

Literary Voice

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Four days! Four walls!
A Winged Sparrow, My Comrade



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From the Editor's Desk

Literary Voice: A Peer Reviewed Journal of English Studies, Number 20, Vol. 1, March 2023 comprises research papers on multiple genres of British, American, South African, Australian, Turkish, Indian English literatures, Life Writings, Theatre and Media and ELT. The articles investigate the gender conflicts/gender stereotypes through Judith Butler's concept of “performativity” and Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura. The critical appraisals of the literary texts by the White writers, focus on the colonial essentialisation and Postcolonial negotiations to find out the nature of European colonial exploitation in the African Congo Basin from a postcolonial perspective through the ideas of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha, and question the role of English travellers who served the imperial interests under the facade of liberalism, and essentialised the Indian continent and its people in colonial representations, though some of the white writers transcend the assumed notion of White superiority in visualizing a future world free of racial and ideological prejudice.

The research articles trace the trajectories of cultural conflicts and identity crisis through the postcolonial ideas of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and liminality to decipher varied effects on one's national identity on the confluence of two great civilisations of the east and the west, and also unravel the complexity of (Muslim) immigrant identity by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, New York. However, the idea of identity becomes intricate in the case of immigrants who move across geographical boundaries and interact with varied cultures and customs in order to occupy an 'interstitial space' or as Bhabha calls it a 'third space' in terms of identity and agency. Besides, the deceitful forces of the capitalist economy and neo-liberal state too ruffle their assimilation into a transitioning society.

The write ups on Life Writings investigate the physical, psychological and sexual violence faced by women on the basis of their ethnicity and gender during the Holocaust, explore the psyche of women with psychological impairments, elucidate Body Dysmorphia through the Foucauldian theoretical framework to discuss the objectification and oppression of woman, debunk the myth of women's masochism and offer healthier ways to view female behaviour, describe how the act of shaming is used as a tool to take social control over the Jewish masses, and plead for the need to develop culturally specific interpretive models to read Black American women's autobiographical writings as trauma narratives. The traumatic impact on the women during the horrific times of the Partition of India, informs numerous Partition narratives which earnestly strive for an understanding of peace, love, and compassion by fostering inclusivity and tolerance among the people.

The burgeoning foothold of surveillance culture and its grave threat to individual autonomy and privacy has been filtered through the Foucauldian model of panopticism and Pramod K. Nayar's account of multiveillance, to demonstrate how prolonged surveillance can engender paranoia in a community. Likewise the critical interventions about 'silence'—individual and state—assert that African and Afro-American writers subvert the notion of silence as weakness through their varied empowering representations of silence,

underline the significance of literature in countering state silence, and question the legitimacy of the use of force by the State. Silence becomes another possibility of expression in the narratives where the characters gain significant shades of their selves through the manifestation of silence as a tool to assert power.

The scholars have critically examined literary texts which negotiate issues as Bridal Mysticism, inter-species dialogism, politics behind appropriating the desert scape, Postcolonial space, cityscapes, landscape and seascape, pervasive gender inequality, misogyny, female body, sexuality, environment, technology, victimology, and the dialectic between retributive justice and restorative justice. A host of existential dilemmas with socio-politico-historico-psychological dimensions as manifest in the apartheid body politic in South Africa, the concept of Ecofeminism and vegetarianism, women writings as a site for dialogue, social change and the possibility, historiography of Indian Nationalism, sustainable way of living in the world with special emphasis on the ethics of care and concern, have been subjected to in-depth analysis.

A couple of critiques theorise how nature and 'place' are represented in literature and bring to light the inevitable hegemony of socio-cultural discourses which relegate 'place' and the nonhuman world to the status of the other, thus rendering it marginalised, misrepresented and mute. The write ups on select literary texts – Khushwant Singh's *Delhi*, Audre Lorde's biomythography, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and Toru Dutt's "Our Casuarina Tree" -- present an in-depth analysis of places and things as these play a central role in structuring the personality, singularity and identity of an individual.

The research papers on theatre and media raise issues related to the gender and commodification of the stereotypical images of India, plead for a national identity for a group of people who are often diverse and enervated by internal animosities, attempt to differentiate transgender individual in relation to caste and class in ways that obliterate the acceptance of transgender identities and narratives, and lay bare the repercussions of child marriage and the hypocritical patriarchy that exist in India. Besides, the current number comprises literary discourses, book reviews and poems of emerging Indian English Poets.

T.S. Anand

The Normative Cost of Going Native: Rediscovering 'Exotic' in Phenomenological Study of Mistah Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Dr. Nipun Chaudhary*
Sk Abdul Hasinur Rahaman**

Abstract

Undoubtedly, Joseph Conrad's novella Heart of Darkness has been billed as a work of timeless importance. The novella is considered not only an usher of modernity in the field of English novels but also a landmark in the significant development of the study of colonialism and post-colonialism. Since its publication in 1899, the novella has baffled scholars and received high acclamation from every corner of the literary sphere. The novella depicts the European colonial masters as an agent of colonialism, imperialism and racism. However, the primary aim of this paper is to find out the nature of European colonial exploitation in the African Congo Basin from a postcolonial perspective. Concepts and ideas applied are by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha as the methodology for the purpose of postcolonial reading of the text.

Keywords: *post-colonialism, colonialism, imperialism, modernity, racism.*

Introduction

Unquestionably, Post-colonialism is a Postmodern concept. The primary concern of post-colonialism is to analyze the impact of European imperialism and colonialism on the third-world countries in Asia, Africa and Oceania. Political and socio-cultural conditions of the colonized in the hands of the western colonizers are the main concern of post-colonialism. Though it borrowed its ideas from Marxism, post-structuralism and postmodernism, it has drawn the attention of more and more readers and scholars worldwide. It is a reaction to, resistance against colonialism, and exploration of its effects on the colonized; it is a re-examination of colonial discourses, decolonization, re-instating of the native and unlearning the established truths. The issues of racial, class, caste and regional domination, cultural, literary and linguistic hegemony, Diaspora, feminism and globalization also come under the purview of post-colonialism. Nayar defines post-colonialism:

Initially written with a '-' [between 'post' and 'colonialism' as a signifier of chronology, the term was originally meant to convey a historical-material change in a country's political status: 'after colonialism'...Postcolonialism is the academic cultural component of the condition of post-coloniality. It represents a theoretical approach on the part of the formerly colonized, the subaltern and the historically oppressed, in literary-cultural studies informed by a particular political stance, using the prism of race and the historical context of colonialism, to analyze text, even as it seeks to produce critical commentary that serves an act of cultural resistance to the domination of Euro-American epistemic and interpretive schemes. (*The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* 122)

As postcolonialism raises manifold political, sociological, philosophical, economic and cultural questions, it is hard to limit postcolonial studies to historicist explanations. Undoubtedly, Edward Said's pioneering work *Orientalism* is generally acknowledged as the tenet of 'postcolonialism'. Being published in 1978, this book develops postcolonial discourse in the field of literary theory. Said philosophically postulated the binary opposition in his famous book:

Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient". Hence, it has a wider global application in terms of binary opposition between "the orient" and "the occident" ... In fact, as a mode of discourse, Orientalism helps us to explain how "European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, socio logically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (*Orientalism* 2-3)

After a decade of the publication of *Orientalism*, Postcolonialism finds its best explanation and revelation with the publication of another canonical book - *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. Later, the term 'postcolonial' is avidly applied and gained a new outlook in the hands of such critics as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik and Linda Hutcheon. Spivak demands that in the process of colonialism the colonized native has no choice other than to surrender to the colonial masters, and for this, she coins the word 'subaltern'. Regarding subalternity, in an interview Spivak comments:

In the context of the post-colonial study, the term "Subaltern" does not represent the "oppressed" ... rather it is "everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism ... Subalternity is a new branch of thought in hegemonic discourse. What matters much in this respect is the mechanism of discrimination by which we can determine a subaltern. (De Cock, Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa 29-47)

As a western European theory, postcolonialism becomes synonymous with the cultural and literary theory which basically seeks to analyze English literature from third-world countries. In his famous book, *Third World Literature*, Fredric Jameson proposes that "all third world texts are necessary. . . and in a very specific way . . . to be read as national allegories' noting how 'the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of public third-world culture and society" (69).

The application of 'post-colonialism/ postcolonialism' is wide and diverse. It studies and analyzes the European territorial conquests, the European colonial institutions, the objectionable operations of the empire, the condition of the colonized subject in colonial discourse and their resistance to the colonizer. In fact, it illuminates, most importantly perhaps, the nations before and after their independence, their cultural and ethnic communities and the continual Western legacies created by colonialism and imperialism. According to Frantz Fanon, the notion of colonialism is always destructive:

In order to exercise colonial authoritarianism and unchallenging possession over the colonized natives, the colonial masters always create a "Manichaeian world". By creating such a world, the colonist strives to limit the space of the natives. Applying so-called law and order they turn the wheel of injustice over the natives. The natives

are labelled as the “quintessence of evil he is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized, he uses zoological terms. (*The Wretched of the Earth* 6-7)

In his essay *Of Mimicry and Man*, Bhabha opines that Mimicry is unintentionally subversive. In fact, there are many straight ways in which mimicry can be subversive. There is a clear instance of subversive mimicry in the character of Amrit Rao in *A Passage to India*, a famous novel by E. M. Forster on the theme of colonialism and race-relationship. There is again 'reverse mimicry' which is basically described as 'going native' by most postcolonial critics. In 'reverse mimicry' the colonial master adopts a native culture and behaves like the native colonized as found in Conrad's present text under discussion. Here Kurtz takes up the role of 'reverse mimicry' or 'going native'. The way Kurtz becomes a reverse mimic character and the cost he has to pay for this will be discussed at length in the next chapter of this paper.

Discussion

Truly speaking, Joseph Conrad is one of the pioneers of the modern novel and in his novella *Heart of Darkness* Conrad efficiently and effectively used multiple narrative techniques with great command and mastery. Interestingly, in the said novel, Conrad employs two narrators: the frame narrator (third person anonymous omniscient narrator) and the 'I' narrator, Marlow. The first 15 paragraphs and the last one is narrated in the 3rd person and the rest of the novel by Marlow. The setting of the novel is England and Marlow along with the other characters is placed on a boat which is floating on the Thames. Marlow is the speaker of his past experiences and the other narrator envelops Marlow's story. The novel follows the pattern of a journey which is a convention in a picaresque tradition. The places here are arranged horizontally and the most significant journey is Marlow's journey to the underworld. The total journey is subject to different stages and the journey pattern becomes a centric journey pattern.

The novella lacks a satisfactory ending. It has something that may be called an 'open-ended conclusion'. In spite of the exploration of his subconscious and of becoming the great admirer of Kurtz, Marlow proves to be no Kurtz. Again, a linear, chronological story pattern does not occur in *Heart of Darkness*. The events do not follow each other, logically and systematically. The narration moves forward and backwards both in time and space. The 'point of view shifts constantly from London to Africa to London.

But Conrad's narration of Africa, a native of Congo Basin, the River Thames and the River Congo itself is tinged with the issue of colonialism and racial discrimination. Chinua Achebe's observation is very significant in this respect. Achebe strongly affirms:

The novel represents Africa as “the other world”....It is as if the River Thames has been honoured with Emeritus status, while the River Congo is denied this status....The Thames too “has been one of the dark places of the earth.” But down the ages, it has successfully achieved a new status and conquered darkness. But the River Congo still retains its primordial darkness which tells the truth of African civilization and the beginning of human civilization. (*An Image of Africa* 252)

In fact, the way African native people are described really attracts our attention and we

acquire a clear understanding of how Conrad looks at them. The following description of the Congo Basin is surly highly Eurocentric as Marlow narrates “We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtains of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly ... The dawns were heralded by the descent of a chill stillness” (37). Marlow's journey through the River Congo has been narrated as travelling to the prehistoric ages full of darkness. While going down the Congo, Marlow and his crew encounter the African natives and the whole description is highly packed with racism, as Marlow describes “It was unearthly and the men were.... No, they were not inhuman ... They howled and leapt and spun and made horrid faces, but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar” (37- 38).

The irony lies in the fact the Europeans imagined themselves to be the emissaries of light striving to spread knowledge and enlightenment among the African natives. Conrad balances the two opposite extremes which are represented by Europe and Africa. Marlow himself, exemplifying the plight of the modern man, seems to be caught between these two extremes. Naturally, they suffer the upshot of it, i.e. degradation and desolation. Marlow, unlike Kurtz, experiences desolation but not degradation. Kurtz, on the other hand, cannot control himself from the 'fascination of the abomination' which ultimately leads to his death and psychic disintegration.

The European exploiters are called by Marlow looters, burglars, inefficient and selfish. Marlow is confronted with a 'choice of nightmares,' between the systems followed by Kurtz and the Manager, the two imperialist traders. The Manager does never display even the slightest sign of humanness. His main concern is to loot and exploit the African natives and to conspire and plot against his own people. Throughout the narrative, Marlow time and again puts emphasis on the point that the Negroes of Africa are human beings like the white men of Europe. The voyage helps to understand the nature of the evil and cruel, inhuman and brutal ways of the white colonizers. 'Exterminate all the brutes!' is a measure both of the brutality of the white colonizers and of the degrading impact of the heart of darkness.

Kurtz's Going Native

Heart of Darkness is a faithful account of “the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration” (Conrad, *Geography and Some Explorers*). The novella has, therefore, been considered an indictment of brutal human exploitation in the African nations. Conrad here takes up the theme of colonialism which he explores throughout the novel. The colonialists, who came from Europe, treat the African Negroes as slaves and any refusal on their part is answered by torture, gunshots, or absolute physical annihilation.

Conrad at the very beginning of the novella comments on the Roman conquest of Britain and opines that the process of colonization will continue. It is true that the European colonial masters are violently looting, plundering and exploited the African natives. To Conrad, it is just the mirror image of what the Romans did in Britain almost two thousand years ago. At the outset of his arrival at the inner station, Kurtz was a benevolent colonial

master with a torch of enlightenment and civilization in his hand. However, later he considers himself a self-declared God who controls the natives there with absolute authority over them. Though it becomes too late, Kurtz realizes his folly and he records all these in a manuscript which he hands over to Marlow when they meet. His exclamation “Exterminate all the brutes!” (51) is highly significant for this purpose and for his in-depth realization of the true face of colonial exploitation. He realizes that they are just like parasites; they just live on the blood of the African natives. The European colonialists collapse both morally and ethically as they cannot bridle their lust for ivory which has become the chalice of their pilgrimage to Africa, and Kurtz is no exception.

In this epoch-making novella *Heart of Darkness*, the most enigmatic character is Mistah Kurtz who is the secret agent of the inner station. Kurtz physically appears in the novel very late through the eyes of a number of persons. The manager, the Russian and others have their own opinion about the nature of Kurtz. But all the information is filtered through the eyes of Marlow. Also, notable, these very impressions are further modified by the opinion of the people Marlow meets when he returns to civilization. Among them, Kurt's intent and her opinion occupy the most significant place. Conrad gives his first impression with much masterly grandeur, as Marlow describes “I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It was a distinct glimpse: the dugout, four paddling savages, and the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home – perhaps; setting his face towards the depth of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station” (34).

The Russian is profoundly influenced by the man's noble ideas. In seeking to explain Kurtz's inhuman actions and statements, the Russian defends that the man had suffered too much. He even knows that Kurtz could kill with impunity only those who do rebel against this authority. As the Russian says:

He was not afraid of the natives; they would not stir till Mr. Kurtz gave the word. His ascendancy was extraordinary. The camps of the people surrounded the place, and the chiefs came every day to see him. They would crawl..... If it had come to crawling before Kurtz he crawled as much as the veriest savage of them all. I had no idea of the conditions, he said: these heads were the heads of rebels. I shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers – and these were rebels. Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks. (58)

He himself had been threatened to be killed by Kurtz if he did not give his treasure of ivory. In brief, the Russian sees the man as a great man with greater human and progressive ideas.

The manager views Kurtz from a totally different standpoint. He considers Kurtz's methods of obtaining ivory to be completely unsound. As the manager verbosely says:

But there is no disguising the fact, Mr. Kurtz has done more harm than good to the company. He did not see the time was not ripe for vigorous action. Cautiously, cautiously –that's my principle. We must be cautious yet. The district is closed to us for a time. Deplorable! On the whole, the trade will suffer. (61)

He is sure that Kurtz's cruel and uncivilized activities would lead to conflict between the company's men and then with the natives, and, in consequence, it would be difficult to secure more ivory. In the end, Kurtz alienated the natives instead of befriending them. He is,

however, delighted that Kurtz has been eliminated. Kurtz had posed a threat to his position. But Kurtz had now brought about his own downfall, thus ensuring the manager's safety. In fact, Kurtz's aspirations, whether legitimate or erased, are fully beyond the Manager's perception.

Marlow's opinion of Kurtz, based on the Russians and his own observation of Kurtz during the last few days before the man's death, is completely different. He realized that contact with nature, deprived of the substance of civilization, had brutalized Kurtz:

The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now – images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously around his inextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My intended, my station, my career, my ideas – these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments.... But both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it had penetrated fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive emotions, avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power. (67)

Contact with brutal nature and the elements of natives awakened Kurtz's dormant tendencies, the evil sleeping in the utter darkness of his heart. He had, by the force of his personality and voice, along with the assistance of the weapons- 'the thunderbolts of that pitiful Jupiter'- acquired the power of life and death over the natives. In the process of going native Kurtz himself becomes engrossed with darkness. According to Marlow his soul was filled with "impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines" (68). This position had fed into open flames the fire of megalomania which comes from his superior western thought of civilization and enlightenment. In short, he had become drunk with power, read with it.

Conclusion

Conrad, like the modern novelists, was interested in the complexities, intricacies and subtleties of the human soul. His purpose was to explore the real person, the 'psyche' or the soul, of his personages. Like the stream of consciousness writers, he could have placed us within the mind of his characters and given us their interior monologue. But this is not his method; he rather uses the technique of multiple points of view. The character is shown through different eyes and through different angels. It is used in *The Heart of Darkness* to illuminate Kurtz, the central character, curtly speaking, to find out the complexity and individuality of the character. In this way is gradually built up a rounded, three-dimensional personality, one of the immortals in literature, the very intensity of whose passions, however evil, raise him to epic heights of grandeur and magnificence. But he remains to be an enigma to us due to Conrad's application of the device of 'multiple points of view.'

In spite of his lofty idealism, Kurtz deteriorates at its worst only because he exercised his unchallenging freedom over the native Congolese and endless solitude. In the wilderness of Congo Basin, Kurtz degenerates into a beast without any civilized restraints and social or civil protection. In fact, Kurtz could not control his lust for ivory, women, power and the lure of loneliness. Kurtz's final words 'The horror! The horror!' is highly pregnant with manifold interpretations. According to Marlow, it is the expression of Kurtz's 'complete knowledge' and

his 'moral victory'. Kurtz is not only the prototype of European colonial and imperial master whose primary aim is looting and plundering the colonized slaves but also, he is an evil incarnation like Satan. Kurtz could have been a perfect musician or an extremist political leader if he had not been sent to Congo Basin. But alas! He goes native in the African Congo and has to pay for it the maximum, his own life. To sum up, Kurtz is a perfect representative of Western European colonial, imperial and racial agents who ironically proves that darkness does not lie in the heart of Africa, but rather in the heart of European colonial, imperial and racial masters.

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**Conflicting Genders and Gender Conflicts: Elucidating “Performativity”
in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills***

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Abstract

*Violence meted out to women, irrespective of forms and means, has always been paramount when it comes to its addressal. Although different waves of the literary movement of feminism have made strenuous efforts in order to take a proper stand for the emancipation of the females, the present day concerns have undergone a radical turn. With the advent of postmodern feminism in particular, there was a glaring shift in the entire scenario of both looking at and comprehending the nuances of gender. The Japan-born English writer, Kazuo Ishiguro is one of the most vocal and visible voices reflecting this basic shift of modern day understanding of gender conflicts. Upon minute observation it appears rather clear that most of his fictions depict what can be called deconstructive thought of feminism. By adhering to a detailed textual critical analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's maiden novel *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), this paper attempts to unmask the otherwise concealed conflicting attributes of female characters in relation to their counterparts. The paper is descriptive in nature and will make use of Judith Butler's key concept of “performativity” within the larger rubric of postmodern feminism.*

Keywords: *feminism, performativity, postmodern, violence, women*

History appears to have been one of the most prominent witnesses to manifold layers of gender violence represented in numerous fictions and literary pieces. The different forces of patriarchal society embedded within the hegemonic power structures, have rendered the females in a society subordinate on numerous occasions thereby making it to be one of the focal issues of critical negotiations in the literary circle. What appears disturbing in the context of subordination of women is the fact that in most literary representations, the man-woman relationship is articulated from the point of view of the patriarchal socio-cultural value system within which the author and his/her narrative is situated. In other words, there is a process of the women selves getting both materialised and functioned as the entity who needs to depend on their male counterparts for authenticating their sense of identity as well as achieving a sense of being productive individual. This, in one way or the other, leads to the portrayal of the females to be the ones who are at the receiving end. No wonder, in such a scenario, most of the women characters in various novels get portrayed as depressed, suffering and in need of some kind of solace that would eventually lead to the emancipation of the individual, the women in this context. Simone de Beauvoir's statement, in her groundbreaking text, *The Second Sex*, is of particular relevance in this context – “One is not born but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine” (445).

Several works of fiction portray women as secondary characters situated within

cultural power-politics and power-play which allow men an elevated status – in the lived lives of a people, men seem to enjoy a superior status. Kazuo Ishiguro's maiden novel *A Pale View of Hills* is one of the scintillating portrayals of the troubles and trauma which a female character has to undergo to emerge with a sense of self in the society. The reader is acquainted with Etsuko, married initially to a man in Japan named Jiro and they had a daughter called Keiko. As it was destined, the marriage never found expression the marital life of Etsuko was all but troublesome. The instance of conflicting genders the portrayal of not only Etsuko but also her elder daughter, Keiko and her second daughter, Niki to be absolutely dependent on male counterparts by Ishiguro goes to reiterate the secondary position of females in the narrative. With a postmodernist approach, Ishiguro does not adhere to the articulation of a conventional household where the wife gets subjugated by the husband in every sphere of life. Ishiguro paints the entire canvass by leaning on the journey of the central character, Etsuko which was nothing but adorned with hardships-both familial and societal. The novel paints captivatingly numerous Japanese characteristics starting from the spirit of the text to the landscape. Also, there are vivid elements of different kinds of spaces in relation to the central character, Etsuko. However, the entire goal of this particular research is to deal with the various kinds of gender conflicts which grants the life of Etsuko, in particular, a topsy-turvy look.

The literary theory of postmodernism is sceptical of knowledge and truth in the discursive realms while being suspicious of singularly coherent ideas and celebrating plurality of theoretical ideas which permeates through numerous historical records down to the society of individuals. The narrative reveals obvious instances of postmodernist deconstruction in its subtle explication of feminist concerns. M. Karenga, one of the noted scholars dealing with the decolonising issues of South Africa, makes a very pertinent remark in order to illustrate the situation of gender conflicts in different literary novels. According to him, the conflicts related to gender can be understood

as a crisis in views and values which undergird and inspire a practice of un-freedom in the midst of discourse on and struggle for freedom. The vision crisis is defined by a deficient and ineffective grasp of self, society and the world. And the value crisis is defined by incorrect and self-limit categories of commitment and priorities which in turn limit our human possibilities. (7)

It can be stated that the importance of third wave feminism lies in the idea that the human beings have drastically moved away from a world that had been looking at some factors and concepts of the general tenets of feminism in a very totalitarian way. Postmodern feminism vehemently rejects this totalitarian attitude in favour of the questions that the feminist movements began to raise about reclaiming and redefining womanhood. It has to be stated that there is an anti-essentialist foundation to the very idea of something being post-modern so that a particular theory is not defined and the different meanings, concerns and understandings are not fixed. The position of Etsuko in the novel perfectly vindicates the key ideas of postmodern feminism in relation to re-questioning or re-interrogating the concerns related to womanhood, beauty, sexuality, language, masculinity etc. It also, simultaneously stakes its claim that there is no single position which is homogenous in nature. One of the significant reasons for the second marriage of Etsuko could well be argued to be the zeal to

provide a better life to the first daughter, Keiko which is another important instance of the struggle of the females in the novel. But, it turned out to be a fatal decision as Keiko became an almost alienated character in the family as she was someone who could not converse in English. Needless to say, the different insecurities in her life finally culminated in her suicide. Keiko, unlike Niki was pure Japanese, and more than one newspaper was quick to pick up on this fact. The English are fond of their idea that our race has an instinct for suicide, as if further explanations are unnecessary; for that was all they reported, that she was Japanese and that she had hung herself in her room. (Ishiguro 13)

The kind of trauma that Etsuko undergoes in England after her second marriage with the Englishman, Mr. Sheringham is also remarkable in her understanding of the past. Moreover, the death of her England husband along with the act of committing suicide of her first daughter, Keiko only amplify the pathetic position of Etsuko as a mother and a then widow. As a mother, it was at the back of her mind to be a zone of comfort for her daughter but it never happened the way she intended. There were nostalgic intricacies of her past life which has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future past, a past which has only ideological reality. (Stewart 136)

The lives of both Etsuko and her second daughter, Niki centers around the different types of gender roles, what Judith Butler calls “performativity.” It can easily be stated that the main contention of Butler in her writings is to understand gender as a category which is performed by focussing on gender as performance. Etsuko, as a mother, Niki, as a daughter earlier and as a wife later on along with the mother-daughter duo of Sachiko and Mariko who provide as a counterpart to Etsuko play out their roles in the novels mainly like a text. What is significant in the context of their roles in the novel is that they keep repeating certain propositions to validate one social and also cultural context. This, thus, echoes the inherent tenets of what Butler argued as she opined that gender is always performed. Because a particular gender is performed, it can be stated that the meanings of various feminist positions can never be fixed and are always open to different forms of negotiations.

In the words of Butler, “the performativity of gender has everything to do with who counts as a life, who can be...understood as a living being, and who lives, or tries to live, on the far side of established modes of intelligibility” (4). It should be noted that the whole idea of Butler's performativity of gender entices into the Derridian notion of repetition and reiteration which wholly lay down the foundations of third wave feminism. In this regard, it becomes vividly evident that various gender positions get constantly negotiated. The idea of repetition is defined by Butler as “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (43). The different types of roles played by Etsuko in the novel initially in the land of Japan in Nagasaki and then in England vividly indicate that gender roles, more often than not, need to be reiterated and re-performed again and again so that there are multiple images of performances. Thus, the whole idea of feminism, for Butler, deals with a kind of performance. What can be inferred from this idea is that because it is

performed, the different meanings of gender and feminist positions can never be fixed and are always open to various negotiations.

The trouble associated with conflicting genders in the novel get sort of reiterated by the different acts of the characters more than the way Ishiguro presents them in the narrative. It was seen that Etsuko lost her family members in Nagasaki to the bomb blast which had severe impacts in her mind. Taking this into account, her migration to England and her marriage to an Englishman then can be called to be an act of escapism on her part as she never wanted her past to haunt her present. However, the troubles of the poor lady were as if destined to be following her like her shadow as the foreign land turned out to be even traumatic for her. Ishiguro illustrates the act of naming their second daughter, Niki in a very captivating manner saying Etsuko wanted to do away with her past and start afresh in England. Ishiguro writes,

Niki, the name we finally gave my younger daughter, is not an abbreviation; it was a compromise I reached with her father. For paradoxically it was he who wanted to give her a Japanese name, and I – perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past – instead on an English one (Ishiguro 9).

Butler, in her theory of gender performativity, argues that power and knowledge get inscribed in the body of an individual. “Butler's work has profoundly reshaped how we come to think about gender” (Hey 441). Echoing a very much Foucauldian idea, Butler also makes a very valid point that power and knowledge arise from one's own sexuality which makes a particular body nothing but a site of power discourse. A particular body, then, appears to be under some sort of control and it was the troubled life of Etsuko in Nagasaki which was, in one way or the other, regulating and controlling her present life in England. Starting from her own sense of guilt regarding her failure as a mother to the inherent trauma as a result of the death of her elder daughter, Keiko, there were traumatised aspects which were perturbing her mind. Also, geographically speaking, both Nagasaki and England had differences between the two which again brought in a sense of discomfort in the life of Etsuko. The cultural differences between both the places were evidently different and Etsuko narrates this in the lines below:

In Japanese cities, much more so than in England, the restaurant owners, the teahouse proprietors, the shopkeepers all seem to will the darkness to fall; long before the daylight has faded, lanterns appear in the windows, lighted signs above doorways. Nagasaki was already full of the colours of night-times as we came back out into the street that evening; we had left Inasa in the late afternoon and had been eating supper on the restaurant floor of the Hamaya department store. . . Since it was never my habit to indulge in Kujibiki and since it has no equivalents here in England—except perhaps in fair-grounds—I might well have forgotten the existence of such a thing were it not for my memory of that particular evening. (Ishiguro 120)

Ishiguro, very subtly, uses a kind of post-structuralist approach to under the male-female perspectives. The Foucauldian ideas that there is no true gender and a particular gender is constantly being articulated find true expression in the novel with the portrayal of different roles for the characters. In relation to the idea of performance, Butler argues that the idea of a man or a woman is in relative relationship. The positions of Etsuko and Jiro initially in Nagasaki and the position of Etsuko and Mr. Sheringham later on in England significantly endorses this thereby reiterating the idea that the notion of a man is often defined by who the

woman is and vice-versa. In the hindsight, it can easily be stated that categories like male and females are nothing but different kinds of social categories that are constantly in relationship with others. In the words of Butler, “If what I want is only produced in relation to what is wanted from me, then the idea of “my own” desire turns out to be something of a misnomer. I am in my desire, negotiating what has been wanted of me” (11).

As an important instance of gender conflicts in the characters apart from Etsuko, the act of Sachiko, the neighbour of Etsuko could very well be stated. It was seen that after the death of her family members in the war, she took shelter at her uncle's house which was traumatic for her. The very act of Sachiko leaving the house of her uncle could be related to the fact of ill-treatment meted out to her in subsequent manner. Also, it was seen that there was no productive work for her at her uncle's home which would help her grow as an individual to a great extent. Her lover in England, Frank also depicted his negative side with his habit of drinking to the extreme and making umpteen promises only to break them every time. Moreover, it was also seen that more than on Sachiko, it was on the other girls of the beach that Frank spent his money on which showcased a neglected position of Sachiko in front of him. These are also different acts which reinforce various categories as argued by Butler.

Thus, one substantial remark which follows is that there are certain signs associated with both men and women. In this sense, genders are always nothing but signifiers but are not signified. A signified, thus, is not always available and is not always fixed and human beings always get defined as a result of their performance. It can also be inferred that Butler, like other post-modernists, does not want the idea of a female to be fixed in nature. A particular definition is not something which is desired because it is always open to different negotiations. This idea substantiates very well the core meaning of what Butler calls as “gender performativity” as she endorses and also reiterates the idea of the Beauvior of someone becoming a woman. Body, then, in this context, becomes controlled. Butler also argues that there are certain sections and restrictions which get imposed on a body. These lead to the constraints that women often come up with in the different negotiations related to third-wave feminism.

To conclude, the maiden novel by Ishiguro *A Pale View of Hills* can well be thus regarded to be a captivating artistic sketch which elucidates the idea that a particular gender is constantly approximated wanting to make a sign. Thus, gender, in relation to postmodern feminism becomes a text, it reads like a text and thus, has to be performed like a text as “there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything” (Butler 25). The different conflicts associated with the males and the females in the text along with their conflicting opinions manifested in the manner those behaved and acted in the plot. As an instance, the remarks made by the second husband of Etsuko regarding their first daughter, Keiko depicts both stereotype and dislike, “Keiko was a difficult person by nature and there was little we could do for her” (Ishiguro 109). This is a clear indication of his indirect hint at Jiro, the former husband of Etsuko to be a rude individual who palpably failed at imparting good manners to his daughter. Also, Etsuko's act of moving away from Nagasaki to England also acted as a perfect cover to this as “Jiro was to blame, not us” (Ishiguro 109).

On the other side, the novel vividly explicates the idea that no identity is expressed

beyond the acts that are expressed by a particular gender. Ishiguro's narration reinforces the vision that there is constantly an act to one's gender as it is a particular act which gives an identity to an individual. In short, the novel is a proper justification to the idea that a particular act gives an identity to an individual and that identity cannot exist beyond the act that an individual performs. To complete a full circle regarding the contradictions of postmodern feminism, the following remarks are equally apt and valid,

The concept of a 'post-modernist' feminism is a contradiction in terms because while feminism is a politics, post-modernism renders its adherents incapable of political commitment. . . . The chief problem with 'postmodernist' feminism is its inability to name forms of domination, and in particular in a feminist context, to identify male domination as the adversary challenged by feminism. This inability is a result of its refusal to engage with grand structures of oppression. (Thompson 325)

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Serving Imperial Narrative and Contesting Liberal Humanism: A Critique of E. M. Forster's Travelogue *A Passage to India*

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Dr. Tanu Gupta**

Abstract

*Travel literature is a subtle, but royal imperial genre that includes autobiography, photography of the Oriental lands, and purposeful reportage which provides solid insights to the imperial center about the places visited by the imperial travel lers. They apparently seem to be innocently roaming and traversing landscapes, but in reality they were fulfilling the imperial objectives. The way travelers like Thomas More, James Milne, William Moorcroft, Francis Bernier and E.M. Forster have presented Oriental landscape, people and cultures especially in their narratives, it gets amply clear that they were serving imperial center with a deep hidden motive. They were gathering knowledge that could be later used by the imperial center for consolidating its hold unto the Oriental territory. With the circulation of three 'post' ideologies, i. e. post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism, alternative views have come into forefront radically and as such everything is looked upon with suspicion. Though outwardly, the travellers wore the garb of liberal humanism, but it was a mere deceptive tactic. This paper is an attempt, especially in the backdrop of the post-structural and postcolonial theories, to trace how E. M. Forster in *A Passage to India* is actually serving the imperial interests and questioning liberalism in general, and exposing his own liberal stance unconsciously, rather than writing any innocent narrative for mere aesthetic purposes.*
Keywords:-Travel literature, liberal humanism, photography, representation, White-Man's Burden, Oriental landscape.

Introduction

The newest advances in the theoretic spheres have unmasked the imperial writers' representations of other cultures. The imperial center had in a well-knit manner already defined the contours of mainstream literature in the preceding centuries, but ironically, in the twentieth century it came to surface that even the personal travel narratives of William Moorcroft, Francis Bernier, James Milne and E. M. Forster being no exception to the rule, in a structured manner constructed a world view by their fabricated tales and monstrous claims of their chauvinistic narratives, for they had to justify British rule in different parts of the world. Harish Trivedi (1993), a prominent postcolonial Indian critic believes that "Literature should not be seen merely as literature but also as part of a larger reality and particularly in the case of these studies [colonial studies], as part of colonial politics" (21).

Forster's visits to India in 1912 and 1921 resulted in an inexplicable, but metamorphosing experiences for him. *A Passage to India* is a piece in 'travel genre,' rather than objective account about India because on close textual analysis it comes to surface that the narrative content of his work dances to the tunes of imperial center, and therefore, is not an

authentic portrayal of India, for representations too are ideological constructs and not truthful depictions of reality always. Forster is one of the most debated literary figures of the twentieth century. Born in London on January 1, 1879. Forster travelled to Italy, Greece, and India. E. M. Forster came to India as a traveler, and surveyed India's landscape, people and diverse cultures with a well-defined purpose, i.e., he has to articulate and project that the West is civilized, and the East is barbaric, and that he does meticulously. *A Passage to India* ostensibly seems truthful representation of the haughtiness of colonisers in India. However, when one browses through the pages of this travelogue what comes to limelight is that the orthographic projections of Forster implicitly expose the reality that the imperial culture exercises its hegemony and the subordinate landscape, people and culture get reflected in negative terms. Like James Milne, William Moorcroft, and Francis Bernier, the traveler E. M. Forster from a vantage point represents the 'other' within a set of static, stereotypical characteristics. This is simply to supplement the imperial discourse that justifies colonialism under the pretense of Rudyard Kipling's (1989) famous dictum 'White-Man's Burden.' *A Passage to India* demonstrates disdainful colonial mentality by acting as gods themselves sanctifying colonial rule, for example Ronny states: "We're out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them's my sentiments. India isn't a drawing-room" (Forster, 1924, 69). Mrs. Moore too ameliorates this belief as she too states: "Your sentiments are those of a god" (Forster, 1924, 69). She too ambivalently justifies imperial narrative. Her statements reflect unconscious justification of imperialism: "God has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding" (Forster, 1924, 70).

The narrative strategy of E. M. Forster signifies travellers' fluidity to appropriate Indian landscape, people, and culture as Adela Quested reflects:

Colour would remain - the pageant of birds in the early morning, brown bodies, white turbans, idols whose flesh was scarlet or blue - and movement would remain as long as there were crowds in the bazaar and bathers in the tanks. Perched up on the seat of a dogcart, she would see them. But the force that lies behind colour and movement would escape her even more effectually than it did now. She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit. . . . (Forster, 1924, 66)

The traveller E.M. Forster deliberately is trying to bring into the canvas of his narrative all the aspects of Indian territories and collective identity, but has romanticized and appropriated India to an unbelievable extent. Marabar Caves is the name given to Barabar Caves of Sultanpur, Bihar. Miss Adela's inscrutable experiences at the Marabar Caves threaten the identity of Dr. Aziz. British women and Indian men are intentionally caricatured in ambivalent disposition. Fielding best articulates this strain:

He took no notice of them, and this, which would have passed without comment in feminist England, did him harm in a community where the male is expected to be lively and helpful...He discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen, but that he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians. The two wouldn't combine. (Forster, 1924, 65-66)

But it is ironic that Forster like other imperial intellectuals consciously denigrates the positive aspects of colonized races. He is not fully able to appreciate and comprehend the Indian

landscape, people, and its rich cultural ethos. Forster's tone is soft, but still imperial beyond doubt. At times, his ostensibly liberal nature pricks his consciousness, therefore, we find some positive descriptions about the oriental races. Liberalism in case of Forster is seen as being a cradle companion with imperialism. Liberal humanism actually in consonance with colonialism ameliorates the colonial discourse, and is not providing any alternative ideology in real sense. No doubt, Forster is a follower of liberal humanism, but he too is skeptical of liberalism as is evident in his article *Two Cheers for Democracy*:

I belong to the fag-end of Victorian liberalism . . . In many ways it was an admirable age. It practised benevolence, philanthropy, was humane and intellectually curious, upheld free speech, had little colour- prejudice, believed that individuals are and should be different, entertained a sincere faith in the progress of society. . . . But though the education was humane it was imperfect, inasmuch as we none of us realized our economic position. In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts, and we did not realize that all the time we were exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward races abroad. . . . Which means that life has become less comfortable for the Victorian liberal, and that our outlook . . . now hangs over the abyss. (1951, 54-55)

Forster's conviction is that the liberalism is not an inclusive discourse. Mrs. Moore and Adela, with their liberal-humanistic assertiveness find it tough to promptly ally with the British in India, instead they try to sympathise with the Indians. But their effort is fraught with challenge, for they belong to imperial culture, and liberalism resonates good in theory only, and practically impossible to fructify. Fielding who represents liberal humanism too is inscrutable. Said (1978) notes: "Fielding is also untypical: truly intelligent and sensitive. . . . Yet his capacities for understanding and sympathy fail before India's massive incomprehensibility. . . ." (*Orientalism* 244). Fielding too has an inscrutable attitude towards India. Trivedi (1993) proposes argument to Fielding's ambivalent identity by declaring: "Barely outside the official fold and equally recognisably a type is Fielding. . . ." (168). It will be a grave injustice to India's colonial history if it is believed that Fielding was in any way having true sympathies with Indians, for he too demonstrates an inadequacy in the assessment of the overall colonial situation in general, and of Aziz in particular. Another glaring proof of his failure is evident when he fails to understand the colonized lawyer, Hamidullah's peculiar condition and declares: "faith did not rule his heart, and he prated of 'policy' and 'evidence' in a way that saddened the Englishman." (Forster, 1924, 181).

There is obvious bias at the core of the travel fiction. The Europeans travelers got so mesmerized by the oriental landscape, its people and cultures that they felt an inferiority complex. To overcome this they purportedly presented the reality in an appropriated and distorted manner. It is a sort of wish-fulfillment. Foster seems, "Critical of English racialism because his skin is the wrong colour, Dr. Aziz is excluded from the club to which his intelligence and skill give him every right to belong, and the moment an accusation is made about him, the European immediately believe it on the slenderest of evidence." (Thody 1996, 243). The positive qualities of Aziz threaten the imperial narrative. Therefore, to undermine his humanity a charge of sexual assault is put on his head. Benita Parry (1985) enunciates: "What is absent is a consciousness of imperialism as capitalism's expansionist, conquering

moment . . . ” (2). The novel brilliantly exposes that the material ambition of imperialism is at the center of all the imperial narratives. Aziz echoes a similar strain in his voice when he suspects Fielding and Adela of stealing his money. Ironically, Fielding tells Aziz that he shouldn't demand the money in defamation case against Adela. Dr. Aziz is maneuvered by Fielding to suit his design as:

Whenever the question of compensation came up, he introduced the dead woman's name . . . he raised] a questionable image of her in the heart of Aziz, saying nothing that he believed to be untrue, but producing something that was probably far from the truth. Aziz yielded suddenly. He felt it was Mrs Moore's wish that he should spare the woman who was about to marry her son, that it was the only honour he could pay her, and he renounced with a passionate and beautiful outburst the whole of the compensation money, claiming only costs. It was fine of him . . . (Forster, 1924, 259)

Forster's tone is ironic regarding Fielding's liberal humanism, for Dr. Aziz is meticulously maneuvered by Fielding to exonerate Adela. Fielding wholeheartedly doesn't ally with the colonized Indians. The vacuum in his liberal thoughts gets amply clear when he says, “The English always stick together! That was the criticism. Nor was it unjust. Fielding shared it himself, and knew that if some misunderstanding occurred, and an attack was made on the girl by his allies, he would be obliged to die in her defence. He didn't want to die for her, he wanted to be rejoicing with Aziz” (Forster, 1924, 235). Fielding's commitment to his race, even when it is obvious to him that the English race is exploitative, unjust, violent and authoritative in India, yet he clings to its ambivalently and categorically doesn't take sides with the oppressed Indians. It shows that he lacks the courage a liberal intellectual possess. Moreover to critique the liberal humanist project of E. M. Forster, one can easily take cue from Mrs. Moore's personality and Cyril Fielding whose personalities are loaded with humaneness on one hand, and on the other hand Indians have been shown as isolated individuals, who are not able to organize themselves into a coherent group, an implicit indication that they can't govern themselves, and needed to be ruled by the master race. The Indians are primitive, aggressive and inscrutable, and therefore needed to be civilized and protected. They have been projected as if they are suffering from what Octave Mannoni terms 'dependency complex.'

The travel fiction propagates the dichotomy of cultural superiority and inferiority. Whereas Joseph Conrad's writings about Africa are a bitter critique of imperialism, Forster's are soft articulations of imperialist ideology, and not a vehement criticism of imperial mission. The author unintentionally has disclosed that the two white women from England fail to discover the 'real India' especially after a harrowing experience at the inscrutable Marabar Caves. This rendering of Marabar Caves as inscrutable suggests that Forster is trying to have authority over the Orient landscape and people. The Western travelers have failed to imagine true India. Though Adela Quested alleges Dr. Aziz of trying to molest her, but her reminiscence of the incident is vague:

I remember scratching the wall with my finger-nail, to start the usual echo, and then I was saying there was this shadow, or sort of shadow, down the entrance tunnel, bottling me up. It seemed like an age, but I suppose the whole thing can't have lasted thirty seconds really. I hit him with the glasses, he pulled me round the cave by the strap, it broke, I escaped, that's all.” (Forster, 1924, 214)

Ironically, the drafts of Forster shed entirely different light on the molestation hysteria as:

She struck out and he got hold of her other hand and forced her against the wall, he got both her hands in one of his, and then felt at her breasts...The strap of her field glasses tugged suddenly, was drawn across her neck, she was to be throttled as far as necessary and then...Silent, though the echo still raged up and down she waited and when the breath was on her wrenched her hand free, got hold of her glasses and pushed them into her assailant's mouth. (qtd. in Levine 288)

Forster doesn't want to leave the space for a sexual critique of empire. The amplified ambiguity in Forster's final draft erases all the possibility of believing in E. M. Forster as a grand ambassador of 'liberal humanism.'

Forster is acutely aware of his nationalistic feelings, therefore any sort of harm that might have been caused in the early half of the narrative, is redressed in the subsequent half when Adela Quested and Fielding are made to realize their cultural superiority. The failure of friendship between a colonial and colonized man gets an emotional outlet:

When on their last ride together, Aziz and Fielding, after misunderstanding, bitterness and separation, are friends again. Yet aware that they could meet no more, that socially they had no meeting place. But Aziz, anticipating the time of freedom from imperialist rule, promises and then - you and I shall be friends. (Forster, 1924, 316)

A Passage to India is full of suggestions which show the impact of discursive practices of imperialism and loopholes in the so called liberal humanist project. Forster is aware about the limitations which any intellectual of a nation has to face, especially when the intellectual stance subdues the nationalistic interests, which do get surfaced in one way or the other, no matter whether one is aware of it or not.

Conclusion

The narrative strategies which are employed by E. M. Forster amplify the imperial mission as it gets amply clear that the British colonisers in hegemonic manner meticulously controlled the personal choices of the colonized subjects. Though the chief contention of E.M. Forster's travelogue is the trust between a coloniser and a colonised man, but the narrative conclusion of the novel amply suggests that it is not possible because it is not Dr. Aziz, but from everything else that doesn't want it:

The horses didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, “Not, not yet,” and the sky said, “No, not there.” (Forster, 1924, 326)

According to Alison Sainsbury (2009), “‘not there,’ referring to that which escapes history's imprint, both contradicts 'not yet' and in the end overwhelms it,” since the two statements are given equal weight” (61). Sincere friendship is not possible between a coloniser and a colonized subject even if the colonizer wears the garb of liberal humanism.

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Fictionalizing Science, Scientification of Fiction: A Study of Rudyard Kipling's Stories - "With the Night Mail" and "As Easy as A.B.C."

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Abstract

In the few stories of science fiction penned by Rudyard Kipling the author left the impression of a rare imaginative mind that was able to transcend the assumed notion of White superiority in visualizing a future world free of racial and ideological prejudice. In doing so, Kipling makes his works of science fiction uphold his social and moral concern and champion the betterment of humanity. However, this utopia of a distant future, when mankind will be able to live with full political and economic freedom and with the minimum interference of the state in their personal lives, is far from without its share of difficulties. The readers need to penetrate the long and often tiresome digressions on future aviation industry and aircrafts in order to get a glimpse of the author's vision of the upcoming world where war, religion and ideological extremism would become historical anecdotes. The people of this world, with highly individualistic mindset and professional skill, foil an attempt to bring back the old days of corruption, fear and uncertainty by the regressive elements of the society who veiled their design in the name of restoring the system of representative government. The present paper offers an alternative reading of Kipling who appears as an iconoclast and steadily breaks the heroic qualities of the White man and nation he cherished so dear and gives impetus to the attributes he held detrimental to the supremacy of the White nations: preaching against warfare, encouraging privacy in personal sphere followed by isolated and insular existence in national and international arena, allowing other nationals especially the citizens of the imperial rivals to be members of the utopian White nation that Kipling idealizes.

Keywords: *Supremacy of Individualism, Technocracy*

Rudyard Kipling, usually regarded as the pioneer of imperialism in the colonial period and acclaimed as well as condemned throughout the colonial and post-colonial era, tried his hands in the realm of science fiction apart from writing about his favourite area of British colonial mission in India and the East. The two works of science fiction that I propose to discuss here speak of a future era where technological progress makes the life of people, obviously the White people, so much easier that the inhabitants of the New World can look at the hardship of their ancestors with pity. Apart from this the reader is bound to be awestruck in finding Kipling's nearly flawless presentation of futuristic technology and the worldview of the future generation who gradually moved away from religion, war and mass destruction. Viewed from this perspective, Kipling seems to transcend not merely the scope of his colonial mission but even goes to the extent of rejecting the postcolonial agenda and to anticipate what Walter D. Mignolo calls 'decoloniality.' The present paper makes a modest attempt to illustrate these points with reference to "With the Night Mail" (1905) and "As Easy as A.B.C." (1912). This illustration endeavours to assess the two said narratives as a few of Kipling's best workmanships of fictionalization of science as the title indicates. The second

part of the title, i.e. scientification of fiction, appears perceptibly complex and requires an analysis of the works apart from the definition of 'scientification'. Hence, this would be done at a later stage.

As these two stories, for obvious reasons, fall outside the interest of present reading society at large, I feel it would be advisable to narrate the storylines in brief. In the first story "With the Night Mail" Kipling casts his vision on the future world of 2000, a world that is to appear more than nine decades later since its first appearance. Here he presents a host of future aircrafts capable of making intercontinental flights. For fact check in various web modes the reader can easily get to know that the first successful flight in airplane took place in 1903, two years before the publication of this story and the first transatlantic air travel did not take place before 1927. The narrator remains anonymous and is on board such a flight on its way to Quebec from London. The whole story is interspersed with a gamut of technical details related to aircraft like "The Bridge-Builders" (1893) or "007" (1897) are stuffed with contemporary railroad and bridge-construction technicalities. Towards the end, in keeping with the author's predilection for accomplishing the colonial/adventurous/technological mission successfully, the narrator pilot finished his journey before his scheduled time. In the next narrative the author stretches the time more than a century in future thereby making the reader visualize and fantasize about the imaginary technocracy prevailing in 2065. A little familiarity with Kipling's literary output will make the reader realize that in creating this future world and its inhabitants Kipling had to forgo many of his dominant themes such as the notion of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons or Anglo-Americans, taking Russia and her inhabitants as only enemies, urging his nation to maintain a strong armed force to meet challenges at Home and in colonies and most importantly, delineating the selfless virtues of a colonizer in the East. The citizens of the future era are found to be stiff upper-lipped individuals who developed a detestation for the masses and can go to any length to secure their privacy. Consequently, the rule of the masses especially the less privileged masses appearing in the form of electoral democracy, has now been regarded as out of fashion and repugnant in a world ruled by the A.B.C., a semi-elected and semi-nominated body of a few people. In this almost immaculate environment disaster strikes when the riotous population of Northern Illinois cut off all the communication channels and separated themselves from the rest of humanity. Later, emboldened by this initial success they gradually make public demonstrations and relapsed into the 'medieval' ways of demanding popular government. Although they constitute only a section of the overall population and was immensely disliked by the saner citizens, the latter found it odd to take the law in their own hands to thwart the motive of the fanatics. A while later the representatives of the A.B.C., constituted of diverse nationalities, arrive to take stock of the situation and decide the future course of actions. Armed with the choicest electronic weapons they have little difficulty in imprisoning the dissidents. Although they were invested with the authority and power of annihilating all the dissidents they chose to transport the prisoners back to London where there can be a parade of people with extinct ideas and ways of life.

In the first story the authorial concern is with the safe transportation of the 'Postal Packet 162' to Quebec amid a great tempest. The narrator pilot completes his mission with the help of the superior avionics and professional skill. Kipling's excessive emphasis, as I have

already mentioned, on the mechanics of aircraft, shrouded the humanitarian aspect of the story to a great extent. This aspect is revealed only occasionally, almost scintillating in a narrative otherwise laden with technical quagmire. Thus, during the narrator's conversation with the captain of the aircraft the latter narrates how an inventor gets unhinged when his scientific innovation failed to serve mankind in war:

Magniac invented his rudder to help war-boats ram each other; and war went out of fashion and Magniac *he went out of his mind because he said he couldn't serve his country any more*. I wonder if any of us ever know what we're really doing (AR¹ 113, emphasis added).

Throughout his life if Kipling remains consistent with anything, it is his almost never-changing views of the necessity of war especially when it comes to protect either the colonies or safeguard the British isle from German invasion. In poems like “Recessional” (1897), “For All We Have and Are” (1914), “Mesopotamia” (1917) or “The Storm Cone” (1932) Kipling repeatedly warns his nation about the necessity of the preparations for war. Given the fact that Kipling's literary career began to flourish in the mid-1880s during his stay in India as a correspondent for *The Pioneer* and he died in 1936, it can safely be assumed that any radical change of Kipling's views on war will seriously make a reader reassess the author. His shorter works of fiction like “The Lost Legion” (1892), “Swept and Garnished” (1915) or “Mary Postgate” (1915) provide ample evidence of the author's worry about the design of the younger imperialist nation like Germany and the worst possible fate of the colonial mission in the Indian subcontinent. The twentieth century, which witnessed the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in its initial years and the two Great Wars, leaves almost no scope for Kipling to be utopian about the future of mankind. Still the author proves that it is possible to dream about a post-war society which is civilized not merely by technological advancement but by the change of the worldviews of the future generation. For sure this generation would hold the warmongers and bellicose section of society as modern human beings with fossilized mindset. Kipling's way of naming the inventor as Magniac, a euphemism for maniac, lends credence to this assertion. Obviously, while penning the narrative in the early 1900s, Kipling had his share of doubt about the materialization of so bright a future for mankind. That is why the last line of the excerpt expresses doubt about the complete abolition of war and whether it is proper to desist the scientists from developing weaponry. If war is the most hated and feared phenomenon then religious superstition follows suit. Thus seeing the crash of a concomitant flight the narrator's mind is filled with dismay and anxiety as much as for the helpless passengers as for the old ways of attributing all mishaps to *deus ex machina* which reserves endless torment for the departed souls in afterlife:

What if that wavering carcass had been filled with the men of the old days, each one of them taught (*that is the horror of it!*) that after death he would very possibly go for ever to unspeakable torment? (AR 127).

Thus, for his future generation living in an imaginary ideal world Kipling, to a large extent, removed the possibility of the outbreak of war and credulity in old wives' tale. The way Kipling idealizes the future world effectively makes that world as the 'ideological fantasy' conceived by the author, if we accept a slight deviation of Žižekian explanation of his coinage. Žižek took the classic example of money to show people's conscious attempt to

demean its interest while in reality they do exactly the opposite (27-30). In the present narrative, in order to paint an ideal habitat for future generations, Kipling made war an historical phenomenon. In practice, however, he used to draw the sympathy of the readers for the cause of the Empire in his literary output and speeches².

If the first narrative unearths Kipling's essential belief in the reign of peace after war and the eventual disappearance of dogmatism from society then the second narrative³ focusses on issues like the importance of privacy after significant improvement of living standard, a general dislike for democracy which for Kipling is simply another word for mob fury and reconciliatory views towards nations who were at loggerheads with western Europe and United States in the heyday of colonialism. If we set aside Kipling's professed dislike for electoral democracy for a while, we will see that in this narrative Kipling only idealizes in a roundabout way the values and ethos which are held in high esteem by democracies across nations. Indeed, Kipling's penchant for privacy goes by the name of individual rights and freedom in today's world and the much condemned 'invasion of privacy' by means of force is just likely to stand for the outmoded ways of changing society through armed revolution/rebellion. In doing this Kipling had to perform the daunting task of making the average people as privileged ones, a phenomenon still appearing a distant dream and a long walk ahead. It is almost like making the majority of the population retain their state-ordained superior privileges which far exceed the basic demands of food, clothing and shelter - a popular rallying cry even today and shows no sign of lapsing into the land of oblivion in the foreseeable future. By making the masses educated, economically independent and residents of urban areas the author allows the cream of the creamy layer of society percolate through the dwellers of rural areas and shanties. Quite obviously, this privileged (at present) masses will effectively counter the dissident section of the North Illinois, who has already become a minority. This brilliant manoeuvre of countering the discontent of people with their own lot, i.e., people whose grudge against the authority is now past, is also evinced in the second book of the *Jungle Books* (1895) where Mowgli instigated the wild bees (majority and prosperous) to get rid of the dreaded onslaught of the red dogs (minority and are always agitated).

If we take up the issue of the second narrative, i.e., the visible dismay and consternation of general citizens-turned-privileged class at the prospect of going back to the earlier days of electoral democracy, we find that this futuristic society has undergone a sea change. The activities of these 'regressive' elements are regretted thus:

...they went on to talk of what they called "popular government"? ...They wanted us go back to the old Voodoo-business of voting with papers and wooden boxes, and word-drunk people and printed formulas, and news-sheets! (*ADC* 44).

Discernibly, the speaker, in this present scenario the mayor himself, is horrified at the demand of a section of people to relapse in the old habit of indulging in chaos and uncertainty. However, the larger section of society has been transformed for good and is in no mood to pay heed to such demands. More than men the women are vocal in preserving this hard-won right and securing the future of their wards:

I don't suppose you men realize how much this - this sort of thing means to a woman... We women don't want our children given to Crowds. It must be an inherited instinct. Crowds make trouble. They bring back the Old Days. Hate, fear, blackmail,

publicity... (48).

Thus, for all their threatening posture the dissidents failed to secure any support or sympathy from any corner of this new world. Thereafter the representatives of the Aerial Board of Control, as has been mentioned before, make good use of their coercive apparatuses.

The last but not the least important concern is Kipling's portrayal of Dragomiroff, a Russian national and Takahira, a Japanese in the narrative. In his earlier short stories like "The Man Who Was" (1890) or poems like "The Truce of the Bear" (1898) the Czarist Russia was painted in all its malevolent aspects as a great power conspiring to engulf the European colonies in Asia and thereafter the European civilization itself. The *fin de siècle* masterpiece *Kim* (1901) itself is set against the background of the Great Game - a phenomenon characterized by the imperial rivalry between the Raj and its Russian counterpart for retaining a dominating presence in Afghanistan. This animosity towards Russia and her rulers was only aggravated after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 as Kipling penned another poem "Russia to the Pacifists" towards the end of 1918 and published in the following year. In a marked departure from this earlier prejudice Kipling made Dragomiroff not only a citizen of his future world but goes to the extent of investing him with the authority to take part in its administration. This is a conscious attempt on the part of Kipling to undo the long-held western tradition of portraying Russia in a bad light and create an alternative image of Russia in the perception and understanding of the West — a phenomenon which closely resembles Walter D. Mignolo's concepts of 'decoloniality' and 'decolonial aesthetic'. However, Kipling was all praise for Japan and her inhabitants in his 1889 and 1892 visits. Apart from his memoir on Japan Kipling acknowledges the nation state's determination to progress in the path of modern civilization by making a Japanese national an organ of the future world's decision-making body thereby making the East meet the West on equal terms. This gradually changing racial view of Kipling in favour of a liberal and multiracial society were also strengthened after experiencing the social and cultural interactions of the Whites and the non-Whites in his visit to decolonized Brazil in the year 1927 and was duly narrated in *Brazilian Sketches* (1940).

Taking the title of the paper into account, we can understand that fictionalizing science is quite a normal practice with the early and modern writers of this genre. To state the whole matter in a straightforward way, fictional treatment and representation of scientific explorations and experiments are widely accepted as works of science fiction. On a superficial level, both narratives conform to this pattern by presenting men and machine several generations ahead of their time. Thus, the first part of the title offers a simple reading. The very coinage 'scientification' and its complicated process have been defined by Weingart as a process in a system which helps the said or Mother System to acquire scientific knowledge from every possible source and by every means. Thereafter with the acquired knowledge, which is verified by scientific methods, the Mother System along with all its associated subsystems can function better. This process by its very nature is endless and every advancement is ratified by proven scientific method which in turn is the application of scientific knowledge learnt (cited in "Scientification: an overview"). Contextualizing this definition in the realm of fiction and more particularly in the present discussion we may say that in Kipling's imaginary future worlds of 2000 A.D. and 2065 A.D. all the associated and

functional subsystems such as politics, administration, aviation technology are made compatible to work within the said future worlds, i.e. the Mother System. In the process these subsystems constantly upgrade the Mother System. This upgradation entails, apart from the use of futuristic technologies, a thorough change in the thinking of the people who now prefer privacy and technical advancement to populist politics. The change or transition of society at various levels, while getting materialized in real life, requires years, perhaps centuries, to take place. It encompasses a gradual but inevitable confrontation between the new generation and the older orders, the latter prone to resist any change. At the end of such clashes the new order is destined to prevail and slowly occupy the social, political and economic arenas as a decisive factor. In accordance with the ambition and worldview of this generation, the earth or at least most part of it, will have a substantial presence of urbanized people having every conceivable civic facility and the means to focus only on their profession. Dependence on people belonging to lower echelons of society was considerably reduced due to an overwhelming use of machines in domestic spheres as well as in industries and agriculture and a general socio-economical upliftment of the poor and the needy. Quite naturally, in such a circumstance people will lead a kind of detached and insular life bordering on the asocial. Obviously, such tendency stems from an excess of readily accessible various easy modes of transportation and communication. It is this excessive reliance on modern and sophisticated machinery that makes the population lazy and almost apathetic to the public administration so much so that they will be quite happy to attribute the entire administrative responsibilities to the A.B.C. as the narrator observed in the first story: “Practically, the A.B.C. confirms or annuls all international arrangements and, to judge from its last report, finds our tolerant, humorous, lazy little planet only too ready to shift the whole burden of public administration on its shoulders” (AR 136). This line, which also serves as part of the epigraph to the second story, sums up the indifference and apathy of people to matters outside their immediate interest. These insular and self-centred people, with sole concern on professional career and material benefit, represent the Mother System working with subsystems like academics, aviation, transport, industry and a small unit of politics and administration — all are equally competent benefitting the Mother System and vice versa. For the process of 'scientification' to take place, it is necessary to make the Mother System (people with the mindset discussed till now) retain a perfect working relationship with all its corollary subsystems (mentioned just above). The authorial job is to make his fiction reflect this perfect working relationship, scientification per se, in every possible manner. Thus, while working as a medium to represent the process of scientification, fiction/discourse itself falls into the category of a subsystem, supposedly created by writers belonging to the Mother System. Viewing thus, this subsystem will be used to acquire/disseminate knowledge and enhance the credit of the Mother System/narrator/researcher. In doing so, this discipline becomes a part and parcel of the process of 'scientification' thereby justifying the second part of the title.

In a groundbreaking shift from the prevalent science fictions of his time the author did not let any of his protagonists engage in perceptibly impossible adventures such as Jules Verne or H. G. Wells did in their pioneering *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) and *The Time Machine* (1895) or continue weird experiments detrimental to humankind such as *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) by H. G. Wells. This effectively belittles the elements of

surprise, always a temptation for the writers of this genre. Rather in his fictional future world Kipling's emphasis is on creating a new world order and a new social, political and moral code of conduct where the inhabitants of this new world can live without the fear of war, intrusion of state in their private affairs and racial prejudice which were blotches in previous centuries.

Notes

¹*Actions and Reactions* (1909) is the volume where this story was anthologized after its first appearance in *McClure's Magazine* in November 1905.

²One of the most prominent speeches was his address to the public at Southport in June 1915 for speedy recruitment in the army in the wake of the First Great War (Amis 99).

³The story was first published in 1912 and was later collected in *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917).

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Retributive Justice and Lack of Emotional Intelligence in Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*

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Abstract

*People persistently debate over the choice of retributive justice and restorative justice. While restorative justice insists on the correction and wellbeing of the offender, retributive justice concentrates on suitable punishment for the wrongdoer. Moreover, many researches show the relationship between criminality and lack of Emotional intelligence. While a person is emotionally strong, he or she will have good decision making skill. The article on Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* analyses the effects of retributive justice and lack of emotional skills. Though retributive justice is savoury for the moment, it does not lead to physical and emotional wellbeing. It has a long lasting disastrous effect on the vengeful person..*

Keywords: *Retributive justice, Emotional Intelligence, Criminal attitude, Revenge, Impact of Revenge*

Crime fiction deals with crimes, criminals and their motives, and finally the detection and punishment. It has several sub-genres, including whodunnit, legal thriller, courtroom drama and hard-boiled fiction. The crime fiction usually deals with the striking reality of society. It clearly exhibits the degenerated part of human values. Crime stories and novels have been accepted as a distinct literary genre only since the nineteenth century. Dennis Porter states in his book *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction*:

Historians of detective literature may be differentiated according to whether they take the long or the short view of their subject. Those taking the long view claim that the detective is as old as Oedipus...Those maintaining the short view assume that the detective fiction did not appear before the nineteenth century and...that its inventor in the 1840s was Edgar Allan Poe. (1981, 132)

After Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle is the most outstanding writer of crime fiction who has tried his hands on various literary genres with remarkable success. He, though a physician, is a trendsetter and pioneer in constructing and solving crimes by creating the immortal detective Sherlock Holmes. Doyle was deeply influenced by his professor Dr. Joseph Bell in chiselling the famed detective. Holmes reflects the keen observation and analytical skills of Dr. Bell. Doyle's plots exhibit a profound influence of Edgar Allan Poe, the predecessor of detective fiction. Doyle prefers a simple writing style to an ornamental one. He does not care to employ the elements of figures of speech. He has made the detective stories a powerful instrument of social transformation. He is highly sensitive to anything that affronts human dignity and denies social justice. For example, he dealt with a case of miscarriage of justice to a young man called George Edalji, who was accused of slashing horses and cows. Doyle proved Edalji's poor eye sight and freed him from all accusations. Doyle took much pain to release Edalji from the prison. Doyle's humanistic fervour, humanitarian compassion, and socialistic conviction have fired his imagination to arrive at a social progress tackling social problems.

He hates the social institution, which causes cleavage between the different strata in the social structure. He believes that his art can be effective instrument for social transformation. His novel *A Study in Scarlet* was the first work to feature the detective duo Sherlock Holmes and his companion Dr. Watson. It was published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887 after rejections by four publishers, when Doyle was struggling to establish himself as a successful physician in Southsea, England. He started his literary career while waiting for his patients. The unexpected success of Sherlock Holmes compelled Doyle to confine himself to Holmes stories. His award winning biographer Daniel Stashower clearly portrays the nature of Conan Doyle in *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*. Doyle was a moralistic and idealistic gentleman. Doyle felt unjustly confined by the public demand for Sherlock Holmes Stories. Doyle always wanted to be remembered for literary creations other than Sherlock Holmes. As an author of science fiction, historical novels, plays and war chronicles, the themes and the characters of his stories have been taken from the rich material offered by real experiences. He interprets the truth of life from felt experience, and not from books. East London was an epicentre of many criminal activities during Doyle's time. Doyle's keen observation and his experience in London propelled him to create many of the criminal characters in his Sherlock Holmes stories. He used the set up of then London to add mystery and tension to his stories. He cleverly used the dearth for an all powerful and intelligent police figure by creating Holmes. Doyle gratified the people and instilled joy in them by making Holmes solve the murder mysteries in his own queer and unique way. People lauded the characterization of Holmes and his exemplary skills of observation and deduction.

A Study in Scarlet is a revenge story of Jefferson Hope. The novel has two parts, "The Lauriston Gardens Mystery" and "The Country of the Saints." The second part narrates the incidents that make Hope burn with revenge. It presents the love life of Jefferson Hope and Lucy Ferrier that took place in 1847. The story flashes back to the Utah Territory in America in 1847, where John Ferrier and a little girl named Lucy, the only survivors of a large party of wanderers, lie down near a rock in a state of dehydration and hunger. They are discovered, however, by a large party of Mormons led by Brigham Young, the leader. The Mormons rescue Ferrier and Lucy on the condition that they adopt and live under their faith. Ferrier, who has proven himself an able hunter and a sincere observer of Mormon faith, adopts Lucy and is given a generous land grant with which to build his farm after the party constructs Salt Lake City. Years later, Lucy grows up into a charming young lady and is the favourite of the City. One fateful day, she is rescued by Jefferson Hope from an accident. Eventually, she befriends and falls in love with Jefferson Hope.

Lucy and Hope become engaged to be married, scheduled after Hope's return from a three-month long journey for his job. However, Ferrier is visited by Young, the leader of Mormons, and is informed that it is against the Mormon religion for Lucy to marry Hope, a non-Mormon. He states that Lucy should marry Joseph Stangerson or Enoch Drebber, both are members of the Mormon Church's Council of Four and Lucy may choose between them. Ferrier and Lucy are given a month to decide. Ferrier, who has sworn to never marry his daughter to a Mormon, immediately sends out word to Hope for help. When he is visited by Stangerson and Drebber, Ferrier is angered by their arguments over Lucy and throws them out. Every day, however, the number of days Ferrier has left to marry off Lucy is painted

somewhere on his farm in the middle of the night. Hope finally arrives on the eve of the last day, and stealthily takes his love and her adoptive father out of their farm and away from Salt Lake City. However, when he returns from hunting for food, Hope witnesses a horrific sight: Ferrier killed and Lucy abducted. Determined to devote his life to revenge, Hope sneaks back into Salt Lake City, learning that Lucy was forcibly married to Drebber and that Stangerson murdered Ferrier. Considering the nature of Drebber and Stangerson, they are criminals by nature. Maskowitz asserts in her article, “Criminal Minds are Different from Yours, Brain Scans Reveal:”

In addition to brain differences, people who end up being convicted for crimes often show behavioural differences compared with the rest of the population. One long-term study that Raine participated in followed 1,795 children born in two towns from ages 3 to 23. The study measured many aspects of these individuals' growth and development, and found that 137 became criminal offenders.

One test on the participants at age 3 measured their response to fear – called fear conditioning – by associating a stimulus, such as a tone, with a punishment like an electric shock, and then measuring people's involuntary physical responses through the skin upon hearing the tone. In this case, the researchers found a distinct lack of fear conditioning in the 3-year-olds who would later become criminals... Overall, these studies and many more like them paint a picture of significant biological differences between people who commit serious crimes and people who do not. While not all people with antisocial personality disorder — or even all psychopaths — end up breaking the law, and not all criminals meet the criteria for these disorders, there is a marked correlation. (2011)

The Criminal vein of Stangerson and Drebber mars the lives of three people: Lucy Ferrier, John Ferrier and Jefferson Hope. After the forced marriage with Drebber, Lucy dies a month later from a broken heart; Drebber, who inherited Ferrier's farm, is indifferent to her death. Doyle beautifully narrates how Hope breaks into Drebber's house the night before Lucy's funeral to kiss her body and remove her wedding ring. Swearing vengeance, Hope follows Drebber and Stangerson continuously, coming close to killing them on numerous occasions. Doyle writes, “for some months Jefferson Hope lingered among the mountains, leading a strange wild life, and nursing in his heart the fierce desire for vengeance which possessed him” (1986, 101). Hope begins to suffer from an aortic aneurysm, a heart ailment, causing him to leave the mountains to earn money and recover. When he returns about a year later, he learns that Drebber and Stangerson have fled Salt Lake City out of fear for their lives. Doyle notes, “many a man, however vindictive, would have abandoned all thought of revenge in the face of such a difficulty, but Jefferson Hope never faltered for a moment” (1986, 102). Hope searches the United States, eventually tracking them to Cleveland; the pair then flees to Europe, finally landing in London. In London, Hope becomes a cabby, and eventually found Drebber and Stangerson and fulfills his revenge.

Hope spends his whole life in pursuing Drebber and Stangerson, the murderers of his ladylove to punish them. When a crime is committed, the criminal rejects the victim's right to live a peaceful life. The criminal snatches the victim's chance of living a fair and decent life and thus the criminal is liable for punishment. Hampton states, “punishment should not be

justified as a deserved evil, but rather as an attempt, by someone who cares, to improve a wayward person” (1984, 237). According to Hope, both Drebber and Stangerson deserved a severe retribution. Retributive justice adheres to the notion of meting out suitable punishment to the wrong committed. Whether to punish the criminals or not is an evergreen topic of argument since time immemorial. But Jefferson Hope has no confusion over the choice of punishment to the criminals. Hope's loss and pain turn into vengeance, and it leads to many future devastative events.

When Hope chooses revenge, he forgets his future life and other course of actions. He struggles hard to earn money to follow Drebber and Stangerson from country to country and from continent to continent. Hope's health deteriorates and he becomes weak. But his pursuit for revenge never gets weakened. In Hope's opinion, Drebber and Stangerson have deliberately committed a sin, acted unlawfully and they deserve legal as well as moral punishment. The famous English legal philosopher Hertzberg Hart explains retributive punishment as, “the application of the pains of punishment to an offender who is morally guilty” (1968, 5). While some people believe in legal system and wait for the court to render justice to the wrongs committed, some people like Jefferson Hope take law in their hands. They are deeply offended by the criminals that they waste their entire life for vengeance. Hope's love for Lucy Ferrier is so strong that Hope is unable to mend his wounded heart. He decides to kill the murderers. Murphy and Hampton define retributivism as “retributive punishment is the defeat of the wrongdoer at the hands of the victim (either directly or indirectly through an agent of the victim's, e.g., the state) that symbolizes the correct relative value of wrongdoer and victim” (1988, 125). Hope chooses retributive punishment on the violators of law. One who violates the rules has an unfair advantage over others and it becomes essential to maintain a social equilibrium by punishing him. Drebber enjoys an unfair advantage by forcing Lucy to marry him and thus acquiring Ferrier's estate. Lucy was to marry Jefferson Hope and Hope was to acquire the estate of Ferrier. But their plans are tragically collapsed by Stangerson and Drebber. Morris rightly opines in “Persons and Punishment” on the unfair advantage enjoyed by the criminal:

He has something others have—the benefits of the system—but by renouncing what others have assumed, the burdens of self-restraint, he has acquired an unfair advantage. Matters are not even until this advantage is in some way erased. ...[H]e owes something to others, for he has something that does not rightfully belong to him. Justice—that is, punishing such individuals—restores the equilibrium of benefits and burdens by taking from the individual what he owes, that is, exacting the debt. (1968, 478)

According to Jefferson Hope, punishment is the only payback for the offence done by the criminals and the only remedy for the sufferings undergone by him.

It has also been identified that criminals like Drebber and Stangerson lack the qualities of Emotional Intelligence (EI) listed by Daniel Goleman in his book *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998). Goleman's model outlines four main EI constructs: The first construct, self-awareness is the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions. The second construct, self-management involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances. The third

construct, social awareness implies the ability to sense, understand, and react to other's emotions while comprehending social networks. The fourth construct, relationship management includes the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict (1998, 25). Both Drebber and Strangerson in *A Study in Scarlet* fail in these qualities. They lack self-awareness by failing to recognise their ill feelings towards John Ferrier and Lucy Ferrier. Strangerson's lack of self-management leads him to murder John Ferrier. Drebber forces Lucy to marry him even after knowing that she is in love with Jefferson Hope. Both Drebber and Stangerson fail in social awareness that they never try to understand and positively react to others' emotions. They also fail in relationship management by earning a deadly enemy, Jefferson Hope.

People with good emotional skills often solve their problems easily and react to the crises in a positive way. But Jefferson Hope has lower EI by failing to handle the crisis effectively. Though his cause is right, the path is wrong. Hope lacks hope in life and spends his time in the pursuit of revenge. He finds it hard to forgive his enemies. In the book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman says, "people with well-developed emotional skills are also more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of the mind that foster their own productivity; people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought" (1995, 36). Hope's fumes of vengeance overpower him that he fails in controlling his emotions. He loses the battle between revenge and the clear focus on productive and positive future. Similarly, low EI makes a person react to situations vehemently. This means that if people have to change their offending behaviour, they have to change their view of themselves and others, forgetting their criminal history and setting a new moral code for their actions (Smith, 2007, 674). Hope's vehemence is so strong that he decides to harm the murderers as well as himself. He does not care to lose his life for the sake of punishing the wrong doers. He is not ready to forget his painful past as he does not have a strong emotional skill. Emotional strengthening happens naturally to those who have emotional maturity with EI, but some people, because of some external and internal factors, lack the ability to achieve the emotional milestones (Salovey et al, 2002, 65). Jefferson Hope has a troubled emotional life and to people like Hope, the emotional growth does not take place spontaneously, and it needs necessary strengthening. He insists the choice of retribution and pursues his ambition for twenty years in spite of his failing health.

Jefferson Hope lacks faith in legal punishment and justifies his choice of retributive justice to the murderers. He says to Sherlock Holmes, "it's enough that they were guilty of the death of two human beings—a father and a daughter—and that they had, therefore, forfeited their own lives. After the lapse of time that has passed since their crime, it was impossible for me to secure a conviction against them in any court. I knew of their guilt though, and I determined that I should be judge, jury, and executioner all rolled into one. You'd have done the same, if you have any manhood in you, if you had been in my place" (Doyle, 1986, 106). Hope quenches his thirst for vengeance after twenty long years. He also records, "There is no satisfaction in vengeance unless the offender has time to realize who it is that strikes him, and why retribution has come upon him... You may consider me to be a murderer; but I hold that I am just as much an officer of justice as you are" (Doyle, 1986, 108-113). Hope considers

himself as the harbinger of justice.

The case of Hope shows that revenge is one of the important motives of crime. Hope fails to understand that preserving human life is more important than destroying it. Hope himself is a victim of crime and has lost his love life in the hands of Mormons. His loss and anger overshadow his reason and dull his intellect that he devotes his entire life in planning and executing his retributive justice instead of concentrating on starting a fresh and meaningful life. Jaffe states in his article “The Complicated Psychology of Revenge”:

In the past few years, psychological scientists have discovered many ways in which the practice of revenge fails to fulfill its sweet expectations. Behavioural scientists have observed that instead of quenching hostility, revenge can prolong the unpleasantness of the original offense and that merely bringing harm upon an offender is not enough to satisfy a person's vengeful spirit. They have also found that instead of delivering justice, revenge often creates only a cycle of retaliation, in part because one person's moral equilibrium rarely aligns with another's. The upshot of these insights is a better sense of why the pursuit of revenge has persisted through the ages, despite tasting a lot more sour than advertised (2011).

Jefferson Hope is the perfect embodiment of suppressed primitiveness in human beings. Hope nurtures the poison tree within his mind and allows it to be deep rooted. Though he has a cause to risk his very life to wreak vengeance upon his enemies yet the outcome is not satisfactory and encouraging. It should have happened that once Hope avenges his enemies, he would settle down peacefully to spend his remaining years. It does not happen as he dies of heart ailment which he developed as a result of his long suppressed stress and anger.

Believing in the retributive justice Jefferson Hope metes out punishment to the wrongdoers. Through him, Doyle brings out the effects of retributive justice. *A Study in Scarlet* focuses on the right of crime victim to inflict an appropriate punishment on the offender, though eventually realizing that vengeance is sweet but does not pay. The novel demonstrates Arthur Conan Doyle's interest in social order and morality, and underlines that social awareness is the key to social progress.

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Childhood of Lucy and Mother Nature in Lucy Poems: An Alternative View

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Abstract

William Wordsworth, the high priest of Nature goddess has delineated nature in myriad hues with man at the centre of its colossal play. Time and again, his poems have been the mouthpiece of his pantheistic philosophy establishing his faith in nature's benevolence and its moralizing and spiritualizing influence. His Lucy Poems, six in number, also sustain this belief that those who grow in the lap of nature are taken care of by Mother Nature herself and its pervading influence ensures the carving out of a perfect human shape as well as a sensitive heart and strong mind. However, in all Lucy Poems, Lucy, a young child, who is adopted by nature as "a Lady of my own", meets with an untimely death. The present paper intends to explore the concept of nature with reference to Wordsworth's philosophy. As the poems mainly concern Lucy's childhood and the role of nature in her growth, the paper also discusses the concepts of childhood and maternalism through various perspectives such as biological, sociological and psychological, bringing out the contradiction in Wordsworth's philosophy as it ultimately emerges on a deeper analysis of his Lucy Poems.

Keywords: Nature, Pantheism, benevolence, moralizing and spiritualizing influence, childhood, maternalism, contradiction.

One of the attributes of romantic poetry is that it celebrates the innocence and angelic quality of childhood. William Wordsworth, who is one of the greatest exponents of romantic poetry in England, also celebrates childhood. Born and bred in the rural environment of Cokermouth in Cumberland and having spent his boyhood among the dalesmen of his native country, Wordsworth was influenced by the surroundings; these influences were deeply profound and lasting in nature. After his graduation from Cambridge, Wordsworth travelled to Italy and then, went to France, the countries were then undergoing the throes of a great revolution.

On his return to England, he created a literary storm of sorts. He wrote some great philosophical poems and lyrics full of intense feelings and deep thoughtfulness. In his "Ode on Intimations of Immortality", he suggests that childhood is the state when one feels the presence of divinity:

Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy! (62-66)

Unexpectedly, Wordsworth faced adverse criticism for his theory of past life. Stephen Gill in his introduction to *William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry* (2004) observes:

In an unsigned review in the *Eclectic* (January 1808), John Montgomery objected to the poem on religious grounds: “The Poet assumes the doctrine of pre-existence, (a doctrine which religion knows not, and the philosophy of the mind abjures) and intimates that the happiness of childhood is the reminiscence of blessedness in a former state” (213).

From glorifying childhood in general, in the poems like “Ode on Intimations of Immortality” and “When I Behold a Cloud in the Sky”, Wordsworth shifts to the childhood of a particular girl named Lucy. She is depicted as an innocent and beautiful girl, a veritable paragon of virtues by virtue of her association with nature in his Lucy poems that happen to be six in number. They have a common subject, though the titles are different:

A Slumber did My Spirit Seal
She Dwells among the Untrodden Ways
I Travelled among Unknown Men
Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower
Strange Fits of Passion have I Known
Lucy Gray

Lucy Poems, wherein Wordsworth seems to celebrate the simplicity and transience of human life, seem to be deceptively simple. Mostly taken to be devoted to the role of Mother Nature in nurturing a child, they emerge as the mouthpiece of some of Wordsworth's deep reflections on the nature of childhood and the role of nature vis-à-vis childhood. However, before we come to Wordsworth's Lucy Poems, to comprehend Wordsworth's concept of childhood, and how nature impacts it, it would be worthwhile to have a look at the various concepts of childhood as enunciated by different thinkers and creative writers.

In ancient and mediaeval times, no idealized concept of childhood existed. It was only with the arrival of French Historian Philip Aries' historical work *Centuries of Childhood—A Social History of Family Life* (1960), and his claim to be “in mediaeval society the idea of childhood did not exist” (125), that childhood became a popular subject for literary artists. John Clarke in his essay “Histories of Childhood” writes:

From ... reflected in art; for example, by the beginning of the representation of ordinary children (i.e. not Jesus or angels) ... portrayal of dead children. This is described as 'a very important point in the history of feelings'.
(*Children and Childhood* 3)

Childhood as defined by Roger Scruton, philosopher and columnist, is “not an end in itself, but a means to growing up” (*Independent* 10 May 2002) (Qtd. in *Children and Childhood* 3). David Emile Durkheim, too, seems to have a belief in the same ideology when he says that the essential function of this age [childhood] may be summed up as: “The period of growth... the individual, in both the physical and moral sense, does not yet exist, the period in which he is made, develops and is formed” (*Children and Childhood* 25-26). This growth, however, is not always a natural process. Sociologist Chris Jenks offers a succinct definition of childhood, “All contemporary approaches...childhood is not a natural phenomenon...childhood is a social construct” (206).

In fact, the concept of childhood started taking shape during the 1660s in Europe wherein adults looked at children as separate beings—innocent and in need of protection as

well as cultivation by the adults around them. The English Philosopher John Locke was particularly influential in defining this attitude towards childhood which he propounded in his theory of *tabula rasa* that propagated the idea, “a white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas” (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 121). As a corollary of this doctrine, it was generally believed that this blank state of mind is to be filled by the parents with correct notions. During the early periods of capitalism and the rise of a rather large commercial middle class, it propounded a theory that a proper upbringing of children was important for society's health. Hence, modern psychologists tend to focus the discourses regarding child development on maternalism, which altogether dominates a child's physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual growth. Maternalism, as described by Koven & Michel refers to:

...ideologies that exalted women's capacity to mother and extended to society as a whole the values of care, nurturance, and morality. ...the private virtues of domesticity while simultaneously legitimating women's public relationships to politics and the state, to community, workplace, and marketplace. (1079)

In Wordsworth's ideology of childhood, maternalism occurs in the concept of nature that acts as a mother to educate a child. Broadly speaking, the human world, nature and man's response to divinity, are three universal themes of poetry in all times and tongues. William Blake deals with the third theme, and Wordsworth deals with the other two themes. Ralph Pite in his essay “Wordsworth and the Natural World” affirms, “In 1921, David Nichol Smith described Wordsworth as 'our greatest nature poet’” (*The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* 180).

Nature, as described by Kate Rigby, “is an infamously slippery term used to refer to a range of disparate phenomena on different temporal and spatial scales” (63). Reflecting on the concept of nature, Rigby further says:

In the eighteenth century, Nature was variously dissected, and mathematicised in search of the underlying “laws”; commodified as property to be exploited in the generation of wealth; aestheticized as “landscape”; moralized as a mode of being to which, as Rousseau influentially argued, we should “return”; revered, either as God's good creation, or, more controversially, as the physical aspect of the godhead; and politicized, both by conservatives, as warranting the preservation of traditional social hierarchies, and by the radicals, as legitimating revolution in pursuit of the “rights of man”. (*The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* 63)

In all these poems, Wordsworth says that nature is not only beautiful but also joyful. Nature is sensitive, perhaps more sensitive than humans to Wordsworth:

...there is a Spirit in the woods. (“Nutting” 54)

Thus, nature is assumed to be a maternal human entity and becomes a guiding spirit to all those who can submit to her. Shunning the ways of the world followed by realizing their exclusive interest in materialism is a “sordid boon” that keeps them away from the blessings of nature. When in pain, it becomes a source of solace from all afflictions:

... when the fretful stir

Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

.....

How often my spirit has turned to thee! (“Lines Written a few Miles above Tintern Abbey” 53-58)

At such times, nature becomes the sole companion to lead his thoughts. It is the best friend, philosopher and guide for men. It can teach the highest truth and deepest wisdom to men:

In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, the soul
Of all my moral being. (109-112)

He attributes altruistic motives of nature toward its true lovers when he claims:

...that nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; (123-24)

In “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower,” nature becomes both law and impulse so as to teach Lucy to be sportive, 'wild with glee' and engender “...the silence and the calm Of mute insensate things. (17-18)

By nature and the natural world, Wordsworth means the flora and fauna, hills and dales, stars and the sky and human habitation. Ralph Pite also says, “Wordsworth's natural world seems to be restricted to the country...now predominates”(180). He further says, “In Wordsworth's work the natural world is always social, both in itself and in relation to man”(181). Coleridge also affirms the view in his lecture on “Poesy on Art” that art mediates nature and man.

Nature as a theme came into special prominence when Rousseau, the famous French philosopher, gave the slogan 'back to nature'. Wordsworth too was influenced by Rousseau like many other poets of the period were. Wordsworth's age witnessed the Industrial Revolution in England. Wordsworth strongly reacted and revolted against materialism, the worship of Mammon. He deplored that 'the world is too much with us' and he preferred to be a pagan, a worshipper of nature to a money-minded Christian. What was needed was an even and balanced view of nature. In our scientific age, a practical view of nature is generally held intact. This is inclusive of the notion that nature is kind and cruel, too. When raging floods, tsunamis and tornadoes, earthquakes and landslides wreak havoc on man, one wonders how Wordsworth could upkeep his blind faith in nature. The modern man's view of nature is aptly expressed by Aldous Huxley in the following words:

“Our intuitions of nature tell us that the world is bottomlessly strange; alien, even when it is kind and beautiful...always mysteriously not personal, not conscious, not moral; often hostile and sinister; sometimes even unimaginably, because inhumanly evil.” (*Critics on Wordsworth* 30)

However, Wordsworth is an incorrigible believer in the noble influence of nature on man and this is the common theme of all his Lucy poems. It is ideal to enquire who Lucy is, and how the poet is related to her, a real person or just a creation of the poet's imagination.

Wordsworth has given us no hint about the identity of Lucy. Critics and scholars have made some conjectures about the heroine of Wordsworth's Lucy poems. One view is that she is Mary Earthwaite Water whom Wordsworth loved and who died very young. Another view is that Mary Hutchinson, whom Wordsworth married, is a prototype of Lucy. Further, another view is that Margaret, the sister of Wordsworth's wife Mary Hutchinson is the original Lucy. The fourth view is that Dorothy, the poet's sister serves as a model for Lucy and the poet has to

kill her at the end, though only in the poems, to ward off his incestuous feelings of love towards her. The fifth view which is expressed by Moody and Lovett is that the French girl, Annette Vallon is Wordsworth's Lucy:

Late in latter year (1791) he (Wordsworth) went to France where he watched with enthusiastic hope the middle stages of the French Revolution, and shared ...return to England. (*A History of English Literature* 261)

Perhaps, it would be more appropriate to say that Caroline, the child of Wordsworth and Annette Vallon is represented by Lucy for Wordsworth in his Lucy poems presents Lucy as a child growing up to a mature girl. Stephen Gill, in his introduction to *William Wordsworth: Selected Poems*, also confirms, "...in France he had fathered a daughter with a woman he had not married" (xiii). Wordsworth continued to remember her with a sense of guilt that he had abandoned her. It may be presumed that the image of the girl haunted the poet's mind, leaving him no rest. The poems serve a cathartic function for his feelings of remorse. His guilty conscience pricked him. However, discarding all these conjectures, Geoffery Durrent asks:

Who was Lucy? There is no answer to this question except to say that it is irrelevant. Lucy may or may not ... dramatically. (*A Companion* 210)

Molly Leferbure's opinion, however, seems to be the most comprehensive of all considering the efforts made at searching for Lucy's prototypes:

The Lucy poems shed ample light on the childhood of Lucy, and nature's salutary influence on her. Three incontrovertible facts emerge from the Lucy poems: that Lucy is a beautiful good girl brought up in nature; that she dies an early death and that the poet is filled with sorrow at her death. She grows up into a beautiful and virtuous girl. She was "like a rose in June". ("Strange Fits of Passion have I Known" 6)

Lucy's beauty is a recurring theme in all these poems. In the poem "She dwelt among Untrodden Ways", her beauty is described:

A Violet by a mossy stone
.....
—Fair, as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky! (5-8)

In the poem, "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower", all objects of nature such as the floating clouds, the willow plants, the stars of the midnight and the rivulet lend their beauty to Lucy. Even the storm plays a role in moulding Lucy's body.

Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould her form(22-23)

Lucy's death followed by the poet's grief at it is expressed in the poem thus:

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!" (37-38)

The poem "Strange Fits of Passion I have Known" expresses Lucy's death as well as the poet's shock at it:

O mercy! To myself I cried,
'If Lucy should be dead!' (27-28)

The poem "She Dwelt among Untrodden Ways" describes Lucy's death and the poet's sorrow at it in the following words:

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me. (9-12)

The poem “Lucy Gray” reveals the circumstances of Lucy's death. She walks through a heath at night, loses her way, is caught in a snowstorm and dies. The grief-stricken parents let out a mournful cry:

'In heaven we shall all meet!' (42)

Wordsworth unwittingly expresses a hard fact about nature that it is an enemy of man and it kills Lucy. Her life is snuffed out in the very prime of it. The lyrical inference and moral from the poem is that it is fatal to live in nature. Notwithstanding, the votaries of Wordsworth would not agree with this interpretation.

Reading between the lines, the poems reveal harsh aspects of nature at their ends. During the ongoing nature's plan of educating Lucy, she abruptly dies. Her death is inexplicable, unexpected and unwarranted. It comes as a sudden shock and a rude jolt violating the law of cause and effect. How can nature's much acclaimed kindness let Lucy die? In the poem “Lucy Gray”, it is clearly elaborated that Lucy gets stuck in a storm and drowns in a river. Her footprints are traced near a bridge over the river and no further steps get traced. If that is the case, it goes without saying that nature has killed Lucy. It counters Wordsworth's philosophy that nature is kind and benevolent. Conversely, it is “red in tooth and claw” as Tennyson observed. Here, Sunil Kumar Sarkar supports the idea of the death of Lucy with the concept that birth and death are a part of nature's plan. He quotes Alan Gardiner in support of his view, who opines that when nature adopts Lucy as her daughter, Lucy would forfeit her human-ness, and thereby, it is a hint to the end of her human limitations such as mortality. Gardiner writes:

The impression is given that a close relationship with nature is a kind of death... free of the limitations of human mortality. Death itself is the ultimate consummation of this relationship. (qtd. in *A Companion to William Wordsworth* 223)

However, this opinion is contrary to the *Sankhya Yog* elucidated in the *Bhagwad Geeta* that considers the human form to be “matter” supported by the “spirit” or the divine energy. Creation occurs when matter and spirit come together. The energy flows through the material human form to help it experience the sensory creation. In verse 20 of the *Bhagwad Geeta*, it is said that the “Cosmic Nature or Prakriti is the direct creative cause of the human body and its Nature directed activities” (Yogananda 890). Therefore, how can nature consume Lucy before she has fully attained her womanhood and become “A Lady of my own”, as promised by Mother Nature herself in “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower” (6)?

Despite William Wordsworth's unflinching belief that nature has an ennobling effect on those who live in it, he seems to have asserted a different philosophy. As Ralph Pite also affirms:

...nature does not offer an escape from other people so much as express an alternative mode of relating to them. As he says in *The Excursion*, it is not 'a refuge from distress or pain, /A breathing-time, vacation or a truce' but potentially at least, nature will

provide 'a life of peace, Stability without regret or fear'(181).

Nature sympathizes and soothes, inspires and instructs equally well. However, in all the Lucy poems, Lucy lives in nature and dies prematurely in nature at the hands of nature. Lucy poems are not about the cycle of birth and death of living beings, as some critics believe. The hard truth that can be deduced from the poems is that people living in the lap of nature are not only susceptible to availing its benefiting characteristics but are also equally vulnerable to facing the dangers of nature. Here, the role of nature is ambivalent. Admittedly, Wordsworth has not explicitly stated it, nor would he subscribe to this view if it were, by any means, brought home to him. Needless to say, creative writers generally tend to utter greater truths with sheer objectivity.

Propounding his own theory of poetic composition, Wordsworth emphasizes objective accuracy:

The ability to observe with accuracy things as they as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion of feeling existing in the mind of the describer... though indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time: as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects. (Qtd. in *The Mirror and the Lamp* 53)

Wordsworth again insists upon this theory in 1816 when he says, “Throughout, objects... derive their influence not from what they are actually in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects” (*The Mirror and the Lamp* 54). Regarding his depiction of nature and the natural world with respect to the life and death of Lucy as a child, we may agree with Francis Jeffrey, when he says, “Wordsworth appears scientifically heartless ('analysis' instead of 'sympathy'), snobbishly condescending ('refined' instead of 'obvious') and impressive but deceitful ('eloquent', by contrast with 'intelligible'). His self-involvement hampers his perception of the world around and, for Jeffrey, it makes him cruel” (183).

It is certain that Wordsworth's view of nature is one-sided. He only pens down the peaceful aspects of nature and ends up ignoring the violent nature of nature. In his Lucy poems, he sets out to show the benefitting effect of nature on man but his poems ironically reveal the baneful effects of nature on man. Also, we may conclude with Timothy Morton who, in his essay “Deconstruction and/as Ecology” says, “The trouble with nature is that it doesn't exist—yet its fantasies grip our minds with hope and fear, imprisoning them in the status quo.” (*The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* 302).

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Victimhood Discourse in Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness*

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Abstract

Victimhood as a construct has been deconstructed at various levels and in different contexts. As an inevitable part of any conflict, victimisation springs from the associations and correlations between multiple variables like relationships and social and cultural milieu. Historical archives and records hint at the common sources and consequences of Victimisation or Victimhood. Deirdre Madden's novella One by One in the Darkness (1997) presents an account of the ordinary lives affected by ethnic and political conflict. Madden draws the varied shades of victimhood to highlight the overall devastating influence of ethnic strife. The paper aims to understand the construct- 'Victimhood' to analyse the established notions and definitions. Furthermore, the relevant theories in the field of Victimology would be taken into account to understand the actions and behaviours of victims under consideration. In addition, the study aims to suggest the differences and similarities in the degree and nature of victimisation and arrive at the underlying patterns.

Keywords: *Victimisation, Victimhood, Conflict, Victim*

Introduction

The concept of victimhood has been interpreted in different ways and modes. A victim is subjected to violence of any form, physical or psychological. There are numerous ways a person can be plunged into the pits and pitches of victimhood- manipulation, exploitation, abuse (physical, sexual or verbal), assault, etc. At times the victimisation is manoeuvred directly either by humans or the situation and circumstances prevailing at a specific time and place. Embracing reality becomes an arduous task once a subject is engulfed and enveloped by victimhood. More than a bodily wound or a scar that a person experiences or endures, the psychological entrapment arrests the physical and mental growth and progress. When an unprecedented disturbance or event shakes the core of one's existence, the tragedy is internalised and manifested in due course as the victim relates the things to events or the phenomenon beyond one's control.

There can be different dimensions of victimhood. At times the victim seeks support and care from the immediate family or friends when the going gets tough. Often, the sufferers, when robbed of peace and contentment and belief in humanity, exhibit insouciance and indifference towards others. Moreover, overcoming a tragic incident and forgiving a person guilty of an offence is usually tough and challenging. The psychological impediments in accepting the bitter reality are also demonstrated by the helplessness and the vulnerability echoing from the victim's actions and behaviour. The aggressive and irascible behaviour of an individual also highlights the low acceptance potential. The erratic mood swings coupled with the depression factor classify as victimhood indicators. It can have a debilitating

influence on an individual, leading to suicidal thoughts and tendencies. The anxiety resulting from victimisation is likewise mirrored in the individuals undergoing tough and tumultuous periods. In addition to panic and anxiety attacks, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) become a defining variable of a victim's mental status and well-being.

People adopt different moderating factors and coping mechanisms while tackling traumatic and rough phases. One way of coming out of the ditch is to seek escapist ways and means. This remedial measure is quick but a temporary one. Trying to divert the mind and placing oneself in a zone or a task that requires utmost dedication and sincerity works for some. At times, the misery and angst are channelled onto the person who plays a key role in orchestrating and precipitating a tragedy or catastrophe. The human instinct of seeking help and resorting to the 'dependency complex' also defines the defence mechanism. The love and support of the family and friends also act as a shield to stand one's ground in the face of adversity and misfortune.

Deconstructing Victimhood is a challenging task given its paradoxical nature. Identifying and labelling real victims in the context of political and social anarchy poses many challenges. On the one hand, classifying victims and their representation in literary and cultural discourses seem to be acts of humanisation while on the other, the inclusion of one group or a community connotes the exclusion of the other from the political discourse (Rosland 296). According to John Mack, this process of exclusion is called "egoism of victimization" "the incapacity of an ethno-national group, as a direct result of its own historical traumas, to empathize with the suffering of another group" (Mack 125). In the case of the Irish Troubles, the issue of victimhood has remained an essential part of social and political discourse. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 sparked the debate on suffering and victimhood in the Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant communities. Different narratives of victimhood came to the fore signalling the impact of the sectarian intrigue on the Irish community (Graham and Whelan 2007, Donnan 2005, Donnan and Simpson 2007)

Discussion

One by One in the Darkness (1996) by Deirdre Madden presents a narrative of a week in the lives of three sisters (Quinn family) before the IRA ceasefire of 1994 laced with childhood stories of the siblings. The novel is set against the backdrop of the infamous Irish Troubles when Northern Ireland was caught in social and political mayhem. Madden brings to light the various facets of the sectarian conflict by dwelling on themes of violence, victimhood, and trauma to draw attention to the ethnic nationalist conflict. The narrative is catholic-centric, with a major focus on the Catholic community caught in the sectarian and nationalistic intrigues. The community divided on different religious and ideological lines responds to the chaos brewing around in multiple ways. The active and passive adherence to the social and political movements and goals lands different characters in traumatising states as the families and acquaintances are engulfed by the tumultuous times. The people who lose their lives one way or another do not only qualify to be categorised or labelled as victims, but those who survive also undergo tough and nerve-wracking experiences. In this context, it becomes important to understand the notion of victimhood in the light of the characters

sketched in diverse shades and lights.

The Quinn family comprises three sisters: Helen, Cate, Sally, and their parents, Charlie and Emily. A happy-go-lucky family lands in gloom and despondency when Charlie gets killed for being at the wrong place and at the wrong time. His brother, Brian, is the killers' actual target, and his absence from the scene leads Charlie to the grave. This unprecedented incident changes the lives of his family members forever. It deprives them of peace and contentment. As a victim of the heinous act orchestrated by a few, Charlie's death drenches others in the aura of victimhood as the people around try to come to terms with reality. His killing also strains the relations between Charlie's and Brian's families. Childhood narratives pinpoint the cordial and convivial ties between two families, which eventually turn sour given the unforeseen incident. His wife and daughters suffer in different ways. Even though they make a mark in their professional capacities, their personal and social standing takes a big hit.

Helen, the eldest daughter, works for a law firm in Belfast. As a career-oriented woman, she gives her best to professional chores, but she is victimised by the angst of her father's absence and his tragic killing. This trauma alienates her from the myriad colours of love and joy that an ordinary person yearns to have. Her attempt to escape the humdrum and dull existence reveals the desolation and despondency etched in her soul. Belfast keeps her away from the haunting memories of her county Derry, yet the scar often itches and keeps her on tenterhooks. Helen emerges as a victim of the political and social chaos that robs one of life's essential and basic pleasures. Living in Belfast does not isolate her completely from her hometown as the bitter nostalgia keeps her on her toes, and she loses herself to the wavy shores of variegated memories. Her fond childhood memories of her father and the vexing present plague her days and nights:

In the months immediately after her father's death, Helen had socialised frantically because she was afraid of being alone with her grief. (Madden 40)

Cate, the middle sister, shifts to a different country, away from the din and noise of the troubling memories and nostalgia. Her struggle at mingling into the usual and ordinary London society points out the deep cracks and fissures within herself. Like her sister, she is also a victim of the situation, dropped into a slough of despond by the inevitable forces at work. She tries to busy herself by inviting people over for meals and decorating her apartment in light colours. Her efforts to involve herself in the mundane hint at her loss. The tragedy ushers in her an identity crisis as she changes the spelling of her name to sound less Irish.

The youngest of the three, Sally, struggles to seek out meaning in the bleak world around her. She often twitters in her space forged by the ravages of time and space. There are mixed feelings – alienation, escapism, loyalty towards her country. On the one hand, she wants to escape to an alien world; on the other, the patriotic feelings overwhelm her. Shouldering the responsibility of staying with her mother, her victimhood is often brought into sharp focus when the monotonous lifestyle laced with the political and social fiasco is thrust upon her by the present and the past:

It was all right, until Daddy died.' She took a deep breath. 'Now, I want out again. If it wasn't for Mammy, I'd leave tomorrow. I can't stand being in Northern Ireland. (Madden 139)

As a mother and a widow, Emily struggles to keep the loose ends of her grief together to stand

firmly as a binding force of her family. Often, she falls prey to the despair and helplessness it entails, yet she also tries to accept the reality that has shaken the core of their existence. Her world turns upside down after her husband's death, and her attempts to keep him alive manifest the inevitable grief that has become a part of her existence. As a victim, she dabbles in household chores that were once dear to her husband. In a way, her actions signal the escapist attitude toward the personal loss.

As a father and a husband, Charlie was the centre of the Quinn family. His death unearths the weaknesses and the vulnerability that the women of the household had learned to veil in the face of the adversities and the calamities. Once the centre loses its grip and breaks into shards, the ties of strength and support weaken, and the members suffer in different ways and grapple with the loss. Charlie's death ushers in the disquietude and anguish of the victimhood that hovers above the Quinn household.

In the novella, other characters also face more or less a similar fate while consumed by the volatile circumstances around. Brian acts as a foil to his brother's death. His involvement with the armed resistance groups brings the archdeacon's curse upon Charlie and his family. On the one hand, he plays a role in precipitating Charlie's doom unintentionally, yet the tragic event also victimises him as it strains his relations with the Quinns. He is held responsible for the deed that was not masterminded from his end. The narrative focuses on the contrast between the past and the present and how these sisters would find peace and comfort as children at the uncle's place. The fond memories have been replaced by the distressing and the bitter present.

Benjamin Mendelsohn, a French lawyer, known as the father of victimology, coined 'Victimology' in the mid-1940s. Derived from the Latin word 'victima,' meaning victim, and 'logos' means a system of knowledge. In his seminal work "Victimology and Contemporary Society's Trends" (1976), he classifies different types of victims, out of which two types are significant in the given context. According to Mendelsohn, a completely innocent victim is the one who is not responsible for his victimisation. Out of the six categories of victims delineated by Mendelsohn, only one class highlights the case of an innocent victim, and it constitutes mostly children and the people who are oblivious of things happening around. In a way, Mendelsohn seems to imply that victims are responsible for being a part of a tragic event in most cases. Victim Precipitation is an important variable in the field of victimology. In such a case victim is solely responsible for bringing upon himself the deadly ramifications of victimhood. In the works of Von Hentig and Mendelsohn, this variable has been discussed and analysed.

Victimisation, in every case, is a negative experience that a victim undergoes. It is an act of harm engineered against a person or a group while victimhood is the mode of collective identity centred on that damage. The 1985 United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power sets the international agenda for defining victims as: "persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that do not yet constitute violations of national criminal laws but of international recognised norms relating to human rights."

At times, the perpetrators committing heinous crimes also see themselves as victims

of power or authority or the hierarchical denominations. In the case of the Irish Troubles, people who resorted to armed violence justified their cause by hinting at the biased and prejudiced attitudes and approaches. In a conflict zone, the attempt to define and determine the victims and perpetrators becomes a herculean task. In case of human rights violations, the different elements in the state resort to repressive factors, thus fanning the violence and victimisation cycle. As the wrath of violence and bloodshed is unleashed from discrete sections of a society, a vicious cycle is generated, zooming and zipping around.

Victimhood as an identity has various dimensions to it. When politics and power variables play a key role in precipitating social and political anarchy, leading to wars and conflicts, the division of people on ideological lines determines the scale of violence and victimisation. The groupism eventually results in embracing the collective victimhood unifying one against the other. One of the causes of victimhood lies in structural conduciveness- political contexts like institutions of governance, economic resources, civil and social rights, and legal framework (Jacoby 518).

Although victimology belongs to the field of criminology, there are different underlying perspectives to it – conservative perspective, liberal perspective, and radical – critical perspectives. The Conservative perspective entails that an individual's actions and mannerisms define and determine his state of being. His actions can trigger his fall. Furthermore, it implies that individuals should strive to care for themselves and protect their families in the face of the mayhem. The liberal perspective focuses on the safety nets and welfare policies available to the victims as a major factor in rehabilitating them to their original positions. Radical – critical perspective postulates that the field of the study should focus on other varied sources of suffering inflicted by different agents of power and social systems. The challenging question in this category is about identifying the victims from the rest. The focus has shifted from traditional approaches to radical means and methods- exploring state-run constituents and components in recent years.

Like Quinns, the Larkin family also suffers to greater degrees when the eldest son of the family, Tony Larkin gets killed for planting a bomb. Tony is the victim of being a Republican supporter and sympathiser. Unlike Charlie, his direct involvement with the Troubles leads him to death. His family also undergoes traumatic experiences as they try to come to terms with the reality- the numbness and the shock of losing a member make them the victims of grief and eternal loss. On the one hand, the bereaving people are separated and alienated by their losses, yet at the same time, they are yoked together by the consequential bearings of violence and conflict. Tony's case becomes an ideal case of victim precipitation as his actions lead to his downfall. Tony and Charlie fall into the category of primary victimisation as their actions and circumstances are in tune with their dreadful ends:

Mrs Larkin looked as if she were locked into some terrible dream, from which she didn't have the energy to struggle to awaken. (Madden 104)

Moreover, characters like David have also been portrayed who are exposed to the ugly and violent atmosphere at a tender age. It highlights the struggles of such families where the burden of bringing up children falls on a single parent. What's poignant is the grief and trauma that becomes an indelible part of the young minds and lives for years to come and how it changes their personalities. David's father, like Charlie, is killed for no particular reason.

David's traumatic memories pinpoint the impact of violence and conflict on children who are helpless and vulnerable to the chaos stewing around.

Characters like David, Helen, Emily, Sally, and Cate fall in the category of secondary victimisation, whereby they suffer because of their associations with the victims and also due to their reactions and responses towards the unforeseen events. In the case of victims, what matters most is how these sufferers reconstruct themselves and the meaning out of their existence.

Von Hentig, in his seminal work *The Criminal and His Victim: Studies in the Sociobiology of crime* (1948), highlights the biological, psychological, and social factors to analyse victimisation. According to him, women, the young, and the elderly are more prone to victimisation because of their physical susceptibilities. Hentig considers 'minorities' as one of the thirteen categories in his framework. Minorities fall prey to violence and crime due to their social standing in society. The Catholics vs. Protestants and Loyalists vs. Republicans discourse in the case of Northern Ireland can be understood in the light of the above argument. The struggle for power and nationalistic ambitions drove two communities against one another resulting in the infamous Irish Troubles.

In his seminal work *The Victim and His Criminal: A Study in Functional Responsibility* (1968), Stephen Schafer combines Von Hentig and Mendelsohn's typology of victimology- combining personal and behavioural aspects. Out of the seven categories labelled by Schafer, his idea of 'precipitative victims' and 'political victims' is significant in the given context, as seen in the case of characters struggling to come to terms with reality. The precipitative victims like Tony and the political victims like Charlie and David's father form a part of a population in a given society or a community who directly or indirectly become a part of the vicious cycle.

In the light of the above discussion, all these characters discussed display a common trait- the travails and melancholy yoke them together under one roof. Whether the victim is directly involved or not with the social and political problem, people suffer one way or another. The guilty and the innocents all bear the brunt of the imbalances precipitated by the elements in society. In a way, it can be asserted that the degree of violence and victimisation varies in the given context. Although all the characters suffer one way or another, the measure of wretchedness and misfortune varies from person to person, even in the same family as that of Quinns. Charlie Quinn's death deeply impacts his family as his innocence makes them question each and everything. The unfair media trials and the cold attitude of people around contribute to the desolate and degenerate existence. Similarly, David's father's death also highlights the vulnerability of human existence in a conflict zone. On the other hand, Tony Larkin's death and being guilty of actively participating in the armed resistance doesn't raise brows or make people question the system or administration to such an extent. In a scenario rocked by political and social instabilities, the warring factions challenge and justify the actions, in turn adding fuel to the fire by resorting to violence.

Conclusion

One by One in the Darkness is a representation of the Troubles fiction, delineating the

variables involved in the Irish Troubles. In the light of the above argument, it can be asserted that the victimisation of the victims begins with a single act- the loss of a family member to the political instability around them. The common governing variable of victimisation induces varied responses and reactions from characters, but the trajectories charted out bring to fore the varying impulses and personalities. As victims of Ethnic Nationalist Conflict, Quinn's family serves as a microcosm of the larger Irish community. The forces of victimisation at play in such a volatile environment lead to the adoption of collective identity- Victimhood. Quinns, Larkins, and other characters experience similar ordeals suggestive of the fact as how political turmoil and unpredictability ensnare almost everybody one way or the other. The cases of primary victimisation like Charlie's, Tony's, and David's father and those of secondary victimisation like that of Quinn sisters, Emily, Larkin's, and David's families entail that the victimisation may vary in degree; however, the repercussions and the underlying implications bring them under one single roof. The question of direct and indirect involvement with the volatile and vulnerable situations brewing around also defines the intrinsic nature of victimisation. Furthermore, it can be stated that Madden's text becomes an ideal case for the psychological inspection of Victimhood and relative Victimisation.

Moreover, the task of labelling Victims and pronouncing Victimhood needs to be reinterpreted and re-evaluated. Deconstructing the novella leads to the conclusion that people who lose their lives to conflict of any kind or degree aren't only the victims, but those left behind to take stock of the situation suffer more and are often made to go through traumatic experiences. The scars once inflicted on a human being sprout to deeper levels of one's psyche. People, young or old, men or women, suffer from severe disorders if they don't seek closure or accept the reality thrust upon them, as evident in the case of the characters like Helen, Cate, Emily, and Sally. Understanding and evaluating an armed conflict and its ramifications on a society or a community lead one to arrive at the collateral damage consuming one and all. In the novella, the defence mechanisms adopted by the victims to channelise the angst and misery internalised with time, draw a stark picture of the devastation. It can be inferred that victims do not always resort to violence to avenge the wrongs done to them from time to time. The sufferings and the anguishes might suffocate one's existence to give up on everything, but violence does not always beget violence.

At the global level, it becomes pertinent to deconstruct the idea of victimhood in criminology and civil war engagements. As a field of study, victimisation throws light on different types of victims and helps understand how the affected can be emboldened, supported, and rehabilitated. The developed and the developing countries might experience different problems, but the general population and the weaker sections of the society often bear the brunt of the fiasco looming around. The measures adopted at the social and political levels while tackling a problem, play a key role in determining an individual's or society's social and mental well-being.

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Societal Paranoia and Surveillance: A Critical Reading of Anna Burns's *Milkman*

Priyanka Dey*

Abstract

With the rise of state-controlled surveillance apparatuses, there has been a concomitant rise in the number of narratives that pivot around the issue of surveillance, many of which express a common fear about the increasing foothold of surveillance technologies and the threat that surveillance culture poses to individual autonomy and privacy. An important work in this tradition is Anna Burns's novel Milkman which uses the backdrop of The Irish Troubles to show how the means of surveillance can be weaponized to control people. This paper attempts to examine the contributory role surveillance plays in the construction of paranoid ideation. Using the Foucauldian Model of panopticism and Pramod K. Nayar's account of multiveillance, the paper tries to demonstrate how prolonged surveillance can engender paranoia in a community. It also seeks to elucidate how the existing psychoanalytic theories of paranoia cannot entirely account for the specific kind of paranoia that is induced by surveillance.

Keywords: *Paranoia, Surveillance, Multiveillance.*

There is a long and distinct tradition of fictional works that have explored the effects of surveillance on both individuals and communities. Most of these works have focused on the specific nature of the anxiety engendered by surveillance – an anxiety that is often barely distinguishable from the clinical category of paranoia. Paranoia, of course, is clinically defined as the unreasonable and excessive fear of being harmed. It is believed to be characterized by undue suspicion and unwarranted hyper-vigilance. In severe cases, paranoia can also manifest in the form of 'persecutory delusions' – the inflexible belief that one is going to be harmed, harassed, and so forth by an individual, organization, or other group (American Psychiatric Association 87). A great many surveillance narratives in recent times have used the expression of paranoia to reflect the characters' fear of being watched, photographed, and controlled by powerful others.

Historically, of course, paranoia has been largely seen as a form of mental illness. Freud, Lacan, and Jung are among the many theorists who viewed paranoia as a symptom of psychosis. Freud believed that paranoia is caused by the psyche's convoluted attempt at fending off unacceptable homosexual urges through the interwoven processes of disavowal and projection, which sees the libidinal impulse return disguised as a threat. Jung, similarly, saw paranoia as the projection of one's own hostile feelings onto others, whereby one's own persecutory feelings ricochet back as an external threat (Stevens 63). Lacan, meanwhile, viewed paranoia as a form of psychosis caused by a loss of faith in the capacity of the symbolic order or 'the Other' to represent things correctly (Evans 35). This view of paranoia, as a form of psychosis caused by internal and unconscious anxieties, was further cemented by research in the field of psychiatry. In the work of Emil Kraepelin and Eugen Bleuler, widely regarded as the founding fathers of psychiatry, paranoia came to be firmly anchored within the cluster

of symptoms associated with psychosis (Freeman 23).

Contemporary theorists, however, question this view of paranoia as a form of psychosis, noting the avalanche of research that demonstrate not only how pervasive paranoia is in our modern society but also how, in many cases, it is engendered by socio-cultural factors. For instance, prominent psychologist Daniel Freeman, widely considered a leading authority on paranoia, argues that paranoia is induced by experiences of trauma and victimization (59-60). Similarly, John Mirowsky and Catherine E. Ross ascribe paranoia to social circumstances characterized by exploitation and discrimination (228). Recent findings in the field of psychology, thus, seem to suggest that paranoia is not the projection of unconscious, internal anxieties but a reaction to varying forms of social oppression. Most fictional works dealing with paranoia, especially those written since the beginning of the twentieth century, tend to echo this view, and accordingly, seek to dramatize the role social institutions play in causing paranoia.

With the rise of surveillance culture, a great many novels have tried to capture the growing anxiety regarding surveillance, by delineating how prolonged surveillance can engender in some paranoid ideation. George Orwell's *1984* and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, in fact, rang alarm bells about the threat surveillance states pose long before surveillance became an all-pervasive reality. More recently, the novels of Margaret Atwood, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo *et al.* have drawn attention to the fear and anxiety of individuals entangled in the meshes of surveillance culture. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, and DeLillo's *Running Dog* centre around characters whose anxiety reaches paranoid proportions while living under constant surveillance. An important work in this tradition is Anna Burns's Booker prize-winning novel *Milkman*. While published in the year 2018, the action of the novel takes place entirely during the seventies, in a war-torn country, mired in armed conflict with a neighbouring country that occupies it; and though Burns does not disclose the names of any of the locations, the trail of geographical references and political allusions that she leaves through the narrative makes it abundantly clear that the setting is Belfast during the tumultuous days of the Irish troubles.

The novel primarily dwells on the traumatic experiences of the eighteen-year-old narrator, who descends into paranoia after being stalked by a forty-one-year-old, high-ranking member of the group of paramilitary figures that run the district in which she lives. But, the narrator is not the only paranoid in Burns's fictional world; her entire community is in the grip of an ineffable paranoia. Through the narrator's eyes, we get a glimpse of a community that has split into two halves: one that is loyal to the foreign rule and the other that wishes to overthrow it—a divide that influences every aspect of their lives. From the names that they pick for their children to the tea that they take for breakfast — every choice that they make is scrutinized through the lens of allegiance, every decision that they take is probed for treasonous implications. As a result, every single member of the community lives in a state of constant dread. Much of this dread stems from the fact that the community has to contend with the disquieting gaze of both the state forces devoted to the foreign rule, and the paramilitary renouncers that are opposed to it. Caught in the crossfire between these two formidable forces, every single person is forced to remain vigilant at all times, especially with both the state forces and the paramilitary forces watching their every move, dissecting their every

choice, and eliminating anyone that they perceive as a threat.

Burns depicts how surveillance creates an atmosphere of fear that makes one see a threat everywhere. The narrator explains how the sick or the injured do not go to hospitals out of fear that the authorities might force them to become an informer, or worse yet, spread the rumour of their being an informer; for as the narrator points out, “Either way, sooner or later, courtesy of the renouncers, your corpse would be the latest to be found up an entry with a tenner in its hand and the bullets in its head” (163). This fear also extends to “the electricity board, the gas board, the water board, the school board, telephone people and anybody wearing a uniform or garments easily to be mistaken for a uniform” (88). This distrust of the state machinery eventually gives way to distrust of everybody, as the community finds itself under the constant fear of being either snapped by the state as a potential informer or nabbed by the renouncers as a possible informer. What follows is an insuperable paranoia that expresses itself in the form of intense suspicion and feverish vigilance. As the narrator points out:

These were knife-edge times, primal times, with everybody suspicious of everybody. You could have a nice wee conversation with someone here, then go away and think, that was a nice, wee unguarded conversation I just had there – least until you start playing it back in your head later on. At that point you start to worry that you said 'this' or 'that', not because 'this' or 'that' were contentious. It was that people were quick to point fingers, to judge, to add on even in peaceful times, so it would be hard to fathom fingers not getting pointed and words not being added, also being judged in these turbulent times, resulting too, not in having your feelings hurt upon discovering others were talking about you, as in having individuals in balaclavas and Halloween masks, guns at the ready, turning up in the middle of the night at your door. (27)

Marisol Morales-Ladron, in her review of *Milkman*, titled “Milkman by Anna Burns: Silence as an Architectural form of Containment,” published in *The Irish Times* in 2019, points out how the nature of the community's surveillance and the hyper-vigilance it engenders in those who are compelled to live under it bear a striking resemblance to Foucault's panoptic account of surveillance. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault had delineated the paradigmatic shift in the way power came to be wielded in the modern society. Far from the gaudy displays of violence that characterized the previous system, the new disciplinary system enforced power by shifting the attention from those who wielded power to those on whom power was exercised. Foucault had relied on the unique architectural design of the panopticon, a penitentiary model conceived by philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century, to explain the new strategies that were being employed to ensure discipline. Bentham had designed a building that had two structures: a central observation tower, and a separate building housing numerous cells, which encircled it. The building was designed in a manner that the inmates placed in the cells were always within the visual range of those who monitored them from the watchtower. Foucault found this architecture to be a perfect metaphor for explaining how power and discipline can be enforced through a surveillance apparatus. Foucault opined that such an apparatus has a threefold effect. First, it induces “in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (201). Second, it disindividualizes power; that, any number of

anonymous individuals could be watching him induces in the surveilled even greater anxiety of being observed (202). Lastly, it compels the surveilled to internalize the expectations and codes of the very system that he is entangled in, leading to the creation of individuals who are both useful and docile (231).

These effects are all too evident in the narrator's community. The real persecutor in *Milkman* is barely visible. It only manifests in the click of surveillance cameras. And yet, the community lives in the constant fear of “their monitoring, their infiltrating, their intercepting, listening at posts, drawing-up of room lay-outs, of position of furniture, of ornament placement, of wallpaper, of watch lists and geo-profiling” (153). Similarly, much like the inmates in Bentham's panopticon, the community has no way of tracing its surveillance to one unified entity. Owing to the ever-expanding range of surveillance tools, the community is left feeling anxious about everything and everyone. Both the telephone and the telephone wiremen, for instance, become the cause of panic. The community's distrust of telephones, in fact, becomes a telling example of their fear of technological persecution – a fear further confirmed by Longest Friend who warns “They even photograph shadows. People here can be deciphered and likenesses discerned from silhouettes and shadows” (153).

Probably, the most significant aspect of the community's surveillance, as Morales-Ladron also points out in her review, is the extent to which it has shaped the people into docile bodies, much like Foucault had theorized. The people in the community, fearful of the consequences of their behaviour and actions, gradually come to internalize the many social, political and religious codes that the paramilitary renouncers insist upon. The result of such internalization is the creation of a disturbingly pliant populace that tenaciously polices its own lives and recoils in horror at the prospect of doing or saying anything that could be perceived as unconventional. This is also why the community cannot reconcile itself with the narrator's habit of reading while walking. They find it disturbing, even perverse. As Longest Friend tells the narrator,

“It's deviant. It's optical illusional. Not public-spirited. Not self-preservation. Calls attention to itself and why – with enemies at the door, with the community under siege, with us all having to pull together – would anyone want to call attention to themselves here?” (149)

When the narrator draws her attention to the fact that explosives were regularly carried by people in their community, Longest Friend explains,

Semtex isn't unusual. It's not *not* to be expected. It's not incapable of being mentally grasped, of being understood, even if most people here don't carry it, have never seen it, don't know what it looks like and don't want anything to do with it. It fits in – more than your dangerous reading-while-walking fits in. (149)

This fear of anything that doesn't 'fit in', anything that is out of the ordinary, anything that goes against the norms recurs throughout the novel. Anyone who doesn't conform, anyone who bears so much as a trace of individuality, is perceived with suspicion. Burns here seeks to demonstrate how prolonged surveillance robs people of their most individuating traits, leaving them to resemble “buried-alive, hundred-per-cent, dulled-to-death, confined people” (200).

Eventually, choked with fear and distrust, the community is driven to undertake its

own surveillance, with people monitoring each other's lives, policing each other's behaviour, and ostracizing anyone whose conduct seems aberrant. The community comes to practise what Pramod K. Nayar refers to as 'multiveillance', a form of surveillance under which "every actor places somebody else under surveillance ... everybody reports on everybody/anybody else" (138). As Nayar points out, it marks a decisive shift from the centralized model of Foucault's panoptic surveillance to a decentralized, rhizomatic model of surveillance (139). This mutually assured surveillance, however, only fuels the ambient paranoia further, resulting in a vicious mutual policing that degrades an already dysfunctional community to an even more oppressively claustrophobic one. Armed with the weapons of shaming and gaslighting, gossip and rumour, the community embarks on a mission to snuff out all traces of individual expression, and violently assimilate anyone that it deems deviant. The few that resist assimilation not only attract public opprobrium but are invariably relegated to the dreaded category of 'beyond-the-pales'. Among the members of this infamous group of misfits are Real Milkman, who protests against the renouncers' hooliganism, Tablets Girl's sister who baffles everyone with her unflinching idealism, and the nascent group of feminists who incur the wrath of the community by espousing gender equality. Burns tries to illustrate here how tenaciously a paranoid community tries to weed out anyone who seems too different or who doesn't give in to the community's ambient paranoia.

Also included in this group are Tablets Girl and Nuclear Boy – two characters that Burns uses to offer insight into the internal world of a mind consumed by paranoia. Tablets Girl is an object of terror in the community. She goes about poisoning people for their various imaginary crimes. She poisons the narrator for being Milkman's accomplice in killing her and twenty three other women in a past life nearly two centuries ago. She poisons her own sister repeatedly for "*Syster* had got inside her. She needed *Syster* not inside her. *Syster*, therefore, had to go" (197). It is only after Tablets Girl is brutally murdered that the narrator gains insight into the inexplicable terror that had devoured the girl, through the letters she leaves behind. Her letters reveal her excruciating fear "*of being odd; of being invisible; of being visible; of being shamed; of being shunned; of being deceived; of being bullied, of being abandoned; of being hit; of being talked about; of being pitied; of being mocked*" among others (194). Crushed under the weight of this unrelenting fear, the narrator's identity splits into multiple personalities, each named to represent the varying intensity of her fear, and one urging another to fight back.

What Tablets Girl's letters poignantly lay bare is the extent to which she felt her agency threatened – an anxiety that Timothy Melley refers to as 'agency panic.' Melley describes agency panic as the "intense anxiety about an apparent loss of autonomy, the conviction that one's actions are being controlled by someone else or that one has been "constructed" by powerful, external agents" (8). For Melley, agency panic and the ensuing paranoia culminate in violent attempts at conserving a sense of autonomy and individuality in the face of constant encroachment on the same by various external forces (155). One can argue that it is such a perceived loss of agency, and fear of self-disintegration that eventually drives Tablets Girl to poison people. By inflicting pain on those that she considers evil, she tries to protect herself from those whom she perceives as threatening her agency. Her act of poisoning people, thus, can be interpreted as her attempt at reclaiming the agency that she believes has been wrested

from her.

Another character whose paranoid fears Burns delves into, is Nuclear boy, a fifteen-year-old, besieged by the fear that the arms race between the U.S. and Russia will soon lead to a catastrophic war. Terrified of the impact that this imminent war will have on the rest of the world, he frets about all day, warning anyone who would listen to him, about the threat these two “immature, selfish nations” posed to the world (51). So fixated he is on the threat that they pose, that even when his brother's head gets blown off in broad daylight with him standing right next to him, Nuclear boy remains unperturbed. He pauses just long enough to find his bearings from where the blast had thrown him and goes right back to worrying about how the arms race between the U.S. and Russia will destroy everyone. Two months later, he kills himself after writing a note that reads: “*It is because of Russia and because of America that I am doing this*” (102).

Though Nuclear Boy's paranoid fears are distinctly different from those harboured by Tablets Girl, there are nonetheless subtle points of similarity between the two characters. Both Nuclear Boy and Tablets Girl seem impervious to the sectarian strife that haunts the rest of their community. Their own fears seem to be located elsewhere. Nuclear Boy's paranoid delusions are set in a place far away from his own country. Similarly, Tablets Girl's delusions are tied to a different age, and at times, even to a different century. So, while the content of their delusions completely differs from each other, their paranoia nonetheless bears a close resemblance, in so far as their delusions try to anchor their fear far away from their immediate reality. It is here that the entwined processes of projection and disavowal, which both Freud and Lacan stressed on as the central mechanism involved in the construction of paranoid delusions, become most evident. Both Nuclear Boy and Tablets Girl disavow their fear of their immediate reality, by projecting them onto another plain – a plain from where, thanks to the spatiotemporal distance, the threat returns in a slightly diminished form. Thus, through this projective mechanism, their delusions serve to alleviate one fear by replacing it with a lesser fear.

That so many paranoids inhabit the fictional world of *Milkman* is of course no coincidence. Burns uses the expression of paranoia to shed light on the vicious cycle of fear and violence that constant surveillance by powerful forces triggers, and the sense of powerlessness, victimization, and despair such violence engenders in turn. The graphic detail in which she describes the everyday violence of the narrator's community, and the egregious assaults on those who fail to comply with the bizarre rules imposed on them help Burns to elucidate why one cannot entirely dismiss the community's fear of persecution as pathological given that their fear cannot, in the clinical sense, be considered delusional. Her message here seems to be clear: that, caught at the centre of “concentric circles of oppression”, the only way for a community to respond to or even make sense of its chaotic and cruel world is through the language of paranoia (O'Connell). Burns, thus, undermines the long-standing view of paranoia as irrational, and prompts one to look at paranoia from a different perspective, one from which paranoia appears not as a pathological disorder but as an understandable response to the threat of violent policing that surveillance in totalitarian regimes often precipitates.

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When the Silence Speaks: Decoding the Silence of the Blacks in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

Paramita Routh Roy*

Abstract

In literature, silence has been represented in different ways over the ages but what has been common in all of these representations is the idea that silence signifies weakness. It is with silence that the positions of black or colonized characters are generally defined and it is by not providing them with a voice that their marginalized positions are emphasized and justified by the writers of the western canon. The African and Afro-American writers have tried to subvert this kind of interpretation of silence and have initiated the play of the meaning of silence through their varied empowering representations of silence in their writings. The enabling nature of silence had been overlooked by those for whom language meant presence while silence signified absence or meaninglessness. It is by countering the stereotypical realm of the absence with their reinterpretations that the writers like Alice Walker and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have created a ground for constructing a new form of presence. Silence becomes another possibility of expression in the narratives of Adichie and Walker where the characters gain significant shades in their selves through the manifestation of silence as a tool to assert power. Both Walker and Adichie did not privilege silence at the cost of destroying the significance that language bears, but they tried to break the restrictive structure and create a parallel position of silence.

Keywords: *Silence, subvert, black literature, power, authority.*

It is a natural tendency to select language over silence or to perceive silence through a binary meaning-making structure where language being the first term, always enjoys the privileged position. The idea of this binary structure in the formation of meaning has always made people understand silence as a kind of absence while language signifies presence. This is how the hegemonic cultural structure has interpreted silence from the days of yore and thus has been instrumental in producing the thought of silence as a lack and not a complete meaning in itself. But a deconstructive point of view encourages an interpretation where this position of absence is studied as the reference point to unravel the infinite series of meanings beyond the defined structure. In literature, silence has been represented in different ways over the ages but what has been common in all of these representations is the idea that silence signifies the manifestation of weakness. In this regard mention must be made of the tendencies of the white writers in equating the presence of African characters in the texts with silence. It is with silence that the black or colonized characters are generally defined and it is by not providing them with a meaningful voice that their marginalized positions are emphasized and justified by the writers of the western canon. Therefore, they intend to create a structure in their text where silence is repeatedly characterized with negative connotations of either the inability of the individual to speak or the necessity of that character to remain silent for the sake of the plot development and glorification of the white characters. Silence

has thus become synonymous with powerlessness, inability, passivity and a marker of servitude in the western literary canon. The African and Afro-American writers have tried to subvert this kind of interpretation of silence and have initiated the play of the meaning of silence through their varied empowering representations of silence in their writings.

Without engaging with the Spivakian rhetoric of whether the black characters can speak or not, the African writers have been able to redefine the notion of silence and thus initiate a deconstructive reading of the African or black characters in fiction. Black characters always fall prey to the idea of an asymmetrical difference which is created by the white hegemonic structure. It is as a negation to whiteness that blackness is understood in the western culture. But with the advent of the black writers; the necessity of creating a symmetrical difference where no idea is considered as a reference point to understand the other idea, became a focal point in literature. It is by bringing forward the stories of black people that these writers were intending to break free from the dominance of the single stories which created stereotypes about the blacks. As a part of their plan for creating grounds of equal representation, the black writers reclaimed silence as a valid medium for speaking more effectively than by using language. Taking into consideration the works of Alice Walker, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, it can be understood that how these black literary voices have been able to reinterpret silence in order to empower the black characters which have always been denied justified presence in the novels of the western writers.

Silence has a dynamic presence in Black Literature and based on the socio-cultural and socio-political context the significance of different kinds of silences can be realized. It is through a comparative reading of Walker and Adichie's novels that it can be sensed how varied positions of black people in history and society can refer to different meanings of the silence that is used by the characters for responding to situations. The silence of an Afro-American character must have been different from that of an African character because they are black but different. While an Afro-American individual had to face the history of slavery, that of a man living in an African nation which had been colonized by whites, had to face another kind of history which made their manifestations of silence different to some extent. The silence of an individual who is not considered as a human but a slave is definitely different from that of an individual who had to fight back the hegemony of the colonizer and that of the black males with silence. These are the areas that have never been looked by the writers of western canon because for them the meaning of silence has always been one dimensional which was just the opposite of language or power. The enabling factor of silence had been overlooked by those for whom language meant presence while silence signified absence or meaninglessness. It is by countering the stereotypical realm of the absence and making this a ground for constructing a new form of presence that the novelists like that of Alice Walker and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie tried to achieve their aims. It is through this attempt that they have successfully destroyed the single story of silence and made silence a 'part and parcel of speech' (Almeida 3). Their attempt can definitely be defined as post-structuralist because they have made silence the centre to understand the ways in which language tries to suppress the positions of black people by making them the powerless other.

The whole idea of exoticising the African characters consists of the tendency of systematically silencing these characters so that it becomes easier to show them through a lens

of unusual or uncanny. Speaking might have given the black characters equal status with the whites in the western canon and that might be a reason why these characters have been constantly silenced and cornered as unwanted. It is through this attempt that the white literary canon indirectly attempted to justify the story of the colonial project of enlightenment. The alternate frames of silence as depicted by Walker and Adichie through their novels make it very clear how implementing the notion of the audibility of silence can actually offer a new dimension to the black characters in the fictional narratives. Applying a feminist methodology, these writers have used silence as a method to investigate the traditional gendered notions of understanding the dogma of privileging language as a tool to assert the self. They try to negate the idea that 'silence creates an emptiness generated by knowledge of one's potential and the impossibility within patriarchal society of fully developing that potential' (Almeida 2). Silence becomes another possibility of expression in the narratives of Adichie and Walker where the characters gain significant shades in their selves through the manifestation of silence as a tool of asserting power. Considering Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, it can be understood how these writers have tried to interpret silence from different perspectives while their intentions had been the same, which were to give the notion of silence an enabling factor to make their characters grow into complete beings.

Both Walker and Adichie did not privilege silence at the cost of destroying the significance that language bears, but they tried to break the restrictive structure and create a parallel position for silence with that of the language. Time and again the structuralist critics and theorists have attempted to create an interpretation where either of the two [silence or language] terms has been taken as a referential point to explain the position of the other. Adichie and Walker did not limit their studies of silence in that frame and had opened space for both the terms to complement each other rather existing in contradiction. Thus there are characters like Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* and Celie in *The Color Purple* who use silence to create their own language. Language can be gendered but silence cannot be comprehended through a specific gendered lens. Silence can be male, female, homosexual, bisexual and transgender because it does not develop with binary structure of signification. Rather it exists in itself and can be the language of any individual. Through their fictional characters they try to establish the point that 'speech and silence are not always antithetical; silence is not necessarily a negative attribute' (Almeida 2). This can be understood in a clear manner when we analyze the character of Beatrice Achike who chooses to remain silent about the constant domestic violence she and her children are facing at the hands of Eugene Achike, only to strike back at the right time and end the torture completely. Her decision of sustaining the silence was a strategy to ensure that the violence is ended once and for all in future. In the novel it is seen how Beatrice's silence is interpreted by her close relatives and acquaintances as her resignation to the authoritative figure of Eugene Achike, the man of the house. This is how silence is generally read as a negative attribute but Adichie consciously subverts that game to show how silence can actually be a diplomatic move taken by an individual to fight back forces that have a limited understanding of the power of silence. It is because Beatrice remains silent at the face of all kinds of violence that Eugene never suspects her of bouncing back with so much power.

There is a clear distinction between 'to be silent' and 'to be silenced' which is highlighted through the trajectory of the characters of Beatrice and Kambili. Adichie definitely gives value to silence but not at the cost of language because she shows different ways in which one can assert herself or her authority. There is the character of Ifeoma who is the embodiment of an empowered female voice and is as strong as Beatrice who chooses to stay silent. So Beatrice's silence is 'self imposed; it involves a personal choice' and that is what becomes vital in Adichie's novel (Almeida 3). One who gets exposed to physical violence at the hands of her husband and who is subjugated in the social structure in several ways; finds it logical to plan for her escape from the oppressive patriarchal system through the utilization of silence as a tool to break free from shackles. Silence provides her the time to think about slowly poisoning her husband and thus this silence leaves her with 'sharp pieces' to challenge her oppressive husband (Adichie 257). While the character of Auntie Ifeoma can have her way with Eugene through her slightly raised voice, Beatrice has her way with her hegemonic husband through the manifestation of her silence. As a Nigerian writer Adichie was aware of the fact that 'while the importance of voice is indisputable, pronouncing silence as the converse of speech or as its subordinate can also be oppressively univocal' (Cheung 6). That might be a reason why she creates examples of both the possibilities where one female character uses language as a tool to defy the regressive norms of patriarchy, the other uses silence as a weapon to fight back a system that was systematically subjugating her. There is equal merit in using silence and using language to express. The silence in Adichie's novels is the one that lets the characters feel that it 'is a different kind of silence, one that lets me breathe' (Adichie 305). This is how Adichie destroys the single stories about the mute black identity and reclaims silence as a language to act and react.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* challenges the 'reductive perspectives on silence' through the character of Celie who in the initial section of the novel seems to be getting silenced by the male figures in her life only to attain a drastic growth by reclaiming the importance of choosing silence to reflect and ponder over her life (Cheung 4). The obedient and passive figure of Celie who would 'jump right up and do just what they say' transforms into a figure who uses her mental strength to counter the gender role that had always restricted her to express herself at the last section of the novel (Walker 83). It is expected from a reader to believe that a character whose silence speaks of her resignation can never be an empowering silence at all but the way in which Walker shows silence as a vital agent that allows Celie much scope to think about the ways in which she can resist, subverts reader's expectations. Ironically enough even when in the episodes of the novel one finds Celie to play a passive role; the entire novel unravels through her voice. As she writes letters to God and later to her sister, Walker tries to establish 'writing as annihilation of silence, as a weapon to destroy the ideas that perpetuate subjugation and inequity' (Almeida 2). So the attempts of her husband to silence her is challenged by Celie through her secret letters to God and her sister. But ultimately this silence gave her the courage to 'jab my[her] case knife in his[her husband's] hand' (Walker 181). This points to the fact that it is to 'stay alive' that Celie uses silence as a defensive tool for the time being (Walker 18). It is thus a strategy that Celie takes to slowly empower herself and break free from the oppression. It can also be said that her initial silence allows Celie to listen to her inner self and realize her homosexual desires towards Shug. Both

of them continue with their relationship in silence because of their awareness towards the societal conventions of heteronormativity. In that way silence becomes the language of the homosexuals who were not allowed to assert their desires openly. More than a secret in case of Shug and Celie silence becomes their language that creates a space for their love to develop without much outside interference. So silence takes another meaning in regard to the question of homosexuality in Walker's novel. While the society never allowed lesbians to speak about their desires openly, silence allowed them to secretly nourish their love and stay unaffected by patriarchal overindulgences.

Silence was imposed upon her even by her father who can be read as 'an attempt to maintain dignity or secrecy' (Cheung 3). Her father never wanted his criminal act of raping his daughter to come out in front of other that is why she was threatened to remain silence. This is another possible meaning of silence. Silence is sometimes maintained to protect oneself from social humiliation. Here it was Celie's father who was worried about his reputation. But the numbing silence that Celie faced at this stage of her life was not out of choice but necessity. At such a young age she could realize one thing that speaking up can endanger her life and as a child she did not bring herself to overcome these fears. But even in some indirect way she was vocal about this entire episode as she always ensured that her sister never had to experience such event that she had gone through and thus through her silence she protected her sister as well. In that sense silence can be used as a temporary ploy for providing protection. Walker might have perceived that there are several possibilities hidden within silence. That might have been the reason why she has shown how Celie uses silence as a tool while she needed and then uses language to assert her independent self. It cannot be denied that Walker's interpretation or representation of silence was not as radical as that of Adichie but she paved the way for the anticipation of such a powerful reinterpretation of silence in later time.

Thus, silence is like an “irony, hedging, code language, muted plots-used by women writers to tell the forbidden and name the unspeakable” and in case of Adichie and Walker this becomes quite explicit (Cheung 4). It is through the employment of a feminist lens that the additional dimensions of silence can be understood in a better manner. In general 'silence represents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy' but both Walker and Adichie deconstruct that notion by giving silence the central position in the text (Almeida 1). Therefore silence gains meaning in the texts of these two black writers and allows readers to get another perspective on the black characters. Silence might have been dismissed by some writers of the western canon but the black writers have been able to regain its value and importance through their narratives. So the infinite possibilities of silence are suggested by Alice Walker and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in their novels where the characters use silence in different ways to express different emotions and abilities.

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Narrativising the Identity Crisis in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

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Abstract

*The age-long literary tradition of positing actual line of demarcation between literature and history has been debunked and deconstructed by postcolonial theorisation and even the perceptive distinguishing line has been made shadowy to lay accent on the correlation between the two. The basic tool by dint of which literature and history are intermingled is the dexterous use of narrative that blends the two so as to generate deeper meanings. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990) are synchronous with each other in terms of the timeframe of the novels associated with the socio-political populist agitation in terms of ethnicity and race in Darjeeling of West Bengal and Cape Town of apartheid South Africa in the mid-1980s. Here, the pertinence of perusing South Asian literature alongside of South African literature lies in the detection of the historiographic synchronicity and the differing facets of diagnosing individual dilemma vis-à-vis ethnic and racial dialectic. Both the narratives dwell on the dynamics of socio-political change and are characterised at great length by broad political spectrum synchronising with the inner dilemma of the individuals. The narrative strategy adopted by Kiran Desai is at variance with that of Coetzee and the internal predicament of the two characters are brought to the surface in two different modes. With the employment of third person omniscient narrative technique Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* provides an explorative glimpse into the quandary of Sai whose psychological entanglement with Gyan gets ruptured on account of the latter's embroilment in the separatist movement for Gorkhaland, while Coetzee's *Age of Iron* showcases the first person narrator, Mrs Curren's guilt-stricken predicament because of her inherited Afrikaner association in the brutal killings of black students in the apartheid resistance movement. In both the narratives, the intrinsic dilemma is projected against the wider scenario of socio-political occurrences ringing with the resonances of the hierarchical binary. The novels narrativise their psychological disposition within an intricately patterned network of affiliative relationships.*

Keywords: *historiography, dilemma, synchronicity, resistance, dialectic, hierarchy, binary*

The evolvement of fictional narratives is marked by a semblance with the evolution of the notion of indigenous land in every country. Same is the case with both the countries, India and South Africa. Therefore, it will not be presumptuous to adopt a consolidated approach to the exegesis of the two novels produced in two countries against turbulent backgrounds. The postcolonial mode of portraying individual dilemma in relation to socio-political binary inevitably calls upon the discourse on history-fiction interplay. The close bonding between history and literature has been valorized by postcolonial writers and the difference between the two has almost been rendered dim. The socio-historical reality has provided the writers the stuff for embarking upon the diagnosis of the psychic workings of

individuals in their fictional environment in association with the broader scene of the incidents taking place in the state arena. In this connection, Pramod K. Nayar in the preface to Avishek Parui's *Postmodern Literatures* (2018) aptly points out, "Considerable attention is paid to the contexts of class, literacy, gender relations, the state and its functions in every age" (vii).

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990) are penned against the turmoil-torn matrix of Indian province, West Bengal and the African nation, South Africa. The affinity lies in the multiculturalism, diversity and pluralistic social structures of the two countries. Both the novelists genuinely depict the socio-political matrix corroding the fabric of the two nations. Hence, the two novels display their role in bringing to light the inner dilemma of two characters coupled with the problem of positing proverbial unity in diversity. In this regard, Meenakshi Mukherjee's illuminating observation cited in *Indianisation of English Language & Literature* (1994) edited by R.S. Pathak is worth noting here:

Everyone knows that all narratives are to be read in the context of a specific time and place but what is not always remembered is that while the narratives emerge out of a culture, they also contribute towards the construction of definition of this culture.

Stories and communities are thus bound together in a symbiotic relationship. (194)

In both the countries, the diversity was not adjustable as the lines of social affiliation were chained by a network of dialectical nexus with regard to the racial difference between blacks and whites in South Africa and the ethnic differentiation in West Bengal. Kailash C. Baral in *J.M. Coetzee: Critical Perspectives* (2008) quite pertinently describes South Africa as a nation with "the given history of settler colonialism, racism and other forces that are part of the socio-political reality of South Africa (13). On the other hand, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay in his *Nationalist Movement in India: A Reader* (2009) relevantly quotes Valentine Chirol's depiction of India as a nation inhabited by a great variety of nations ... there are far more absolutely distinct languages spoken in India than in Europe, that there are far more profound racial difference between the Maharatta and the Bengalee than between the German and the Portugese ... and that caste has driven into Indian society lines of far deeper cleavage than any class distinctions that have survived in Europe. (xviii)

Thus, the two novelists discharge the responsibility of historical chroniclers and fictionalize the individual predicament by highlighting the real trouble of mutual inhabitation in a multiracial and multicultural milieu. In this regard, Partha Chatterjee finds out the root of the problematic discriminatory practices in *Politics of Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (2004) by propounding his view that the ambient capitalism was not imbibed by the proletariat as well as by the poor farmers taking part in the incidents occurring in the domain of the nation. Those classes were imbued with a markedly distinct glimpse of the truth of life.

The Inheritance of Loss and *Age of Iron* are tinged with an undercurrent of trouble-torn psyche of Sai and the guilt-stricken psyche of Mrs. Curren. They undergo turmoil at the psychological level as they become conscious of the class struggle in the political scenario. The subalterns recognize their second-grade status in social hierarchy and form solidarity to resist their marginalization. In this connection, Jorge Larrain in his *Marxism and Ideology*

(1913) argues in favour of the formation of organic ideology:

An organic ideology, therefore, must be capable of 'organising' human masses, must be able to translate itself into specific orientations for action. To this extent ideology is socially pervasive, the source of determined social action. Men and women cannot act without being conscious, without having certain formulated social orientations. (80)

The Inheritance of Loss and *Age of Iron* are on the same wavelength in terms of their agreement with the aforementioned theoretical observations, but the treatment of the dilemma of Sai and Mrs. Curren are on a different plane. Sai emblemizes the alienated self in *The Inheritance of Loss* and Mrs. Curren is pricked by guilt-stricken conscience in *Age of Iron*.

Sai's epiphany is brought to light when she gains a comprehensive vision of turbulence of Kalimpong. The Nepali people raise their voice of ethnic identity and demand a separate land. Sai's entanglement with her Nepali tutor gets thwarted and she recognizes their confusing relationships and the tense environment triggers her agony as she ruminates on the conflicting nature of the uprising. Gyan's advocacy of the agitation and assertion of his ethnic temperament make him dialogic with Sai:

Coward! How dare she? Who would marry her?

"You think it's brave of me to sit on your veranda? I can't spend my life eating cheese toast, Can I?"

"I didn't ask you to. You did it of your own free will, and pay us back for it, if that's what you think." (261)

Sai's dilemma arises mainly out of Gyan's ignoring her after being implicated in the ethnic uprising that she feels has no nexus with her. Sai begins to recognize the friction of her association with Gyan and scrutinizes Gyan's observations. Sai's predicament is neatly summed up in the third person narratorial depiction of her as "an uninspiring person, a reflection of all the contradictions around her, a mirror that showed him himself far too clearly for comfort" (262). In this connection, Meenakshi Mukherjee's *The Twice-born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* (1971) offers a lucid insight into the concern of fictional world with large public issues, national or social problem and at the same time she talks about the recent fiction becoming introspective. The colours of difference and the ethnic temperament of separatism trigger the hotpot of violence imbricated in the individuals' becoming ruminative. Therefore, what is central to the discourse on cultural dialectic is the matter of self identity crisis in tandem with socio-political and socio-cultural crisis. The very milieu becomes the determiner for an individual's assertion, reconciliation and subjective comprehension of identity and the quandary in relation to the problem of 'othering'.

Cultural dialectic springs from the issue of ethnic persistence to which the question of identity becomes responsive. In this connection, the judicious 18th century exponent of insightful philosophy on the notion of the self, David Hume in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) interprets the idea of self as being heavily reliant upon the milieu of certain specific cognitions (Book 1, part iv, section 6). Hence, 'identity' connected with the self is closely linked to the contextual dialectics that create the individual or collective sensations with

regard to the defence as well as the crisis of subjectivity. What holds the fulcrum of attention for Gyan is the exigency for turning upside the status quo for Bengali people in penchant for celebrating social equity. So, Gyan renders full utterance to his advocacy of making a concerted effort to manufacture ethnic 'identity' that carries paramount importance for safeguarding the ethnic damage. Therefore, Gyan-Sai plot gyrates around the issue of 'self-identity' crisis. While Sai psychically navigates through uncertainties, Gyan ruptures the intimacy close to acquiring momentum for the sake of ethnic consolidation by transmitting a shattering wave down the backbone of Sai.

What becomes repulsive to Gyan is the majoritarian arrogance of Bengali people. It is the poignancy of the Nepali people that, Gyan feels inwardly, has propelled his strength to spin a yarn embedded in the lachrymose eyes of his fraternity encountering a grim matrix, "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army" (250). So, he is intent upon betraying his complicity in the uprising. Gyan here pours out his internal conviction in line with the distinguished theorist, Antonio Gramsci who in *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (1996) edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, contends that the hegemonic power structure gets turned upside on account of the uprising by the subaltern:

...the traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. When such crises occur, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic "men of destiny".

...the content is crisis of the ruling class's hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. (210)

But, at the same time Gyan is pricked by remorseful conscience divulged in his bewildering exposure that adds to the crisis of his 'identity,' "I'm only human and sometimes I'm weak. Sorry" (249). Sai who was passionately desirous of retaining an umbilical proximity to Gyan dissects the riddle of the love relationship, "What kind of man was this? she thought. She could not believe she had loved something so despicable. Her kiss had not turned him into a prince; he had morphed into a bloody frog" (249). She hitherto nurtured the aspirations of the ideal society the binary of which is being perpetrated. This is perhaps the most sensitive point of the novel where Desai brings to the surface the intrinsic drama of Sai, "And she had cried, for it was the unjust truth" (250). Thus, Sai gains an explorative insight into the connotative tone and tenor of Gyan's supporting approach towards his embroilment in the insurgency that cropped up between India and Nepal.

In *Age of Iron*, Coetzee posits a link between internal debates of Mrs. Curren with external occurrences. The contextual clues to the understanding of her dilemma are important here, "I am the bitch..." (126) as her inner cancer reflects the decay of apartheid for the black

movement. The killing of Bheki and John stir her ethical dilemma because of her Afrikaner self. Curren's inner deceased physic prototypically illustrates the trouble-torn milieu of South Africa vitiated by the virulent exposure of racism i.e. apartheid. The distinctive features of the sphere of intellectual activities are denotative of the rejection of violence. But, South Africa was inscribed with the history of inevitable class struggle of the blacks who with grit and resolution aimed at decentralizing the white centre of power. The coloured boys, Bheki and John were the products of anti-white movement. Mrs. Curren seems to second their liberation mutiny to gain a privileged status in the national scenario. Echoing the same proposition George Lukacs in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1968) offers us his critical glimpse into the future outcome of class awareness:

...its class consciousness must develop a dialectical contradiction between its immediate interests and its long-term objectives, and between the discrete factors and the whole. For the discrete factor, the concrete situation with its concrete demands is by its very nature an integral part of the existing capitalist society; it is governed by the laws of that society and is subject to its economic structure. Only when the immediate interests are integrated into a total view and related to the final goal of the process do they become revolutionary, pointing concretely and consciously beyond the confines of capitalist society. (71).

But, while Mrs. Curren reflects on the cosmopolitan ideology, Coetzee as a typical postcolonial writer underscores the gruff truth that selfhood is steeped in the binary between white and non-white in lieu of being ingrained in unipolarity. Curren views negritude as an ideological apparatus for the evocation of concerted black motivation and appreciates the heroic upheaval manufactured by the marginalized. But, her identity crisis issues from her sensing of the Afrikaner incapacity to nourish desired affection for the non-white schoolboys, John and Bheki. And this personal quandary dazzles more prominently in her confessional revelations provoked by the brutal murder of Bheki:

Now that child is buried and we walk upon him. Let me tell you, when I walk upon this land, this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces. They are dead but their spirit has not left them. They lie there heavy and obdurate, waiting for my feet to pass, waiting for me to go, waiting to be raised up again. Millions of figures of pig-iron floating under the skin of the earth. The age of iron waiting to return. (115)

Coetzee's employment of such sort of lyrical rhetoric in the above passage conspicuously reinforces the empathetic perception of Mrs. Curren who feels handcuffed to the preceptive rule regulating her black-pointed pejorative approach that handicaps her intimate alignment with the subaltern 'other'. This in-depth conscientious sensation of a white carries the inward procreative imports for the non-white 'other' figured in the anticipation of the 'age of iron' coterminous with the forecasting of the reinstatement of the black regime. It is Mrs. Curren's inhabiting the 'in-between' space that plunges her into a state of ontological crisis.

Thus, the utopian concept of the elimination of racism and ethnicity has been problematized by Coetzee and Desai who are quite aware of the 'internal racism' proposed by Etienne Balibar in "Racism and Nationalism" included in *Race, Nation, Class* (1988) edited by Balibar and Wallenstein. The impeccable combination of fictionality with the authentic

concerns for social phenomena sparking personal identity crisis has been deftly exhibited by both the writers. Sai and Curren typify a pristine picture of the bulk of the national population that continuously nullifies race-based turbulent ambience and hideous bloodshed. This myth of peaceful bonding by eradicating the maladies, ills and evils of racial and ethnic stratification has been demythicised by Coetzee and Desai in these two fictional products which bring into focus the crisis of individual identity in relation to the nude indelible reality of social discriminatory exercises. The two novels are structured on a perfect blending of the fictional and the historical which enriches their literary interests by dexterously intertwining the individual psyche with the social happenings. The exterior socio-political incidents throughout electrify the interior selves of Sai, Gyan and Mrs. Curren. While Sai and Mrs. Curren air their quest for fraternity and wish the script of violent history of any nation to be regurgitated never, Desai and Coetzee highlight the discordant reality of the interplays of opposites in society – 'Bengali' and 'Nepali', 'White' and 'Black' – which act as the keys to decode the symbolic purports of the two narratives.

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Rabindranath Tagore in Shifting Paradigms: A Case Study of Transcreating Robert Burns into Bengali

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Rabindranath Tagore's translations of Robert Burns' four lyrical poems from English to Bengali published in between the year 1878 and 1879 in the monthly Bengali journal Bharati. Tagore constructed his distinct poetic voice at a very early age out of his initial trials and tribulations with poetry and meter in the shadow of other poetic voices. These four translations demonstrate how Tagore's own poetic voice emerges from his endeavour to 'rewrite' the lyrical poems of Burns in Bengali. Thus, this paper examines how these translations can be perceived in terms of 'transcreation' while they confront the conservative notions of translational fidelity, individualistic idea of authorship and textual originality. Moreover, these translations contribute in forming a different taste of Bengali modernity that posits itself in the territorial ethos but receptive to other cultures.

Keywords: Translation, Transcreation, Rabindranath Tagore, Culture, Intertextuality.

I have felt the meeting of the East and the West in my own individual life. I belong to the latter end of the Nineteenth Century. And to our remote country in Bengal, when I was a boy, there came a voice from across the sea. I listened to it.

– Rabindranath Tagore, “Meeting of the East and the West”

Rabindranath Tagore is regarded as a polymath whose creative artistry encompasses diversified genres, themes and practices; but the entire gamut of his translation practice still remains obscured. Tagore became the first Asian Nobel Laureate in the year 1913 for his phenomenal self-translation of the Bengali poem anthology, *Gitanjali* into English in 1912, two years after the publication of his Bengali *Gitanjali*. Tagore's *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* is a “profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse” where he made “his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words [as] a part of the literature of the West” through his “consummate skill” (qtd. in Tiwari 42). Apart from the translations of “his own original creative writing[s]” (Sarkar 155), Tagore also undertook the venture of translating many English texts into Bengali since an early stage of his life and this practice cannot also be discarded as a result of his “crazy bravado” (Dutta and Robinson 117). Tagore himself confessed during his full-fledged poetic career that, “Inspiration of many kinds of ideas from countries has reached my mind and I have acknowledged that in my compositions, which have probably given strength and nourishment to my body of poetry” (qtd. in Mandal 205). Robert Burns was one such celebrated Scottish poet and lyricist who became the subject of Tagore's Bengali translations.

After maintaining an extreme distance from the table of scholarly discussions, Tagore's interest and implications of translating the lyrical poems of Burns into Bengali has

been presently commented upon by various critics and scholars, including Asru Kumar Sikdar (1998), Anuradha Pal Choudhury (1999), Sudhir Chakraborty (2000), Aditya Ohdedar (2002), N. Dev Sen (2010) and Sujit Kumar Mandal (2011). However, the effort of associating Tagore's early translations of Burns, published in the monthly journal *Bharati* as his own poetic voice remains unfinished. Thus, this paper examines how these translations subvert the orthodox concepts of originality and authorship by ascribing to the notions of 'transcreation' within the interrelated paradigm of intertextuality and cultural dialogue.

Sisir Kumar Das in the introductory section of the edited book *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* (Vol. I) notes that, "English came to India not as the language of Shakespeare or Milton and the Bible alone, but primarily as the language of the East India Company promising new financial prospects and political patronage" (Das 17). With the introduction of the colonial modernity, English being the *lingua franca* became a matter of interest among the elite Indians. Born in the year 1861 in an aristocratic Bengali family, Tagore became acquainted with the English language and literature during his childhood. Being a school drop-out and degreeless for his extreme disinclination towards the then education system, "he had no formal training in the English language, he learned it at home" (Tiwari 42). After his cousin Jyotiprakash Gangopadhyay, his father Debendranath Tagore and the eldest brother Dwijendranath Tagore inspired him to delve into the English literary culture (Tagore 13-43). In the late nineteenth-century, love started emerging as a theme in the literary context of India. In the essay "Indian Ode to the West Wind", Sisir Kumar Das asserts that, "One of the marked changes that [was] reflected in the literature of this period is the celebration of love in general and the recognition of female sexuality in particular. The social reform movements involving the widow remarriage, polygamy, and female education foregrounded the issues of man-woman relationship both in the domestic and public sphere and the contemporary literature responded to them splendidly. Here again, English literature became a source of inspiration" (Das 30). Akshay Chandra Chaudhuri, a friend of Tagore's brother Jyotirindranath Tagore, is credited for upholding the "intense excitement" of English literature to young Rabindranath and Chaudhuri himself was an ardent "worshipper of feelings" [self-translated] (Tagore 102). During his stay at Brighton, Tagore first experienced the essence of European music (Ibid. 104). After the gradual serious engagements, "[w]hat he admired about European music was . . . its romantic character, 'its aspect of variety, of abundance, of the waves on the sea of life, of the ever-changing light and shade on their ceaseless undulations'" (Kripalani 78). Thus, it becomes enough predictable why Tagore's literary craftsmanship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century revolved around human sentiments and romanticism. Robert Burns, the national poet of Scotland is largely regarded as the pioneer of the Romantic literary movement in the English culture and Tagore's admiration for Burns can be certainly understood from his Bengali essay *Kabi Yeats*, published in the *Prabashi* journal, on 4th September, 1912:

Burns was born in an age of literary artifice. His feelings sprang straight from the heart and he could express them in words. And so he was able to pierce through the bonds of literary usage and give unrestrained expression to the soul of Scotland.

(qtd. in Dutta and Robinson 94-95)

Translation played a pivotal role in Tagore's English education throughout. In his

formative career, besides translating the Anglo-Norman literature, Tagore was seen to be engaged in rendering the English texts of Thomas Moore, Caedmon, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, John Donne, Thomas Chatterton, George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Chappell, Robert Browning, Aubrey de Vere, Walt Whitman, Mathew Arnold, Christina Georgina Rossetti, Edwin Arnold, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Augusta Webster, Robert Buchanan, Ernest Myers, Philip Bourke Marston, Katherine Tynan Hinkson, Arthur Symons, Stephen Phillips, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Charles Freer Andrews, Amy Lowell and Thomas Stearns Eliot into Bengali (qtd. in Mandal 122-171). Apart from the pages of his autobiography *Jibansmriti* and the monthly Bengali journals like *Bharati*, *Prabashi*, *Parichay*, the contemporary magazines namely *Sabujpatra* and *Samasamayik*, his exercise copy presently known as *Malatipunthi*, his travelogue *Europe Prabasir Patra* bear the traces of his translational engagements from English to Bengali rigorously (Ibid.). Out of these shadows of other poetic voices, the marrow of Tagore's original poetic voice was actually constructed as he himself admitted in the introductory section of his *Sandhyasangeet*: "When we are young, we do try to copy others to come up with a style, but amidst that imitation lies one's own style as well. In due process, this very shell gives way to the internal styles of writing" (Ibid. 34). This assertion deliberately indicates his nullification of the fixed notion of originality and singular authorship while invoking the instances of intertextuality. For him, no text is autotelic and autonomous in nature, but creatively reproducible repository.

Later in the year 1917, Tagore published a book titled *Anubad-Charcha* for the pupils of Shantiniketan when he was designated as their English teacher and in the Preface of that book, he enunciated the distinct expressing methods of the Bengali and the English language which he clearly understood from his first-hand experience of translating texts. The dissimilar nature of these two languages indicates the notion of untranslatability. To quote him, "A word-for-word translation is impossible between two completely different languages. English and Bengali have completely different methods of expressions and it is impossible to find the exact equivalences between their words and synonyms" [self-translated] (Tagore 1). The "creative impulse" (Das 14) within him always invoked for new expressions as a consequence of which he asserted that, "The words of the one language may have their synonyms in the other carrying the same meanings, but their associations are in most cases different. And the suggestions and flavour contained in these associations are more important in literature than mere meanings" (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson 229). Thus, translation in his case is to manipulate and recontextualize the source text for the target readers considering the different taste of the receptor-culture. Tagore's overall perspective on the textual encounters foreshadow his mechanics of translation completely and a meticulous analysis of his language and idiom would suffice this fact.

Four Bengali renderings of Burns' English song-texts have been attributed to the young Rabindranath Tagore, who appeared anonymously under the segment of *Sampadaker Baithak* or "The Editor's Conference" of the Bengali periodical *Bharati*, in between 1878 and 1879. Tagore first translated the song-text namely *Ae Fond Kiss* of Robert Burns which appeared in the January-February series of 1878. His next translation was the text of *Duet* or *Philly and Willy* which also appeared in the same issue. The Bengali rendering of *The Birks of*

Aberfeldy appeared in the October-November series of the following year along with his Bengali translation of *Mary Morison* (Mandal 100-109).

The conscious selections of these texts contain its own explanations which are too some extents deliberately related to the experiences of Tagore's life. Each of these poems in both the languages revolve around emotional pining and address the intricacies of heterosexual bonding. During his stay in Bombay in his adolescence, Tagore and his English teacher Ana or Annapurna had “a tender and innocent intimacy” between them and out of this romantic inclination towards her, he named her 'Nalini' (Kripalani 58). In the words of Krishna Kripalani, “She inspired not one but several poems of his in which he lingers lovingly on the name Nalini” (Ibid. 59). Moreover, in his youth, Kadambari Devi, his “favourite sister-in-law” became his “life-long playmate [and] friend” and this relationship left an intense impression on Tagore's mind (Ibid. 97). Kripalani again notes that, “The family was already running a literary monthly, *Bharati*, to which he regularly contributed. Probably because Kadambari was clearly associated with the journal. . .” (Ibid. 99).

Much later, in the year 1998, these translations were officially included in the thirtieth volume of *Rabindra Rachanabali*. If the English source texts (this paper follows Donald A. Low's collection for Burns' song-texts) and Tagore's translated versions are thoroughly compared, one can easily understand how Rabindranath 're-incarnated' the souls of these poems (qtd. in A. Lal 110). “[R]ather than remaining a slave to illusions of necessary equivalence”, Tagore took part “in active creation of translation” (qtd. in Pym 28) through altering the linguistic and idiomatic stances and metrical formulations to accommodate the target text to the Bengali language and culture and to enhance “the readability of the text” (Oittinen 91).

The text of *Ae Fond Kiss* reappeared under the title of *Biday Chumban* in Bengali where the lady-love, Nancy was transformed into Pramada, a typical Indian lady. A different stanza division can be noticed in *Biday Chumban*—for instance —whereas the source text is comprised of three stanzas, the translated text negated such stanzaic units. Similarly, the text of *Philly and Willy* was titled as *Lalit-Nalini* and subtitled as *Krishaker Premalap* in the Bengali translation. Noticeably, the sub-title appeared within the brackets. The peasant couple, Willy and Philly were renamed as Lalit and Nalini respectively and both of these names have Indian origins. The translation of *The Birks of Aberfeldy* is known as *Rupashi Amar; Preyashi Amar* in Bengali and this text also faced the rearrangement of stanzas during the translation like the previous text. To elaborate, Tagore here maintained no such stanza divisions like its source text and considerably shortened the lines. He translated the text of *Mary Morrison* similarly which came to be known as *Sushila Amar; Janalar Pore* in Bengali. Here, the eponymous character of Mary gained an Indian name, Sushila. Since the significance and prominence of human emotions and actions are largely conditional upon the structure and form of the text, these rearrangements altogether denote a reformulation of poetic ideas and a divergence in its spirit and course. Besides the names of the characters, their emotions and actions were also largely 'Indianized' in each of Tagore's renderings so that these Scottish poems can bloom perfectly in the Indian soil. For instance, the line “Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee” of *Ae Fond Kiss* has been loosely rendered as *Mormobhedi Osru Diye Pujibo Tomare Priye* and this line essentially elevates the bonding between the narrator

and his beloved beyond passion like the eternal yearning of Krishna for Radha during their separation. Tagore did not overlook to introduce “a local colour” (Catford 21) in the settings of his poetry. The bird 'swallow' had been replaced with the cuckoo or *kokil*, the fragrance of 'woodbine' lost its traces and the flower jasmine or *mallika* found its way instead in Tagore's Bengali translation. “The birks of Aberfeldy” literally denotes the shallow woods of birch trees in the region of Aberfeldy in Scotland and this phrase was substituted with the Bengali phrase *giri-kanan* which literally means hilly forest region but Tagore did not mention the name of this Scottish place anywhere in his Bengali rendering.

The suggestion of the Scottish rhyme scheme has also been absent in these Bengali texts. Realizing the fact that the metre, rhythm and sweep are untranslatable in nature, Tagore made no attempts to imitate these effects. Instead, he altered the rhyme scheme according to his modern Bengali taste. For instance, in the text of *Biday Chumban*, the divergence in the rhyme scheme is way more meticulous and contrasting than its source text. Similarly, while the text of *Philly and Willy* contains the rhyming scheme of aaab, Tagore's *Lalit-Nalini* (*Krishaker Premalap*) contains the abaa pattern. In the Bengali version of *The Birks of Aberfeldy*, the pattern becomes abbc from aaab, Burns' *Mary Morison* is rhymed as ababcdcd, but Tagore's *Sushila Amar, Janalar Pore* is far away from its source text.

The theoretical frameworks of translation grounded on the factor of faithfulness or fidelity do not embrace the creative potential on the part of the translator. Moreover, a vertical relationship between the author and the translator springs from this hierarchical association between the originals and the copied texts. But, Rabindranath Tagore's first-hand experience of translating Robert Burns' lyrical poems in the *Bharati* journal alongside his general temperament towards the translational practices from the adolescence upturns this literary tradition. Astonishingly, Tagore is still deprived from receiving the proper attention for having formed this theoretical framework much before the academic field of Translation Studies came into existence. His 'rewritings' (qtd. in Lago 216) altogether discards the individualistic Romantic concept of authority and bears close resemblance to the idea of 'intertextuality'. In the words of Julia Kristeva, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 66). Tagore's translations indeed enrich the source texts rather than deceiving and his renderings can be termed as an echo of Walter Benjamin's assertion: “. . . their translation marks their stage of continued life . . . For in its afterlife – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living . . .” (Benjamin 256) Susan Bassnett further stretches this idea saying, “. . . translated text becomes an original by virtue of its continued existence in the new context” (Bassnett 151).

If Rabindranath Tagore's renderings are taken into consideration, they endorse the theoretical concept of 'transcreation' pioneered by Purushottama Lal in the year 1957, much after Tagore's demise. To quote Lal, “it is imperative for a translator to bow to the culture of the age in which, or for which, he is writing”, and “the translator must edit, reconcile and transmute” for that purpose through surrendering to his own “critical faculties” where “his job in many ways becomes largely a matter of transcreation” (P. Lal 37-48). If the word 'translation' is considered as an umbrella concept that oscillates between the literal or word-for-word translation on one hand and the imaginative translation or transcreation on the other,

then Tagore definitely ascribes to the latter. It is true that throughout his prolific career, Tagore never deploys the term 'transcreation' to describe his perspectives or the nature of his translations. But, his Bengali texts definitely bring to the fore “the mastery of [translator's] own language” which is commonly regarded as the “re-creative process” in translation (Holman and Boase-Beir 12). Transcreation in this Tagorean context is to 'recapture' (qtd. in Chakravarty 20) the spirit of the source text by adding the “foreign shine” (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson 30) of the target language for the target readers in a different cultural setting, without changing the genre and medium of expressions overtly. Tagore's translations as transcreations mainly herald the discourse as a novel growth in the Western countries, but in the modern India “[t]ranscreation has been the general mode of translation . . . from the olden days” (Gopinathan 2). Peculiarly, this theorization was only missing.

These Bengali poems not only marked vivid translational experimentation, but also surpassed the ancient poetic experiences of spatiotemporally imprisoned Bengali readers by inducing humanly emotions and experiences. Even, in terms of metrical motions, these poems blazed a new diction in the Bengali literary culture that had never been travelled before. Tagore's transcreation of Burns can be observed as an initiative to form such a Bengali modernity which receives its sustenance from diversified literary traditions. According to Buddhadeva Bose, “Rabindranath made Bengali a part of Europe” (Bose 49). This statement does not imply imitation, but refers to such a modern taste that asserts its self-hood on one hand while transcending its limits beyond a certain “geographical expression” (qtd. in Das 294) with an aim to introduce a holistic human culture. To elaborate, Tagore's 'West' is such an idea which dethrones the jingoist Western modernity, but embraces its intellectual profundity. To quote from his *Creative Unity*, “. . . the East and the West are ever in search of each other, and they must meet not merely in the fulness of physical strength, but in fulness of truth . . .” (Tagore 84). Thus, his transcreations are more of a cultural response of exchanges and negotiations to the then imperialistic catastrophe. To conclude with the words of Jean-Luc Nancy which approximates his formulation: “Being is singularly plural and plurally singular. . . . If Being is being-with, then it is . . . the 'with' that constitutes Being” (Nancy 28-30).

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A Journey from Misery to Resistance: Feminist Consciousness in the Select Short Fiction of Mahasweta Devi

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Abstract

Mahasweta Devi's literary oeuvre chronicles the multifarious sufferings of exploited, disenfranchised women living on the fringes of society. By exploring the unplumbed depths of their experience, she brings to fore their subjugated and suppressed voices. Devi has 'a luminous anger' to tackle the issues of women and under-privileged classes. The present paper has two objectives; first, it endeavours to explore the agonizing servitude and strife of marginalized women as chronicled in Devi's three stories- "The Hunt", "Douloti the Bountiful" and "Dhouli." Second, it tries to determine the way three female protagonists Douloti, Dhouli and Mary Oraon exercise their power within a restricted zone of domination and suppression. What makes their battle heroic is their 'survival,' their unbroken determination and undying spirit gained through their unending suffering and sacrifice. To survive exploitation, Douloti uses her power of endurance; Dhouli refuses to surrender; and Mary shows active resistance by striking back the tormenter itself. This is their journey from misery to resistance.

Keywords: Misery, Resistance, Feminist Consciousness, Identity

Mahasweta Devi's literary oeuvre chronicles the multifarious sufferings of exploited, disenfranchised women living on the confined fringes of society. By exploring the unplumbed depths of their experience, she brings to fore their subjugated and suppressed voices. Devi is a writer with purpose as she explicitly confesses that her aptitude and aspiration was never inclined towards assessment of art for art's sake. Genuine credentials and valid documents were always her best sources to raise voice against gender discrimination and abuse. (Devi, Preface to *Shrestha Galpa* xiii) Devi uses literature as a weapon and attempts to "peel the mask off the face of the India which is projected by the Government, to expose its naked brutality, savagery, and caste and class exploitation" (Devi, 1998: x). In "Dispossession, Degradation and Empowerment," Beck Tony and Tirthankar Bose argue that "the cause of the gendered subaltern, empowerment and radical feminist realism, and an attempt for subaltern speaking" can be attributed to her texts (441). Although Devi clearly denies to be tagged as a feminist, her sympathetic portrayal of the suppression of women and consequent revolt adds a feminist dimension to her work. Present paper has two objectives; first, it endeavours to explore the agonizing servitude and strife of marginalized women as chronicled in Devi's three stories- "The Hunt" and "Douloti the Bountiful" and "Dhouli." Second, it tries to determine the way three female protagonists Douloti, Dhouli and Mary Oraon exercise their power within a restricted zone of patriarchal domination and suppression.

Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* states that the answer to the question "What is

woman?" (xv–xxix) can be located in the ontological, economic, social, and physiological context. Beauvoir asserts that woman has always been regarded as the "Other" because the "humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (46). Woman is identified and distinguished "with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (46). Beauvoir argues that the reason of this discrimination lies in the ubiquitous gender inequality. Although the condition of women is transforming, yet restrictions are imposed on her fundamental rights for economic independence, employment opportunities, deserving remunerations, political power and social equality (Beauvoir 9). In *Woman's Estate*, Juliet Mitchell states that "peculiarities and severity of oppression vary" (60) in modern capitalist society. According to her, "family and the psychology of femininity are crucial" (14) and play an important role in evaluation of woman's concrete situation in this world.

Literary masterpieces of prominent Indian women novelists shed new light on feminine consciousness and discrimination. Arundhati Roy's portrayal of women protagonists widens its scope to the issues of prevalence of caste and social boundaries, Anita Desai lends new dimension to feminine sensibility by probing the hidden domains of human consciousness and emotions of her protagonists. But Mahasweta Devi's writings specifically give voice to the pangs of marginalised human existence battling against the fragile economic and biased social impacts. Unlawful poverty of weaker sections led them to be a victim of the socioeconomic system because economic reliance and paucity of "the under-privileged sections of the society forced them to be slaves" (Kamble 3). In "Translator's Preface", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, observes that Devi characterizes these communities as the "suffering spectators of India ... travelling towards the twenty-first century" (xxiii). The story "Douloti the Bountiful" exposes how exploitative mechanism in callous society works to create the kamiyas who has to work under creditor until the loan is paid back. Ganori became Munabar's kamiya for a meagre loan of three hundred rupees, worked endlessly for him, till he became crippled owing to latter's brutality. As no more surplus value could be extracted out of the crippled body of Ganori, his daughter Douloti was turned in to the means of repaying his bonded debt. In connivance with Munabar, Parmananda, posing to be a philanthropist, pays Ganori's debt through a marriage proposal to his daughter. Douloti goes with her new *god* and eventually suffers both physical deployment as a kamiya, a bonded-slave; and institutionalized silencing, by being forced to become a prostitute under the code of family and the law of the caste-system. She is stripped off her every right to live a dignified life because she is a prey for the physical gratification of upper caste wild men who take advantage of her poverty, helplessness and biased social norms. Douloti's suffering highlights the grim reality of patriarchal domination, bigotry and maltreatment that has been faced by Indian women for centuries. There seems no escape for these poor women because their lives are the epitome of harrowing isolation and torture: "the marginalized within the communities of the marginalized" (Chattopadhyay 211).

Unfortunate Douloti is uprooted from her community and is trafficked to city as "Kamiya whore" to be raped daily in lieu of paying debt of three hundred rupees. She is not alone in whore house, there are also Somni and Reoti. Devi presents a story "of the

complicity...of the power lines of local developers with the forces of global capital” (Spivak, “Translator’s Preface” 198). Douloti’s body is sold in a sexualized economy or rather put on loan, but the slave mortgage remains always unpaid (Devi, *Douloti* 76). Her utilization persists until her body becomes inconsumable and worthless (87). Another victim Rampiyari’s outburst reveals the height of exploitation: “The cow gives milk if she’s fed. If the human daughter turns Kamiya, no meal, no water, put riders in the saddle and take the money” (83).

Devi compares the youthful bodies of kamiya whores to India’s resources that are commodified for unlimited appropriation. Their owner incessantly cultivates their bodies to draw the monetary and sexual pleasures (59). End of bond slavery is like a distant dream for kamiya whores like Jhalo who fervently waits for the day when this torture will end. Douloti fears that landless people living under the pangs of abject poverty and hunger will be forced to accept the disgusting life of Kamiyas again (73). Douloti’s customers in brothel are mostly government contractors, inspectors and the policemen; all belonging to state apparatus expected to work for the development and welfare of people. Spivak calls them the most terrible construction of post-colonial idealistic philosophy. These defenders of progress abused the innocent tribals and obliterated their culture and lives. (1992: 203). Bonded laborers, like sub-proletariat peoples, remained unaffected by the economic liberation that accompanied political independence in India (Senft 275-286.) Adding feministic perspective, Spivak points out that the bonded laborers and bonded prostitutes are both, “humans turned into slaves...by the force of loans” (1992: 103).

“Douloti the Bountiful” emerges to be the story of gross utilization of subaltern women all across India. In spite of belated concern by few people [Prasad, Bono Nagesia and Father Bomfuller] about kamiyas’ woeful state of existence, Douloti dies a horrible death in a school compound on the eve of Indian Independence Day. Mohan, the school master tries to teach nationalism to his students by inscribing a large map of India in the clay courtyard of the school. However, Douloti succeeds in disrupting the nationalistic agenda of Mohan. She leaves him no option of placing the standard of the Independence flag. She is “all over India” (94). Devi’s female protagonists are forced to live at the threshold of abandonment and nonexistence, and finally acquire new identities of “sub-human” and “commodities” devoid of any market value (Chattopadhyay 105).

Devi inscribes in her story “Dhouli” a new sexual/textual praxis in her narratives of the tribal dalit woman Dhouli who undergoes double colonization due to her ethnic identity and her gender. Her lover Misrilal, an upper caste Hindu, leaves Dhouli and marries another girl of his caste. In “Frames of Marginalisation,” Debasish Chattopadhyay deems that Misrilal considers Dhouli as double burden. He weds woman of his own caste and settles in Ranchi because this is only way possible for him to liberate himself from the liability of the infant and its mother. Chattopadhyay asserts that Misrilal seizes from Dhouli even the right to survive. He manipulates the villagers to expel her from the rural community. (*Dhouli* 106). Dhouli, becomes the ultimate victim for Misrilal’s flaw. Giving birth to an un-fathered child makes her position more vulnerable. Dhouli renovates her body into “an item” for sexual consumption. Her decision raises a challenge to societal norms and restrictions. Misrilal becomes the custom and value saver motivating others in the society to banish Dhouli out

from the village. She is banished from the community for her indulgence in prostitution but ironically she is offered to stay in village if she agrees to be a personal object of sexual gratification for Misrilal's brother-in-law. This dualism seeds the autocratic and exploitative ideology of male dominated society. (31). With her choice of staying with Misrilal's brother in law, Dhoulis could surreptitiously lead a secluded and degrading life of a randi. (32). However, Dhoulis decides to be a "professional randi," to triumph over her minimal identity of "kept woman" (32). She had trust that "the collective strength of that society was far more powerful than an individual's strength" (33).

Beauvoir argues that woman's enslavement and subordination is social construct as women duly understand that by "refusing to be the Other, refusing complicity with man, would mean renouncing all the advantages an alliance with the superior caste confers on them" (10). Through Dhoulis's challenge, Devi projects a perfect example of "eclipsed system of wrenching women within patriarchy" (Dubey 92). Although these women never transgress their fixed territories, yet they are not given their due worth in patriarchal society because men fear that the provision of equality will ultimately annul their right to claim supremacy. This insecurity breeds dominance and oppression of women by men. Katharine M. Rogers argues that the male insecurity and domination is the "most important cause of misogyny, because the most widely and firmly entrenched in society" (Rogers 272). In an orthodox tribal society, the status of women is not better than bonded "slaves" who have to heed to their owners' commands. Their noncompliance bring repercussions in the form that they become vulnerable to the atrocities of the collective patriarchal society especially the slave traders. Burke states that the incidents of human trafficking reveal that underprivileged women are confiscated compulsorily or deluded into prostitution in India. Rajulapudi Srinivas reveals that more than two hundred tribal folk, particularly children and women, were trafficked in the last few years. Taking advantage of the poverty and illiteracy among the tribes and adivasis, mediators are exploiting them.

Rebellious women, like Dhoulis, are forced to live a sub human life in double marginalised situations. But can we call this a 'worthless life' in real terms or there appears a slightest hope for salvation? Julia Kristeva's idea of abjection sheds new light on Dhoulis's rejection of the option of living as per the desires of somebody else's. She disallows the supremacy of unjust social traditions and biased male support because this is her identification of 'true' self for survival. Kristeva, in her article "Approaching Abjection," remarks that "I" rejects the yearning for every element. It is a precursor of an expulsion of longing to listen, or comprehend it. Same happens in case of Dhoulis. Kristeva recognizes that the provision served "is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel myself" (131). She takes this expulsion as the clause of "self establishment." Dhoulis also 'expels' herself from the forced authority of the male supremacy to establish her "I." Dhoulis finds her banishment as a blessing because she establishes her liberty to live and have the power of her own body by being a part of greater community. She aspires to trace her acceptance in 'other' community after rejection from her husband and her tribe. In "Frames of Marginalisation," Chattopadhyay describes that Dhoulis's decision to be a component of metropolitan prostitution population signifies her liberation from her own village, as she discovers her belongingness in the larger community (89).

Devi's story "The Hunt" is a powerful story of a subaltern woman Mary Oraon who becomes victim of phallogocentric sexual aggression and eventually retaliates over the man who threatens her maidenhood. Mary is an unmarried self-reliant tribal girl of eighteen, stunningly beautiful and confident. She subsists on the periphery of social exclusion as she is an illegitimate child of Mr. Dixon who impregnated her simple trusting mother Bhikni, a tribal woman and then abandoned her. The incident permanently sowed the seed of distrust and suspicion in Mary's mind.

Mary displays a secreted potential in her suffering, pain and resistance. When subjected to sexual harassment and manipulation by Tehsildar Singh, Mary refuses to be a passive victim. Singh is a misogynist capitalist who leads the illegal deforestation for profit, but tribals are held responsible. The rise of consumerism and the exploitation of natural resources have led to the extinction of tribes in India. Devi writes: "As long as the forests were there, the hunting tribes did not suffer so much, because the forests used to provide them with food, shelter, timber, hunting. But now that the forests are gone, the tribals are in dire distress." (*Hunt* ii) The tribes are gradually losing their lands, and as a consequent, compelled to become slaves. Rich and upper caste landowners take the advantage of their situation and exploit them mercilessly. Mahasweta Devi believes that government policies have failed to curtail the problem:

Nothing is done for them although so much money is allotted for them. They do not want money; they want facilities; they want to live the life of an honourable poor Indian, you might say. But they are denied everything...The system hunts them. And wants to brand them. The system which hunts them and uses as target is the criminal.
(iii-x).

Tribal women are double victimized. They toil hard, but still get less wages for their labour. If men are paid twelve annas daily for their work, women are offered only eight annas for cutting branches and transporting wood to the pathways (7). To the licentious eyes of the capitalists like Tehsildar, tribal women like Mary are just the objects to be desired and utilized. That is why even though he has a wife, he makes other women a victim of his voluptuousness and avariciousness (11). Mary is aware of it, but she also has a realisation that if she incites the tribals and files a police case against Tehsildar, she will never get justice. On the contrary, Tehsildar will sue a false case against her. After police enquiries and long court trials, Mary will eventually face mental and physical harassment only. It was not her fight against an individual, but against the whole system; law enforcement, judiciary and administration. Mary knew that she is unprotected and vulnerable. Tehsildar tries to allure Mary by convincing her that he will provide her clothes and jewellery. On listening, Mary took a deep breath and then said: "Not today. Today I'm unclean (13). Devi writes: "If Mary was willing, there would have been no problem. Mary is unwilling. Tehsildar must accept that"(11). Unlike Dhoulai and Douloti, Mary is a strong, humorous, and outspoken by nature. She remains formidable for the outside world with her two weapons- her words and machete. As an astute businesswoman of strong physical abilities, Mary is hailed even by her owner's wife for her robust working strength and will power: "[she] carries a forty-pound bag on her back, and boards the train, cleans the whole house in half an hour" (12). She has numerous admirers at Tohri market, but she is headstrong and doesn't let anyone take an advantage of her. But

Singh, the mainstream imperialistic businessman, becomes crazy to assert his gender superiority by “winning” Mary who becomes a victim of the carnal desires of that “big beast” (15).

Julia Kristeva argues that suppressed yearning does not have the requisite potential force to attain sovereignty; “the possibility of revolution exists only in language and in subjects operating on the threshold between control and disruption, between the unconscious and the social” (“Women's Time” 7). She believes that women, living on the peripheries of social exclusions, can find their own meaning of life. Vandana Gupta, in *Mahasweta Devi*, argues that the protagonist Mary's fight becomes a manifestation of novelist's “resistant aesthetics” against gender oppression and annihilation of the physical environment in postcolonial India (120). Mary, the subaltern female victim, endowed with an exceptional physical and mental power, puts an end to her consistent exploiter, a potential rapist who threatened her virginity. She undertakes the role of a hunter to perform the “biggest kill” on occasion of 'Jani Parab' an Adivasi ritual when after every twelve years there is role reversal and instead of men, women go for hunting and enjoy drinks. Mary becomes a hunter in this year's ritual hunt and with her machete kills Tehsildar who is indeed, more dangerous than a real beast “a Lakra, a wolf”(xi). From an object of hunting Mary finally turns out to be a victorious hunter by killing the “biggest beast” (17). However the issue arises; can violence be justified? “The Hunt” emerges as a powerful narrative of valiant resistance of a tribal woman, a victim of male sexual aggression who stands up against the capitalist exploiter and avenges her oppressive plight by killing her oppressor. Devi, through the narrative of Mary's active resistance seems to suggest that when the system crumbles down, violence is justified: “India is supposed to be a non-violent country. But in this non-violent country, how many firings, how many killings by bigots take place every year? When the system fails an individual has a right to take to violence or any other means to get justice”(xii). Devi's “The Hunt” is a startling revelation of prevailing injustices, sexual exploitations and biased oppressions of vulnerable tribal women. It encompasses a forewarning for our coming generations also. The novelist does not simply illustrate the widespread gender differences, but also invokes the human race to show trust in equal human rights and freedom for all human beings of diverse castes, creeds, religions and statuses. Devi dares to visualise a world free of gender disparity, prejudices, oppressions and discriminations.

To conclude, Devi unveils an unspeakable truth of women's misery, endurance, strife and resistance in her stories. She lends voice to feminist issues related to gender margins, loss of identity, passive acceptance and active resistance. The struggles of Douloti, Dhoulis and Mary Oraon offer glimpse of female's metaphorical position in a society which decides upon her rights, obligations and freedom. Poverty adds another dimension of materialistic use of their bodies for the social and economic purpose. Devi' fiction chronicles not only the agonizing sufferings and servitude of marginalized tribal women, but also highlights the way they exercise their power within a restricted zone of domination and suppression. What makes their battle heroic is their “survival,” their unbroken determination and undying spirit gained through their unending suffering and sacrifice. To survive exploitation, Douloti uses her power of endurance; Dhoulis denies to surrender; and Mary shows active resistance by striking back the tormenter itself. This is their journey from misery to resistance.

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**An Exploration of Gender Stereotypes in Shashi Deshpande's
*That Long Silence and The Dark Holds No Terrors***

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Abstract

*This research paper deals with how patriarchy impacts and shapes the mindset of the persons to fit in or move out of the straitjacket of the patriarchal gender stereotypical roles. Some of the protagonists in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence and The Dark Holds No Terrors* have been examined against the backdrop of Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura to infer how some of them conform to the assigned traditional roles while others rupture the traditional stratification and become role models for attaining the gender equality.*

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Male Pride, Female Subordination and Stereotypes*

Shashi Deshpande is an Indian English Writer who has authored more than a dozen novels and an anthology of stories, besides children`s books. Her *oeuvre* is informed by existential dilemmas concerning marriage, identity crisis, problems in relationships, family and sibling jealousy, and realistic portrayals of gender stereotypes in patriarchal society. The present paper focuses on the main protagonists - Jaya, Mohan and Kamat in *That Long Silence* and Manohar, Saritha and Boozie in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* - and analyses these protagonists through the prism of Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura.

Albert Bandura is a Canadian-American psychologist. In his book *Social Learning and Personality Development*, he defines the Social Learning Theory as follows: "Learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement" (9). It implies that men and women learn their gender specific roles from the society via societal institutions though observation or direct enforcement. Though they learn it from the society, it is indeed difficult for both men and women to fit into the traditional gender stereotypical roles in an era of globalization and modernization. Based on this framework, the present article aims to find out how far these institutions are successful in teaching gender norms to the characters and how these characters imbibe the gender roles and perform the same or deviate from the traditional gender roles.

This theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. According to Bandura, learning happens through observation which he terms as "observational learning." People can learn by observing "a live model," "a verbal instructional model" and "a symbolic model." Reinforcement is the next stage where they reinforce what they have learned. According to Bandura, there are four types of reinforcement. They are extrinsic reinforcement, intrinsic reinforcement, vicarious reinforcement and self-reinforcement. He also discusses the modelling process such as attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. Bandura is of the view that all these

processes help in learning process. These processes will aid in understanding how the principal characters in the select novels learn the gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes are different from archetypes. In the book *45 Master Characters: Mythic Models for Creating Original Characters*, Victoria Lynn Schmidt differentiates archetypes and stereotypes as follows: “Stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about people usually stemming from one person's prejudice. Archetypes aren't formed from one individual's view of people but from the entire human race's experience of people. Judgement and assumptions are absent”(5).

In his book *Gender Socialization and the Making of Gender in the Indian Context*, Sujit Kumar Chattopadhyay describes the term stereotypes as follows:

Gender stereotypes are the fixed notions about the values, norms and attributes related to the gender and such stereotypes guide the male and female gender to the absorption of these notions in such a way so that the persons belonging to the male or female gender can become the representatives of the collective formulation of masculinity or femininity...Gender stereotypes are born out of the cultural legacy of a society, its style of thinking and habits and behaviours practiced year after year. Thus, it is the result of a long process operated and continued by a number of agents such as family, school, media and peer group. (139-140)

He further elucidates the process of gender socialization as follows:

Since, unlike sex, gender is a social and cultural construct, the process of gender socialization has a great role to play in the shaping of personality. As sex is assigned at birth, gender is assigned at the social and cultural level, and it is never a matter of choices. So far as the history of gender is concerned, it has always been the result of individual urge of co-opting the social and cultural norms and practices and of fulfilling the social expectations thereof on the part of the individual. To a number of sociologists, socialization is the spontaneous process of learning by which individuals, men or women, conform to the basic social norms. (xvi)

Patriarchal culture is taught to the children through various institutions such as family and society. Sujit Kumar Chattopadhyay divides the institutions which teach gender roles to children as follows:

There are three main categories of socializing agents that play their role for the internalization of gender norms. They are primary groups, secondary groups and reference groups. Family is treated as primary group, the school and peer groups are considered as secondary groups and political parties and media are treated as reference groups. It is through these diverse groups and organizations that the curriculum of gender socialization is imparted in the minds of the child, judged from this angle the role of these agents is as important as the gender socialization itself. (91)

Family members teach gender roles to the children and they serve as what Bandura calls “a live model,” and “a verbal instructional model” and “a symbolic model.” In these select novels, the family members serve as “live models” and “instructional models” in teaching the gender stereotypes to the characters whereas myths serve as the “symbolic model” in teaching gender roles to them. Once the characters learn the traditional gender stereotypes from the

family members, they try to reinforce them in their lives. These reinforcements are of four types. They are extrinsic reinforcement, intrinsic reinforcement, vicarious reinforcement and self-reinforcement.

When the characters follow the gender stereotypes due to the teaching of the family members, it is what Bandura calls “Extrinsic reinforcement.” In the novel *That Long Silence* Jaya's family teaches her gender roles and she tries to reinforce the same in her life. When Jaya is young, her grandmother wants her to be very silent. Her grandmother is of the view that Jaya's husband will suffer a lot due to her verbal retorts and witty replies. She concludes that Jaya's husband will not be “comfortable” (27) with her questions in her marital life. So, Jaya learns to be silent in her life. She rarely expresses her views. Jaya is taught by her aunt Vanitamami that a husband is like “a sheltering tree” (32). As per the advice of Vanitamami and her grandmother, she blindly follows them in her marital life with Mohan. So, she moulds herself according to the likes of her husband Mohan, regarding him as a “sheltering tree” (32).

Besides the institution of family, myth plays a vital role in imparting gender roles to men and women. Maria Mies in her book *Indian Women and Patriarchy: Conflicts and Dilemmas of Students and Working Women*, writes about how women in Indian society are shaped by the mythical figures. She says: “The Indian woman accepts this status because she has been nurtured since childhood on the mythological characters of Sita, Savitri, Draupadi and Gandhari as role models and taught to emulate their devotion to the husband” (101). When Mohan wants to go to Bombay after his forgery in his work place, Jaya accepts his decision. She has followed him like “Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails...” (11; ellipsis in original). She stays silent and does not want to indulge in an oral combat because she believes in the following patriarchal ideology according to which if there are “two bullocks yoked together...it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?” (12; ellipsis in original). In this situation, Jaya's “internal reinforcement” of gender stereotype can be traced.

Mohan has also been taught the patriarchal culture by the family and the society. He observes the society and takes up the role of the provider and protector of the family after the death of his father. As a provider for the family, he not only provides financial support to his wife and children but also to his brother and sister because of which he feels that his salary is not enough to meet his financial needs. So, he even commits forgery. Kamla Bhasin in *Exploring Masculinity* talks about how the men in the patriarchal societies “are thrust into the role of breadwinners, protectors, warriors” (3). In the same way, Mohan commits forgery to maintain the role of the provider and breadwinner of his family. After his forgery, he stays in Dadar flat on the advice of his higher official, but without “his routine, his files, his telephone, his appointments, he seemed to be no one at all” (24). It explains how Mohan has understood his worth based on his job. To him, job is everything. This mentality is not just the mindset of Mohan alone but that of most of the men in the Patriarchal society. Here Mohan serves as an example for “Vicarious reinforcement” of gender stereotypical behaviour of being breadwinner of the family.

Manohar in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* serves as an example for “self-

reinforcement” of gender stereotypical roles according to social learning theory. He is a man who is interested in theatre. During his college days, he is lauded for his theatrical performances. He indeed serves as a secretary of the Literary and Debating Association. He is quite famous in his college. But everything changes after his marriage with Saritha. He gives up his theatre production owing to the less income because Sarita pressurizes him to join in a college as an assistant professor in order to provide for his family. When he earns for the family, Saritha pursues her studies as a medical student. She does not contribute anything for the family. When she starts earning more after becoming a doctor, the patriarchal society which observes them, dictates them the gender roles. The patriarchal society does not want the wife be to the breadwinner of the family in the presence of her husband. Thus, Manohar is insulted by his friend for earning less than this wife. He indirectly insults Manohar by saying that, if he had married a doctor like Saritha, he would have gone to Ooty and even further to London, Paris, Rome, Geneva. In another incident, an interviewer who comes to interview Saritha unexpectedly questions Manohar with the words: “*How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well?*” (35). Here, this friend and the interviewer act as representations of the society. They are reminding Manohar that he is inferior to his wife because his wife has taken up the role of a breadwinner.

Manohar who deeply believes in the patriarchal ideology starts showing his hatred towards Sarita for taking his breadwinner role. It is evident from Manohar's actions that he does not want Saritha to pursue her medical degree. When Saritha wants to specialize after her M.B.B.S degree, Manohar tells her that they cannot afford it. But Sarita completes her P.G. degree with the help of Boozie, Saritha's professor. He acts as a mentor to Sarita and helps to build her own clinic. In this regard, Manohar shows his hatred towards Sarita in the following incidents. When the patients knock at their door to visit doctor Saritha, he does not open the door and asks her to open it. He says: “Open it, Saru, it must be for you.” When they go out of their home, there are “nods and smiles, murmured greeting and namastes” not for him but for Saritha. He is totally “ignored” (41) by the society. These incidents make him feel humiliated. He controls the actions of his wife in all possible ways, He does not allow her to visit her mother's home by posing so many questions to her such as: “Why do you have to go?,” “Did they let you know when she was ill? When she was dying? When she was dead?,” “Then why do you have to go?” and “What about your work?.” Sarita soon understands that her husband is not happy with her career growth. Thus, she thinks: “*a+b they told us in mathematics is equal to b+a. But here a+b was not, definitely not equal to b+a. It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible*” (42). In other instance, she explains the superiority of the husband in the following words: “Perhaps there is something in the male, she now thought, that is whittled down and ultimately destroyed by female domination. It is not so with a female. She can be dominated, she can submit, and yet hold something of herself in reserve” (87).

Knowing that Manohar is hurt by her career growth, Sarita even decides to quit her job. When she informs this to Manohar, he acts as if he does not have any enmity towards Sarita. Thus, Manohar suffers from inferiority complex after losing his breadwinner role to Sarita. Sarita also suffers because by being the breadwinner, she loses the love and affection of her husband. The main reason for the sufferings of these characters is the Patriarchal gender

roles which they have imbibed and are exhibiting. They are in conflict whether to give away the traditional gender roles or to change themselves according to the need of the hour.

Apart from these characters who strictly follow the gender stereotypes, there are also characters who defy the gender stereotypes. They are Kamat from *That Long Silence* and Boozie from *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. In the novel *That Long Silence*, Kamat is a prominent male character. He is a lonely young widower in Bombay. He lives above Jaya's apartment. Kamat makes criticism on Jaya's writings. Jaya values her close bond with Kamat, with whom she shares her thoughts and opinions about her novels, something she could not do with Mohan, her husband. She likes him for respecting her as an equal, and she feels that she is herself in his presence due to which she thinks as follows: "It had been a revelation to me that two people, a man and a woman, could talk this way: with this man, I had not been a woman. I had been just myself–Jaya" (153). He scolds her like her father when she her decisions are wrong. He clears her doubts with the following words: "I'm warning you– beware of this 'women are the victims' theory of yours. It'll drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, woman. Don't skulk behind a false name. And work–work if you want others to take you seriously" (148). When all men think in stereotypical roles, he sees things differently and understands the main problem in relationships between men and women.

Boozie in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is a skilled doctor. Sarita sees herself as the raw material in Boozie's hands. She gets ready to be moulded, chiselled, and polished by him. As she expects, he teaches her to dress elegantly and simply, speak fluent English and appreciate delicious food. He gives her work in a research scheme which provides her extra money every month that is useful to her. She becomes his Registrar and in less than two years she completes her M.D. After four years, she becomes an Assistant Honorary at a suburban hospital. She also receives money from Boozie to start a consulting room of her own. This behaviour of Boozie is just the opposite of her husband Manohar who tries to suppress her desires. Boozie and Kamat do not follow any models and do not reinforce the patriarchal gender roles, rather they defy stereotypical behaviours and serve as the models for achieving gender equality by treating women characters as equals.

Shashi Deshpande's rich galaxy of female fictive characters of multiple hues offers interesting vignettes of her protagonists learning and performing the gender roles, and demonstrates her stance as a socially committed writer. No doubt earlier she was dismissive of the committed writing yet as her fiction craft evolved and mellowed she got reconciled with the fact that all great written work is socially committed writing. In her article "The Dilemma of a Woman Writer" in *The Literary Criterion*, she admits as follows:

There was a time when I was scornful of what is called committed writing. I considered such writing flawed because it being message oriented diminishes its artistic worth. But now I know that all good writing is socially committed writing, it comes out of a concern for the human predicament. I believe, as Camus says, that the greatness of an artist is measured by the balance the writer maintains between the values of creation and the values of humanity. (35)

Deshpande's fiction upholds the values of humanity by focusing on the afflictions of the patriarchy, debunking "Extrinsic reinforcements," and obliquely suggesting to inure the

young minds to the gender equality for their organic development.

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A Reading of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* as a Critique of the Historiography of Indian Nationalism

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Abstract

*The historiography of Indian nationalism has been subjected to criticism for its elitism, absolute indifference to the contribution of the common people and its failure to accommodate the marginalized sections of the society within the larger framework of the Indian independence movement. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* documents an untold story of resistance to the British rule in colonial India, put up by the residents of an obscure south-Indian village. In this paper, I will read *Kanthapura* as a fictional rendering of history of colonial India and analyze how it reveals the inadequacies of the nationalist historiography.*

Keywords: *nationalism, historiography, resistance, untold, critique.*

Michael J. Salevouris and Conal Furay define “historiography” as “the study of the way history has been and is written ?the history of historical writing . . . When you study “historiography” you are studying how individual historians have, over time interpreted and presented specific subjects,” (Salevouris and Furay 255). Historical narratives available for public consumption always contain authoritative meditation on dominant institutions like the state, the law or civil society. The preoccupation of historiography with knowledge/power is problematic in itself. Though history is supposed to be objective in nature, in reality, “objectivity is unattainable in history” (qtd. in Chakrabarty 17). Historians and sociologists have now realized the need to move towards the recognition of the possibility of many narratives of histories, rather than a unitary perception of truth and reality. Raja Rao's novel, *Kanthapura* portrays the thwarted attempts of the inhabitants of the fictional south Indian village named *Kanthapura*, at rebelling against the British rule by participating in the civil disobedience movement under the leadership of the local “Gandhi man,” Moorthy. The present paper essays a critique of the historiography of Indian nationalism as reflected in *Kanthapura*.

Nineteenth century witnessed evolution in Indian historiography, in which the nationalist school emerged as one of the most important approaches. The Indian nationalist school of historiography came into existence as a reaction to the prejudices of the British imperialist historiography against India. If historical narratives of pre-colonial India have been characterized by an overemphasis on kings and courts, colonial and nationalist historians fixed their attention on a few English-educated elites of India. Ranajit Guha explains, “The general orientation of . . . elitist historiography is to represent Indian nationalism as primarily an idealist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people from subjugation to freedom” (Guha 2).

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* provides insightful comments on the gradual spreading

and the dreadful outcome of nationalist movement in an obscure south Indian village named Kanthapura. The novel critiques nationalist historiography by its deliberate refusal to focus on elite national figures. Mahatma Gandhi acts almost as an absent presence in the novel. The protagonist, Moorthy features as the driving force behind the participation of the villagers in the civil disobedience movement. But Rao realistically enunciates Gandhi's power in motivating the common people, especially the youth through Moorthy. Gandhi's speech effects a miraculous change in him. He discontinues imperial college education and devotes his life to help the country by "going and working among the dumb millions of the villages" (Rao 36). However, the charged description of Moorthy's first meeting with Gandhi seems to subtly criticize the nationalist historiographer's habit of writing the history of Indian nationalism as "a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite" (Guha 2). The novel critiques the elitist tendency of the historiography of Indian nationalism by suggesting that Moorthy is only the local equivalent of the nationally renowned political figure, Mahatma Gandhi. On the day of the formation of the Congress Committee in Kanthapura, Range Gowda said, "The state of Mysore has a Maharaja, but that Maharaja has another Maharaja who is in London, and one has another one in Heaven, and so everybody has its own Mahatma and this Moorthy... will be our Mahatma" (Rao 79). Nanjamma imagines Mahatma as the Sahyadri Mountains. She decides to call him 'The Mountain'. Rangamma adds that Moorthy should be henceforth called the 'Small Mountain', thereby instinctively acknowledging the hierarchical structure embedded in nationalist historiography (128). The nationalist historical narrative's preference for elitism is not only implied by the dialogues of the villagers but Moorthy himself seems to accept it as an inevitable fact. Explaining the purpose of the fight, Moorthy says, "Brothers, remember, too, I am but a pebble among the pebbles of the river...(131).

By portraying the social and economic changes brought about by the mobilization of almost the entire populace of the village in the civil disobedience movement, *Kanthapura* exposes the limitations of the nationalist historiographers who tend to simplify the historical narrative of the Indian independence movement by restricting their attention towards the indigenous elites' contribution to national politics. The loss of lives and the exodus of the villagers as a consequence of their involvement in Gandhian politics at the local level draw our attention to the sacrifices made by common people in the Indian independence movement which are usually glossed over by nationalist historiographers. The sacrifices of the villagers can be read as the undocumented contribution of numerous people, without whom no political movement would have been successful. To borrow from Ranajit Guha, the historiography of Indian nationalism "fails to acknowledge, far less interpret, the contribution made by people on their own, that is, independently of the elite to the making and development of this nationalism" (Guha 3). Though Rao ends up upholding the masses as consumers of nationalist ideology, it is remarkable that he vividly depicts how the inhabitants of an obscure village negotiate with national politics through the medium of the local counterpart of Gandhi, Moorthy. Rao's

emotional investment in the Hindu religious ethics enables him to recognize the importance of religion as a tool for political motivation. He does not endow Moorthy with any special charms. His (Moorthy's) credit lies in having a proper understanding of the religiosity of the villagers. If we analyze the components of Satyagraha, we realize that they are deeply embedded in Hindu ethics and scriptures. The villagers are initially introduced to Gandhian ideology through the medium of 'Harikatha', where Gandhi is deified as the incarnation of Shiva and his nationalist activities are glorified as the means to "bring back light and plenty" to "Bharatha", the "enslaved daughter" of Brahma (12). The very formation of the Congress committee in Kanthapura is preceded by a religious procession and a bhajan. Being fully aware of the villagers' fear in divine retribution, Moorthy makes them vow before god. He deliberately manipulates their religious beliefs. He represents Dandi March as a pilgrimage undertaken by Gandhiji to motivate them to get actively engaged in contemporary politics. In order to dissuade the coolies from drinking toddy, the villagers use Gandhiji's name interchangeably with that of the presiding deity of the village, Kenchamma. All these imply that the Gandhian ideology had appealed to the villagers precisely because it was couched in religious diction.

Critiquing the nationalist and colonialist historiography of India in the essay, "On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India", Ranajit Guha observes,

What clearly is left out of this un-historical historiography is the politics of the people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country ?that is the people (Guha 4).

One of the unique features of *Kanthapura* is the presentation of the political involvement of the subaltern classes in the local Gandhian movement. Being an aged Brahmin widow, the narrator, Achakka voices the caste prejudices of the Hindu village which was divided into brahmin quarter, pariah quarter, weaver's quarter, potter's quarter and Sudra quarter. The word 'pariah' refers to a social outcast who lives on unhealthy foods like carcasses of animals. Hailing from an orthodox Brahmin family, Moorthy has to negotiate with the deep-rooted caste prejudices in his mind in order to conform to Gandhian dictate of liberal inter-caste mingling. It is interesting to note that the pariahs from the Skeffington Coffee Estate overshadow the original pariah residents of the village in their importance. It is through the initiative of the city-bred Brahmin clerks that the pariahs get in touch with Moorthy. The first meeting between Moorthy and the pariahs culminates in a disaster due to the violence perpetrated by the pariahs on the police man, Bade Khan; which in turn, was occasioned by Bade Khan's physical assault on Moorthy. Being expelled from the coffee-estate, pariah Rachanna settles in Kanthapura with his family. It seems that Moorthy selects Rachanna as a member of the local Congress Committee only in order to maintain a semblance of representation from all sections of society in the

committee.

When the villagers gather to picket Boranna's toddy booth, the coolies of the coffee-estate are beaten by the police for their refusal to obey their (police men's) order of brutally marching onto the booth. The protesters appeal to the coolies to abstain from drinking by evoking their fellow-feeling and humanitarianism. This incident reveals the fact that the coolies are used by both the authorities and the dissenters as means of vindicating their power. Thus the subaltern emerges as a doubly-wronged figure who is helplessly trapped in the conflict of power between the two groups. It is noteworthy that the coolies finally decide to listen to the protesters' appeal of not drinking, not out of their respect for Gandhi, but only out of their reverence for the local deity, Kenchamma. All these coolies take shelter in the pariah quarter of the village. However in the next morning, they are marched bent-headed to the estate by the police as a gesture of vulgar display of authoritarian power. Three days later, when the Satyanarayana procession transforms into a political one, the coolies join them zealously in a daunting manner. They end up resorting to violence in their combat against the police. In both the instances i.e. Moorthy's first encounter with the coolies and the subsequent event involving their spontaneous participation with the villagers and the Gandhian followers from outside, they are shown to be prone towards aggression and violence. This can be read as a reminder of the fact that the subaltern cannot be easily incorporated within the framework of non-violent political movement as they are indoctrinated in the culture of violence and aggression from birth.

The incident surrounding the picketing of Boranna's toddy booth unravels the truth that the subaltern classes were mere pawns at the hands of the institutions of authority as well as the dissenters. The violence and aggression displayed by the subaltern subtly hint at the distinctions between "elite mobilization" and "subaltern mobilization". It reminds us, "Elite mobilization tended to be more legalistic and constitutionalist in orientation, subaltern mobilization relatively violent. The former was on the whole more cautious and controlled, the latter more spontaneous" (Guha 4-5). The elitist tendency of the historiography of Indian nationalism not only glorified a few indigenous leaders for their contribution to the Indian independence movement, but also pushed local leaders like Moorthy to the periphery. In other words, local political leaders like Moorthy were completely overshadowed by the charismatic presence of national political figures like Gandhi. Moorthy can be read as the representative of such local leaders who had contributed immensely to the contemporary national politics by mobilizing public support for a political cause but their stories passed into oblivion due to the biasedness of the nationalist historiography. He enables us to understand how religion can be used as a tool for propagating political ideas among ignorant, illiterate and semi-literate masses of India. By tracing the trajectory of the involvement of the mostly ignorant and self-centered villagers in the local political scenario, Raja Rao critiques the historiography of Indian nationalism for its failure to acknowledge the contribution and sacrifices of numerous Indians who had jeopardized everything for the sake of nationalist politics.

Kanthapura lends voice to untold stories of resistance to the British rule in colonial India. The entire narrative of the novel is replete with subtle criticisms of the historiography of Indian nationalism.

Notes

i Dipesh Chakrabarty quotes from Georg G Iggers' *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* where Iggers agrees to Peter Novick's opinion regarding the unattainable nature of history.

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**City/Soul/Identity: A Reading of the Urban Mosaic in
Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel***

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Abstract

City, urban space or place, in the realm of writings contextualised on India, has mostly featured as a setting to a narrative. This conviction, in a way, mortified and subdued the position of the city within the purview of Literature, thereby disregarding the significance of the same in the construction and assertion of identities. Cities, precisely, play a central role in structuring the personality, the singularity of an individual because it is a particular city or a specific urban space which designs its inmates. For instance, a Delhiwallah or a Mumbaikar is so referred to as because the strange, unusual as well as the customary, habitual disposition of the metropolis gets reflected in their character, thus exemplifying how the city impacts the individual.

Keywords: *City, Space, Impact, Identity, Character*

“I asked my soul: What is Delhi?
She replied: The world is the body and Delhi its life.”
-- Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib

Space, be it rural or urban, countryside or city, usually figures as a context, or for that matter, as a stable setting to the historical and temporal events in the opuses within the realm of Literature. This notion of the city, in a way, mortified and subdued its position within the purview of Literature and, as Foucault remarks, solely rendered it as a “dead”, “fixed” and “immobile” (qtd. in “Foucault” 170) space incapable of moulding or steering its denizens. Nevertheless, a “spatial turn” (Soja, “Postmodern Geographies” 16) took place and frames of reference and perspectives with regard to the city as merely being a setting to a narrative began changing, possibly in and around the 1960s. As a result of this shift in the outlook and approach towards the city, the critics began to perceive it as a space adept at evoking diverse reactions and feelings in its inmates, thereby possessing the potential of creating a kaleidoscopic manifestation of reality. Thus, the rapidly developing modern metropolis proved to be an engaging and inspiring space for the artists and thinkers because of its immense variability and diversity, as well as the boundless promise that it held, as Malcolm Bradbury puts it, “there has always been a close association between literature and cities” (96).

In the context of literary writings based on India, the re-positioning of the mundane perception regarding cities led to the ushering of a whole new gamut of texts wherein the Indian cities, viz. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, ceased to be only a locale and became an entity which exerted adequate influence on the individuals. For instance, in the contemporary times, several fictional writings set in Delhi such as *A Bad Character* by Deepti Kapoor, *The*

Windfall by Diksha Basu, *Corridor* by Sarnath Banerjee, *In Custody* by Anita Desai, *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* by Anuja Chauhan, *You Are Here* by Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan, *Equations* by Shibani Sibal and many more showcase how Delhi is not just a space, but is a persona which, perhaps, is more significant than the protagonist of a text. In view of this, the quintessential piece that deserves mention with regard to Delhi being a living entity is Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel*.

The vibrant, sonorous, grandiloquent and momentously historic urban space with the honorific name as Delhi, designated so after the King Raja Dhilu who reigned in the region in the 1st century BCE, is a synthesis, an assimilation, an agglomeration of outlandish yet astounding aspects, - beginning from the pre-historic settlements, the growth of Indian traditions and cultures, the succession of mighty empires and powerful kingdoms to the advent of the Europeans resulting in the establishment of the Colonial rule and the final takeover by the Government of India on August 15, 1947. Although presently a megalopolis harbouring the capital of the nation, Delhi, being the seat of the Monarchs of Hindustan since aeons, has always been the cynosure of religious turmoil as well as politics of India. Unquestionably, these mayhems have left their imprint on the natives of the cityscape to such an extent that the conditions of the place, space or the city now regulates the minds of their inmates, thereby validating Lewis Mumford's assertion that "mind takes form in the city; and in turn, urban forms condition mind" (3). Thus, Delhi and its citizenry thrive in a mutual co-existence, sharing a relationship of interplay and interaction which shapes the patterns of conduct of the inmates and delineates the character of Delhiwallas, as is veritably and virtually penned by the Indian author Khushwant Singh in his 1990 publication, *Delhi: A Novel*.

Traversing through time, space and history, *Delhi* celebrates the seasons, the flora and foliage and the manner of life led by the city-people on the banks of Yamuna across generations. The account herein, however, expands over six hundred years and showcases a prismatic demonstration of actuality, as Delhi opens up and foregrounds its so long concealed spaces. Often considered as Singh's magnum opus, the novel sketches a resemblance between the city and its denizens right from the beginning, as the narrator articulates:

... Delhi may appear like a gangrenous accretion of noisy bazaars and mean-looking hovels growing round a few tumble-down forts and mosques along a dead river. If he ventures into its narrow, winding lanes, the stench of raw sewage may bring vomit to his throat. The citizens of Delhi do little to endear themselves to anyone...they urinate and defecate whenever and wherever the urge overtakes them; they are loud-mouthed, express familiarity with incestuous abuse and scratch their privates while they talk. (1)

Thus, Delhi and its inmates are alike, - they are gritty, unsophisticated, raw but honest as they do not pretend or attempt to appear congenial to their on-lookers. The people of Delhi often openly talk about sexual acts, engage in multiple relationships without a regret and abuse each other with slangs, as even a six year old kid vents out to a Sikh man "Abey Sikhrey! Harami (bastard), you want to sit on my Qutub Minar?" (Singh 10, 48). Although the Padishah (Emperor) of Iran, Nadir Shah once humorously remarked that it is Delhi's prickly heat that gives rise to bad temper, but thoughtfully if delved deep into the heart of the city and pondered

over the plight of the residents of Delhi, it may be observed that this truculent attitude and abrasive behaviour ensues from an intense feeling of pain, - an agony, a soreness possibly exuding from an erosion of identity and oneness. This lack of congruence and identity may be traced down to the times of the conflicting regimes that have stabbed the knife of hatred into the heart and soul of Delhi and punctured the atmosphere of fellow-feeling and leniency prevailing amongst its inhabitants. This constant shift of reign has led to an incessant metamorphosis of the city as well as the cultures, traditions and religious beliefs of the people, thereby giving way to hostility and aggression as a character in the novel who is a poet, addressed as Meer Sahib despondently vents out seeing the ruins around after the annihilation caused by the Afghans upon Delhi:

The scene of desolation fills my eyes with tears. At every step my distress and agitation increases. I cannot recognize houses or landmarks I once knew well. Of the former inhabitants, there is no trace. Everywhere there is a terrible emptiness ... I will never come this way again. (228)

The city Delhi, therefore, has undergone terrible transformations and witnessed ghastly affairs in meteoric successions. It can be considered to be a city which has been built, destroyed and re-built innumerable times by several invaders over the years who wanted to shape it in their own fashion. Along with the city, the inmates have also suffered the same fate because, with the coming of a new command every time, there has been a re-positioning of the urban space, a re-working of the identity by shattering the older identities and cultures. Moreover, there have been large scale migrations in Delhi since ages and surprisingly, these migrations or for that matter, relocationing are continuing even today as a character announces in the text, "Do you know 70,000 pour into Delhi every year from all over India? As if Delhi is the nation's orphanage" (380). Such migrations have also, therefore, designed the city as the people have carried with them their own customs and culture which, in due course of time, have got mingled with the other cultures of Delhi.

Thus, over the years, there have been a fusion of ideas, customs, castes and classes in Delhi wherein no particular sect have been able to retain absolute individuality, thereupon yielding to an urban lifestyle replete with superficiality, glibness, lascivious and carnal desires, devoid of the warmth of mental and emotional endearment. This uniformity has given rise to one greater identity, - the identity as a Delhiwalla, which could neither be altered by the pillages of the Emperors nor by the ravages of time. Nonetheless, as the author's account reveals, beneath the said repulsive ugliness the city nurtures within its heart a captivating charm which can be felt by the one who has sowed and cultivated an affinity, a feeling of belongingness to the city. This thought appears convincing in case of the residents of the urban locale as well, as they unravel their true, tantalizing self only to their paramour, as the narrator illustrates "...cultivate a sense of belongingness to Delhi and an attachment to someone like Bhagmati. Then the skies over Delhi's marbled palaces turn an aquamarine blue; its domed mosques and pencil-like minarets are spanned by rainbows, the earth exudes the earthy aroma of khas, of jasmine and of maulsari" (1-2).

The people of Delhi or Delhiwallas which the common people refer to as "Dilliwallas," love and adoration for their city is so intense and ardent that they believe the city Delhi to be their soul without which they are arid and lifeless as the text unearths,

“Delhiwallas would rather die than live in any other city in the world” (104, 85). Although many Kings and Sultans have reigned over Delhi, unleashed tortures upon its inmates, enjoyed the massacre of innocents and turned the city into a desolate ground of rotting corpses, yet the inmates' affection for the metropolis have always remained inexorable and constant. In fact, this fondness for the city luring in the hearts of the Delhiwallas is so ingrained that even back there in the year 1739 when the Padishah (Emperor) of Iran, Nadir Shah expressed his desire to take a woman, addressed as Noor Bai, from Delhi to his harem in Iran, Noor Bai announced that, “If Your Majesty stays in Delhi, your slave will serve you till her last breath, but if Your Majesty takes me away from Delhi, she will take poison and kill herself” (180). Such an assertion stunned and shocked the Emperor as he, all this time had only heard about the Delhiwallas' attachment to their space, but envisaged it for the first time ever, as the Emperor comments, “We had heard that the people of Delhi loved their city as bees love flowers. But we could not believe that the child of a courtesan would prefer to live in a Delhi brothel rather than in our palace in Iran!” (180). Thus, this remark on the part of the Emperor brings the reader back to the verse of Ghalib with which the chapter initiates wherein Ghalib affirms that Delhi is the life of the world, in the absence of which the entire realm would be sombre and listless. To the Delhiwallas, their city is their soul which drives their body and balances their everyday survival. Delhi, therefore, no longer sustains just as a locale but comes alive as a persona whose ethos and essence impacts the life, living and existence of its inhabitants.

It is often argued that the capital city Delhi is endowed with a special mystique because of it being the abode of the Government and more so, owing to its rich former heritage and it is this charisma and glamour which the author adroitly delineates in the art-piece with the help of a postmodern narrative approach called the flashback technique. The novel constantly moves to and fro in time and through this shift, paints a contrasting picture of past and present Delhi, with all its idiosyncrasies. Delhi, which was once replete with forts and several monuments, has been demolished to dust countless number of times and over its ruins, in the present times, are built fashionable houses and skyscrapers as the narrator says, “We take the Qutub road. Past the mausoleum of Safdar Jang, through the rash of bungalows that have smothered Yusuf Sarai and all the Khilji, Tughlak and Mughal monuments that once dominated the landscape” (87).

Similar accounts of Delhi, as in bridging the past and present of the city, are also observable in the writings of R.V.Smith, particularly in his *Delhi: Unknown Tales of a City*. This journalist archived Delhi through his pen and discovered facets of the city which were unknown to even its inmates. Yet, there lies a gulf of difference in the portrayal of the city by the two writers. While Singh brought to the forefront the gauche of the city and its denizens in an unrefined manner, Smith's intricate detailing has a softer tone and a polished diction.

The urban space Delhi, as Khushwant Singh showcases with a master stroke in his *chef-d'oeuvre*, often melds within its ambit facets of superstitious and credulous beliefs of the city-dwellers. The text unravels how the inmates of Delhi are devoutly religious on the one hand and extremely gullible on the other as the narrator can be seen encountering, on the streets of Delhi, people like Natha Singh, an astrologer, who foretells the fortune of men and extracts money out of their naivety. In fact, the narrator himself, on one occasion tells his

mistress Bhagmati that “If you die here you would go straight to paradise. The waters of the Shamsi Talab have been blessed by many saints” (49). This, at times illusory but devoted faith in God, is however ingrained in the very genesis of the city, Delhi. In an atmosphere of rigorous transmutation and the consequent reformation, an intense propinquity to religious sects, perhaps, gave the denizens of the urban space a pedestal, a plinth, a recognition to which they can cling when the circumstances around falls apart.

With regard to the religiosity of the Delhiwallas, however what deserves mention is their interweaving of religious faiths and coalescing of dissimilar creed and religion, that is, divine belief was not restricted into watertight compartments and any individual, be a Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh, was free to practice and follow any cult of his own choice. The readers can, in the novel, spot and discern characters like Musaddi Lal, Bhagmati, Meer Taqi Meer who are a manifestation of this unbounded spiritual conviction. Musaddi Lal, since childhood, had learned Sanskrit and Hindi, considered to be the language of the Hindu scriptures, as well as Arabic, Turki and Persian, believed to be the language of the holy scriptures of Islam. Musaddi Lal even had a Muslim name, Abdullah and even after being a Hindu by birth, was committed to the “dervish of Ghiaspur”, Nizamuddin because he was of the opinion that “...Ishwar who is also Allah, and Rama who is also Rahim...” (55, 50). Similarly, in case of the narrator's mistress Bhagmati, the narrator himself states in bewilderment that “Even after the years I have known her I am not sure whether she is a Muslim or Hindu. She says she is both – and more, because now she is also Sikh” (105). Thus religion, be it of any caste or creed, was a motivating and stimulating force for the citizens of Delhi then, when Delhi was under tremendous uproar, and is a driving force even today, when Delhi is calm and at its best.

Delhi: A Novel, as it is titled, unveils the whole history of Delhi and its bordering areas ranging from Tilpat, which was one of the Pandava's five villages; to Suraj Kund, named after Surajpal, the chieftain of the Tomara Rajputs; and Anangpur, built by a Tomara, Anangpal (23). As the narrator wanders around, sometimes with the foreigners as a Guide and sometimes with his mistress Bhagmati, the city Delhi unravels its beauty as well as bruises. The sites and scenes are described with so much intricacy that the readers can, as if, envision the roads to Mehrauli, the streets to Chandni Chowk, the corridors of Connaught Circus, the Purana Qila, the ruins of Jamali-Kamali's mosque, the remains of Tughlakabad, the Red Fort. Moreover, through the life of a character named Musaddi Lal, - his ancestors and progeny, the entire history of Delhi, encompassing both the past and present, is reflected, therein drawing a resemblance between the development and progress of Delhi since time immemorial and the evolution of his family down the ages, as Musaddi Lal himself asserts, “My ancestors had been scribes in the service of the rulers of Delhi” (50).

Musaddi Lal's account portrays how Sultan Ghiasuddin Balban died out of grief as his son Prince Mohammed was killed while fighting the Mongols and how thereafter, followed a succession of thrones starting from Jalaluddin Firoze of the Khilji Dynasty, who was assassinated by his nephew and son-in-law, Alauddin Khilji, who was followed by Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah, Sultan Nasiruddin Mohammed, and Ghiasuddin Tughlak, finally paving the way to the throne for the Mughals and ending with the acquisition by the British Administration. Nonetheless, in the midst of such turbulence and disarray, what stands out as

a binding factor between Delhi and its inmates is the ransacking carried over the city as well as on its inhabitants by the outsiders. Just as the city has been plundered by various outlanders, or for that matter, by numerous powers, Bhagmati, being a representative of the Delhiwallas, have been exploited and maltreated by many as she comments, “Amreekee ambasseee . . . and the Roosi, Pakistani, Japanee, Germanee . . . our slave has had the privilege of serving many foreign gentlemen . . . These foreigners have some very curious habits . . . They take their pleasure in strange ways. It makes me sick to think of it” (37). Thus, slowly and gradually, Delhi and its residents merge into each other and become inextricable, as the narrator himself acknowledges, “They (Delhi and its inmates) have two things in common: they are lots of fun. And they are sterile” (30). In fact, Khushwant Singh as well, in the novel, paints Delhi only in relation to its dwellers, mostly women such as the narrator's mistress Bhagmati and Begum Qamarunnissa, the mistress of the poet Meer Taqi Meer and the wife of Nawab Rais Mian and mockingly declares that Delhi is like a woman, that is, even if one tries to escape from Delhi or get oneself rid of a woman, there is still no escape as both Delhi and the woman would hold one tight in its clutch as well as memories.

In addition to the resemblances between the city and its denizens, there is yet another thread which binds and stitches the old, wrecked Delhi to the Delhi of the present times - the theme of death or rather, the ceaseless dying of the Delhiwallas. In the bygone days, deaths in Delhi occurred mostly out of violence, brutality and barbarity as Delhi then was nothing but an “abode of savages” (229). Contrary to this, although in the most modern world of the 21st century, the people of Delhi are not dying out of savagery but the fact remains that they are dying, be it out of hunger or old age or unemployment, or by committing suicide, or by being murdered. Astonishingly enough, to the Delhiwallas, deaths as if are no longer a matter of sadness and mourning because people in Delhi die like flies. It is like everyday news to them as they flip through the pages of the newspaper and read the announcements of the deceased citizens just like information, gathered and swallowed. Therefore, one day, when the narrator visits the Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground and finds it empty and unoccupied by the corpses, the narrator questions himself, “What's happened to the Delhiwallas? They are not even dying as they used to! . . . Quite a scene!” (11).

Hence death, for the Delhiwallas, is too ordinary a concern to be anxious about. Nevertheless, at times amidst artificiality, this phenomenon of death also brings out the Delhiwallas' genuine true selves and acquaints them with the eternal loneliness and “real grief” which allows them to ruminate over their lives and look deep down into their souls as the narrator agrees, “When life gets too much for you all you need to do is to spend an hour at Nigambodh Ghat, watch the dead being put to the flames and hear their kin wail for them. Then come home and down a couple of pegs of whisky. In Delhi, death and drink make life worth living” (12).

The theme of death, however, can also be interpreted in a manner that mirrors how, just as the Delhiwallas are dying, the old Delhi is gradually dying and, on its ruins, how the new city is building up everyday brick by brick, thereby relating to the earlier discussed idea of how the new city is taking its shape and form as well as identities. However, what remains remarkable is the wonderful tour across the city beyond time that the text takes the reader and in turn, immortalizing the city in the mind of the reader forever. The people of Delhi are, thus,

engulfed and enveloped with myths and tied to the history of the nation while enjoying their modern life briskly.

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**Texting Feminine Identity: A Study of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's
*The Forest of Enchantment***

Mrs Shreyasi Roy*

Abstract

Epic, myth, and magic always captivate the attention of the readers for their splendour and lustre. However, the narrative of the epics presents women as the embodiment of tolerance – the perfect idol of wifehood and motherhood. But, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni experiments with new themes and sings the unsung songs of women of The Ramayana. Divakaruni's The Forest of Enchantment (2019) is the reworking of The Ramayana to discern the individual journey of the women. The novel portrays Sita's perspectives; emotion, luminous strength and courage, passion and reverence. This paper aims to focus on the individual journey of Sita amidst the noise of patriarchy to define her selfhood and her quest for identity.

Keywords: *The Ramayana, tolerance, patriarchy, selfhood, identity*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's contribution as a literary artist is very significant in the realm of literature. Her oeuvre consists of diverse genres in literature like Indian mythology, history, diaspora, and modernism. Many of her characters are conjured up from the pages of epic, myth, and history and, come alive to share their suppressed stories with readers. Divakaruni posits women at the centre of her novels – the plot chiefly revolves around the woman protagonist's struggle against patriarchy, society, and their own family. Succinctly, the novels manifest the oppressed status of women in society and the age-long disparity between men and women. But, Divakaruni's protagonists break away from the archetypal representation of a docile, all suffering and sacrificing women and highlight a paradigm shift in the projection of women characters from traditional roles. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *The Forest of Enchantment* (2019) is the revisiting of the *Ramayana* from Sita's eyes, from her birth to her return to mother earth. This paper attempts to unravel Sita's transformation from a reader of *Ramayana* to a writer of *Sitayana*. It also encompasses Sita's journey from margin to centre and also gives an insight into the predicament of other women characters, who struggle to voice their plight, and fight for their rights in a male-dominated society.

Magic, myth, and epics always fascinate and attract both readers and writers. The Indian epics – the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* often lure the writers because of their intricate plots and complex characters. B. Sushma in her book *Image of the New Woman: In the Fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni* points out:

Divakaruni portrays mythology in almost all her works. Myth is a central theme in her works. Human condition is relevant to great myths. Growing up as a child in Bengal with stories, folk tales and the epic like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, she tries to reflect the same in her work. (Sushma 33-34)

Divakaruni clinches the fact that the portrayal of women characters in epics, despite their capacity and talent, has been provided with a secondary position. The lustrous substances of

epic and myth play an important function in constructing the cultural heritage of a nation and those have been used as a tool by patriarchy to impose its ideology on women. The Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* reinforce the idea that these androcentric, patriarchal narratives celebrate the idealization of women as the epitome of virtue and tolerance. These depictions present women only as a symbol of wifedom and motherhood, accepting patriarchy as a law to be followed. These notions are embedded in human consciousness by rotational practice in myths and epics. Aditi Paul and Poonam Pahuja in their essay “Exposing Subjugation of Women: A Critical Analysis of *The Palace of Illusions*” published in *Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Critical Spectrum* remark:

From time immemorial, women in Indian society have been trapped in the patriarchal norm. The obnoxious nexus of rules and imposed orders indicate men as superior and women as inferior, men as farsighted and women as a cause of destruction or fall. The androcentric ideologies construct hegemonic structure and by unfurling the pages of history, one can easily locate how women have been subjugated as object. (Paul 83)

Feminist critics invoke a different interpretation of patriarchy. Poststructuralist feminists observe the exercise of phallogocentric language by patriarchy reinforces gender stereotypes by demeaning women. Traditionally, the production of knowledge has been androcentric, that is, men have been producers of knowledge while women are relegated to the subservient position. Knowledge is produced by a kind of language which is man-made. Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray developed a notion of 'woman's writing', i.e., women should write for themselves and other women as well. Therefore, the term “écriture féminine” has come into prominence. They emphasise language as an essential agent for subverting patriarchal structures and empowering women. Therefore, women must write about their feeling, emotion, longings, and sexuality.

Divakaruni adopts this new language and re-interprets the androcentric narrative of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* from a feminist point of view. Divakaruni's novel *The Forest of Enchantment* (2019) is the re-telling of the *Ramayana* through Sita's eyes. Divakaruni has created a new Sita, a contemporary woman who yearns to express her thoughts, ideas, and feelings to the world. It also illuminates the shadowy female characters like Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, Urmila, Surpanakha, Ahalya, and Mandodari. Usually, epic narratives portray women from an idealistic viewpoint. They present women as the epitome of patience, a perfect idol of wifedom and motherhood. But, Divakaruni has recreated the women characters of *Ramayana* by giving them their voice, by making them strong, independent, and expressing their own choices and opinions. She generates an arena where Sita is the narrator and she interrogates the position of women in the patriarchal power structure. Using dialogism, Divakaruni recreates *Ramayana* as a means of emancipation through which tradition and stereotypes are reinvented and questioned. In the Author's note in *The Forest of Enchantment*, Divakaruni delineates:

I'm going to write the story of Sita, I said, because I've always been fascinated by the *Ramayana*. Just like Panchaali, my Sita (yes, with the presumptuous intimacy of authors, I thought of her as mine) will tell her own tale. She'll fill in the gaps between the adventures undertaken by the male characters in the epic, their victories and defeats. She'll tell us what inspired the crucial choices that directed the course of her

life. (Divakaruni vii)

Valmiki's *Ramayana* portrays the life of Ram – his birth, upbringing, achievement, his pangs and sufferings, and his greatness as a warrior. It only explains the partial truth, the one-sided story of Ram. But the question is, does *Ramayana* talk about his better half, Sita? In *Ramayana*, Sita has been portrayed as alone in the darkness, 'under the sorrow tree' (TFE 2). Nobody has paid attention to Sita's despair, anguish, and exhilaration. But, Divakaruni gives a scope to Sita to write her own story. She delves deep into the heart of *Ramayana* through the pen of Sita and demythologized *Ramayana*. Divakaruni's Sita raises inevitable questions about those observances that impinged on her physical, psychological, and social freedom. Maintaining the basic story of *Ramayana*, Divakaruni recreates the narrative from the perspective of Sita. Revisionism as a means of subverting patriarchy is very important; it displays how strictures of social conventions impede the natural breath of women, and gravely, it provides textual spaces for a women-centric reading. She removes the fabric of divinity from characters and events and looks at them from the perspective of human experiences.

The novel begins with a prologue where Valmiki confers his 'life's work to Sita. Valmiki curiously waits to know Sita's opinion about *Ramayana*. But Sita's spirit rises and she humbly says to Valmiki:

'It's very good,' I said. 'The poetry is superb, the descriptions sublime, the rhythm perfect. You've captured the histories of earth and heaven both, the adventures and the wars, the weddings and the deaths, the betrayals and the farewells, the palace and the forest.'

'But?'

'But', I said, and I couldn't keep the anger from my voice, 'what occurred when I was alone in the darkness, under the sorrow tree, you don't know. You don't know my despair. You don't even know my exhilaration, how it felt – first in the forest and then in Ayodhya – when I was the most beloved woman in creation.' (TFE 2)

The depressed and scornful wife then pauses and waits for Sage's answer. Valmiki responds to her tenderly that she might write her story in her way. And the ink that Valmiki presents to her to write her own story is red – the fittest colour in this matter. Red is the colour of menstruation and childbirth, the colour of the Ashoka flower i.e., the colour of love. Menstruation, childbirth, and the redness of Ashoka flower are symbolic. Divakaruni, thus, in *The Forest of Enchantment* constructs some intricate domain of feminine sensibility. Sita acquires the place of Goddess, the incarnation of Laxmi, when she touches a gnarled champak, it starts blooming. People behind her whisper:

Amazing; miraculous; look, they're already healing; I tell you, she's the earth-goddess herself, appeared straight out of the ground just to bless us. (TFE 5)

But she breaks down the Godly attribution and shows her generous liberal human face. The prologue sets the mood of the novel and provides a hint for the next chapter. *The Ramayana* shows the valorisation of Ram, Lakshman, Bharat, and even Dasharath but it hinders the voices of women. Therefore, Sita decides to bring forth all the stories hiding behind the curtain. So, she travels back down memory lane to write her own Sitayan. Being very perspicacious, Sita does not fail to notice that the dynasty of Raghu diminishes women's

liberty, and strictly confines them to the four walls of the palace. But Sita firmly decides not to ignore the voice of her inner self. To quest for her selfhood and identity she tells the story of every woman whom she comes across on her journey. She consciously feels the urge to write their story:

Write our story, too. For always we've been pushed into corners, trivialized, misunderstood, blamed, forgotten – or maligned and used as cautionary tales. (TFE 4)

Queen Sunaina is very wise, intelligent, affectionate, and strict as a mother. In the original version of *Ramayana*, no interaction between Sita and her adoptive mother Sunaina takes place. Divakaruni brings them together in the same frame and gives Sunaina a voice – a voice that is enough to make her own decision, control her husband and his regime, to empower her daughters and other women as well. She is, of course, a devoted wife, an affectionate mother, and a noble queen but all these identities cannot shroud her identity as an intellectual, wise, intelligent woman. As Sita remarks:

She was, in some ways, the real ruler of Mithila, sharp of intellect, clear of vision, balancing kindness and Justice. (TFE 9)

It exhibits that king Janak respects his wife's sheer talent for decision-making, intelligence, and wisdom. But Sunaina, like a *pativrata* or devoted wife, never let anyone know that it is she who is controlling and balancing the power, rather, keeping it a secret under four walls. She pushes forward her husband in front of the court, keeping herself behind the curtain.

Divakaruni's Sunaina encourages Sita to learn the Martial Arts lessons. Sita readily accepts this challenge. In her inner self, she wants to be a warrior and her mother tries to make her wish fulfilled. Her mother senses that Sita's life would not be an ordinary one, so, this lesson might help her to survive. Sunaina allows her daughter Sita to be brave and strong, masculine and undaunted. She secretly makes Sita a warrior by breaking all the stereotypes. A Kshatriya man is supposed to possess all these qualities but Sita crosses the boundaries ignoring the red-eye of patriarchy. Divakaruni presents Sita as a strong and powerful woman who dreams to rule the country. But mother Sunaina disapproves of her wish by saying "...it wouldn't be possible. The kingdom of Mithila can be ruled only by a man. This has been the custom of the country since before the scribes began to write its history" (TFE 14). Sunaina is an adoring mother. She not only imparts knowledge about the kitchen and household to her daughters but also moulds her daughter to become a warrior strategist. She arranges formal education for Sita. But when her daughter wants to be the ruler of Mithila, she resists. She does not want to break the norms of patriarchy.

Mother's advice 'endure' seems to Sita 'solid as a tree trunk'. In her father's house the very word 'endure' is of no use, but now she will learn it as she believes it'll help her in dark times. A woman is considered to be the symbol or epitome of endurance. Ram's father Dasharath has numerous wives whom he neither loves nor respect. Kaushalya, the mother of Ram, is regarded as Dasahrath's Chief consort. But he had never realized her emotional needs, her desires, her pangs, and sufferings. Kaushalya, along with other co-wives, except Kaikeyi are neglected by their husband – Dasharath. These women are helpless. Ram has never approved this behaviour of his father as proper. He can feel the pain of her mother. Maybe that leads him to decide never to marry another woman. Ram loves Sita and honours her as a

woman. Sita is overwhelmed and grateful for Ram's decision.

However, Divakaruni here presents the life of another unsung, silenced character of the greatest epic. One evening Ram, Sita, and Lakshman arrive at the hermitage of sage Gautam. Here Sita comes to know the story of Ahalya, the beautiful wife of Sage Gautam. Ahalya is a devoted wife of Gautam, seduced repeatedly by Indra. In the absence of Gautam, Indra enters the Ashram and in the disguise of Gautam, takes Ahalya to the bed. Ahalya unknowingly spends the night with Indra. When Gautam returns, he curses both Indra and his innocent wife Ahalya. Indra is cursed for deception and Ahalya for infidelity- "betraying her sacred marital vows for the sake of bodily pleasure" (*TFE* 130). Gautam transforms his innocent wife into a stone. Ahalya tries to prove her innocence and implores her husband that she is a victim of Indra's trickery. Later when he controls his fury and anger, he reduces the curse by pointing out that "a special being would soon be born and his pure and powerful touch would restore her to life" (*TFE* 130).

Later Ahalya is liberated by the touch of Ram's feet. Ahalya is cunningly exploited by lustful Indra. Gautam's ire and curse against her is the cause of her turning into a stone. Unwillingly, this act of her husband is accepted by Ahalya. Rishi Gautam is the voice of patriarchy. Different versions of *Ramayana* have depicted Ahalya's liberation as an act of Ram's divine grace to redeem a sinned or fallen woman. The compassion he displays in forgiving is highly praised but there is no presentation of Ahalya's plight. Divakaruni goes beyond these versions and highlights the real fact that women are always marginalized, silenced, and subjugated. Sage Gautam never gives a chance to his wife to justify or prove her fidelity. He even pays no attention to his wife's pleading. The injustices, tortures, atrocities, and exploitation that are inflicted upon her by her husband and Indra are unacceptable and cannot be condoned. Her humiliation is doubled by the touch of Ram's feet in the name of atonement or redemption. Ahalya is silenced by the cruelty of society, and the brutality of her husband; still she is forced to live with her husband. Ahalya makes Sita realize that men have the power to question a woman's fidelity. Later, Sita achieves inner peace and liberation through questioning the very notion of truth and fidelity and finds herself in the same position as Ahalya, the maligned position assigned by patriarchy.

Surpanakha is another important character who accelerates the course of the war and occupies textual space in all the various versions of the *Ramayana* narratives. Valmiki portrays Surpanakha as foul and ugly, comical in her display of unabashed desire and passion. Unapologetic, outrageous, untamed, ugly ridiculous – these are the very stereotypical representations of Surpanakha. But, Divakaruni breaks all these notions and presents Surpanakha as a victim. Surpanakha's outspoken, unashamed and spontaneous nature and her clarity of thoughts make her stand apart as a fiercely independent woman. Both Ram and Lakshman have taken this girl as frivolous and constantly gibe at her. In volcanic anger, she moves toward Sita to injure her. But Lakshman immediately draws out his knife to kill her. Then, within moments, Lakshman chops off her ears and nose. Sita expresses her sympathy and solidarity for her plight. Thus, the act of disfigurement is the manifestation of another most horrific expression of patriarchal control. Surpanakha's overt sexuality has surprised them. Therefore, she deserves severe punishment. Otherwise, she will prove to be a threat to the community. Surpanakha negates every threshold of patriarchal control in her open and

arrogant attitude. Beena G in an essay “Suparnakha: Emotional Mutilation” points out:

Suparnakha is one such peripheral character, appearing as an example for everything 'unwomanly, unacceptable and immoral as a foil to the ideal woman Sita. Making a brief appearance, she is severely punished through a violent and horrifying mutilation by Lakshmana and then after the war disappears from the pages of mainstream or canonical narrative as a non-entity rejected and discarded. (G 86)

After rescuing Sita, Ram is in a dilemma on having his dual role towards Sita as husband and king. His duty as a husband is accomplished when he remarks, “Here ends my duty to you and my responsibility. Go where you will to live out the rest of your days” (TFE 242). As a king, he is answerable to his subjects. He remarks that “They will think that, like my father Dasharath, I swayed from the path of dharma, enchanted by a wife's charms. It will throw the entire Kingdom in turmoil – and I cannot allow that to happen. I owe it to them” (TFE 243). As far as the question of Ram's honour, docile Sita agrees to walk through the flame of fire to prove her chastity. By going through the ordeal, Sita wants to assert her fidelity and chastity to the entire society along with her husband. Therefore, the fire ordeal substantiates her as 'pativrata'. Sita remains untouched by the fire. The fire God protects her from the blaze. Sita is a paragon of traditional muliebrity, mostly self-sacrificing. Despite being a docile, submissive wife, she challenges the old norms and beliefs about the woman. The probation arises again when Ram hears the doubts expressed by the washer-man about Sita's chastity. Bewildered Ram again finds himself in a dilemma and immediately abandons heavily pregnant Sita to the Dandaka Forest. As Arshia Sattar observes in “Valmiki's Ramayana:”

He decides that he must banish her from the kingdom because he cannot allow gossip and scandal to tarnish his reputation. Once again, in both cases of rejection, Rama plays the part of the righteous king who must always be above reproach.... Rama has to sacrifice his personal feelings for Sita in order to uphold dharma, as he had to do earlier when his father exiled him to the forest for fourteen years. It is here that the epic trope of the hero's personal destiny being inextricably linked with the plan of the god is most clearly visible. (Sattar 17)

The climactic moment of the story is when Sita enters the Court, she hears her sons in thrilling voices reciting the saga of their mother, they are chanting not from Ramayana but Sitayana, and she realises that she has already outfought patriarchy. But Sita's dreams are shattered again. Ram wants his subjects to be satisfied before accepting her, and for this to be possible, Sita has to pass another fire ordeal. In this context, Rashmi Luthra's comment is very significant:

Because the second agnipariksha was meant to set “an example for all women.” Sita cannot remain silent in the face of this injustice (Luthra 143).

Sita cannot accept this harshness anymore and questions Ram about the injustice done to her. She readily shuns the chance to gain immortality as a pativrata. However, Ram has not even uttered her name. He harbours suspicion and to ensure Sita's chastity, he exhibits tyranny and barbarity against Sita. Meghnad Desai in “Sita and Some Other Women from Epics” rightly opines:

Despite Sita's purity, Rama rejects her twice, doubting her fidelity...She brings up her own sons on her own as a single abandoned mother and finally returns to her

mother's womb, thus establishing the autonomy of the female. (Desai 9)

Divakaruni makes her readers conscious at this juncture that Sita cannot remain silent, she has a duty larger than the one to her husband; the duty to uphold justice towards women. Sita pronounces:

O King of Ayodhya, you know I'm innocent, and yet, unfairly, you're asking me to step into the fire. You offer me a tempting prize indeed – to live in happiness with you and my children. But I must refuse because if I do what you demand, society will use my action forever to judge other women. Even when they aren't guilty, the burden of providing their innocence will fall on them. And society will say, why not? Even queen Sita went through it. (*TFE* 356-357)

The firm and resolute Sita gives a slap to the patriarchal society. This satiric rendering is used by Divakaruni to interrogate patriarchal norms. Divakaruni's Sita is given voice rather than having others speak for her. The Sita of Valmiki's *Ramayana* is always an obedient daughter and 'pativrata' wife who chooses to follow her husband all in happiness and sorrow. She is presented as an ideal wife by the patriarchal scriptures. In Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment*, Sita is indeed an ideal woman but through her suffering and oppression, she has transformed herself into a new woman. Sita herself is the voice to challenge the patriarchy. She is born by herself and lived her life in her way. Sita, in *The Forest of Enchantment*, is not only a symbol of sacrifice and endurance but also a soul of power and courage. Thus, Sita is a loving, caring, protective merciful and bountiful human being as if she is the embodiment of nature itself. Sita's journey has been one of the choices that she makes independently and consciously. She asserts her identity not as a pativrata wife or Devi but as a common woman who can raise her voice when injustice is meted out to her. In more than one sense, Sita makes her resistance within the confined spaces of domesticity. Sita manifests a woman's quest for liberation from a distinctly indigenous perspective – she resists vehemently and her chief modes of resistance are questioning and actions. Thus, the study examines Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantment* as Sita's resistance and her progress towards liberation.

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TFE stands for *The Forest of Enchantment*.

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Karna in the Modern *Kurukshetra*: Myth and Marginalization in *The God of Small Things*

Dr. Sourav Pal*

Abstract

Myths, in their multiple layers of signification, may be viewed as a site for the ideological war among different sections of a society, for gaining supremacy in a given situation. Barthes in his Mythologies refers to this historicity of myths and suggests that myths are more on the 'Right' than on the 'Left'. The ruling class of the society is also rich and powerful in its mythology and uses it to perpetuate its domination and control subversion.

In The God of Small Things Arundhati Roy uses the myth of Karna from The Mahabharata, and draws a crucial comparison between Karna, the ill-fated antagonist of Arjuna, Velutha, the marginalized protagonist of her story, and the Kathakali man, who retells the story of marginalization both by his life and his art. Velutha is here the modern Karna, both in his attempt to overcome the limitations of birth in a lower caste, and in his victimization by power and the love laws propagated by society. His Kurukshetra is the caste-ridden society and he too chooses the wrong side in it believing in a certain political Party to give him his rightful place in society. Like Karna, he is used as a pawn in the greater political game of power and has finally to succumb. The myth thus plays a major role here, in foregrounding the main argument of the story, and it suggests that the dominated either need a strong counter-mythology or need to destabilize altogether the mythical structure that has hoodwinked them for ages.

Keywords: *Myth, Historicity, Ideological apparatus, Marginalization, Caste.*

Roland Barthes begins the second section of *Mythologies*, entitled “Myth Today”, with the claim that *Myth is a type of speech*: “that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message” (131). Of course, he qualifies his statement by saying that “it is not any type: language needs special conditions in order to become myth” (131). It is a 'form', according to Barthes, to which are assigned 'historical limits, conditions of use', and as a whole society is reintroduced into it. “[S]ince myth is a type of speech”, he says, “everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse” (131). And since discourse is a 'strand' within a given narrative or a society, that argues a certain point or defends a given value system, a myth definitely represents the ways of seeing and communication of a particular section of a given society that gave birth to that myth. In light of the above, it may be argued that myths are storehouses of discourses and counter-discourses within a culture that evolve through different historical conditions. We may even go one step further to say that myths, if we penetrate into their hidden layers of signification, may be seen as the site for the ideological war that reflects the struggle for supremacy between different sections of a society in a given situation. Barthes also refers to this historicity of myths when he says:

. . . one can conceive of very ancient myths, but there are no eternal ones; for it is

human history which converts reality into speech, and it alone rules the life and the death of mythical language. Ancient or not, mythology can only have a historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things. (Barthes 132)

Barthes, while talking about the use of myths by the bourgeoisie in his *Mythologies*, argues that as statement of facts, 'myths tend towards proverbs': "Bourgeoisie ideology invests in this figure interests which are bound to its very essence: universalism, the refusal of any explanation, an unalterable hierarchy of the world" (182). Clearly, Barthes finds in myth the power of consolidation and containment. For him, myths are more on the 'Right' than on the 'Left'. The dominant class of the society, according to him, is also rich and powerful in its mythology as in many other things:

The oppressed is nothing; he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity at its disposal: he has an exclusive right to metalanguage. The oppressed *makes* the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth. The language of the former aims at transforming, of the latter at eternalizing. (Barthes 176)

Historically speaking, thus, myths can be viewed as a storehouse of customs, conventions and ethics endorsed by a given society, especially by the dominant class that was in control of culture in that society, and they can tell us a good deal about how certain rituals, institutions and taboos were established and were made part of a cultural tradition. While writing about the process of mythologization in modern times in *Mythologies*, Barthes refers again and again to this tendency of socially constructed notions, conventions, and assumptions to become "naturalized", that is, accepted unquestioningly as norms within a particular culture. His classic analysis of the cover illustration of the French magazine *Paris Match* or of the popularity of Red Wine among the French proletariat are quite revealing of the process in which myths are constructed to offer and perpetuate an idea of society that suits the ideologies of the ruling class. Taken from this point of view myths no more remain a collection of certain 'archetypes' buried in the racial memory or 'collective unconscious' of the human race, but they become culture-specific and are helpful to the historical understanding of the process of formation and development of various power-structures and social hierarchies.

In *The God of Small Things* Arundhati Roy uses the mythical story of Karna from *The Mahabharata* in order to connect the modern situation presented in her narrative to the historical scenario of marginalization and domination based on caste in India. In chapter 12 of *The God of Small Things* entitled "Kochu Thomban," Roy draws a crucial comparison between Karna, the ill-fated antagonist of Arjuna in *The Mahabharata*, and Velutha, the marginalized protagonist of her story, through the Kathakali man, who retells the story of marginalization both by his life and his art. The three are made one by soul as well as in their marginal status and suffering.

The Kathakali man, the artist marginalized by the capitalist culture, gives expression through his art to the suffering and tragic glory of another marginalized character in the power-structure, Karna, the great warrior doomed from the very beginning by the limitations

of his birth. The Kathakali man is the backdated soul of India lost in the 'Heart of Darkness' of modern commercialism. Like Karna or Velutha, he is one whose innate talent is neither recognized nor honoured by society:

The Kathakali Man is the most beautiful of men. Because his body *is* his soul. His only instrument. From the age of three it has been planed and polished, pared down, harnessed wholly to the task of story-telling. He has magic in him, this man within the painted mask and swirling skirts.

But these days he has become unviable. Unfeasible. Condemned goods. His children deride him. They long to be everything that he is not. He has watched them grow up to become clerks and bus-conductors. Class IV non-gazetted officers. . . .

But he himself, left dangling somewhere between heaven and earth, cannot do what they do. . . . He cannot answer bells that summon him. He cannot stoop behind trays of tea and Marie biscuits. (Roy 230)

So in despair, the battered and cornered artist tries to enter the market to earn his livelihood by cashing in upon his skill. He tries to hawk the only thing he has, his stories, to the wealthy and insensitive tourists only to be mocked by them in return. But, as Roy tells us, his very marginal status makes him one with his subject:

That night Karna was stoned. His tattered skirt was darned. There were hollows in his crown where jewels used to be. His velvet blouse had grown bald with use. . . .

But if he had a fleet of make-up men waiting in the wings, an agent, a contract, a percentage of their profits – what then would he be? An impostor. A rich pretender. An actor playing his part. Could he be Karna? Or would he be too *safe* inside his pod of wealth? Would his money grow like a rind between himself and his story? Would he be able to touch its heart, its hidden secrets, in the way that he can now?

Perhaps not.

This man tonight is dangerous. His despair complete. . . . He is Karna, whom the world has abandoned. Karna alone. Condemned goods. . . . Majestic in his complete despair. (Roy 231-32)

But the comparison here is not only between the teller and his tale, but the present social condition is also viewed through the lens of the past. Two thousand years' history of untouchability is presented through the tragic fate of a great mythical hero of allegedly low birth. Roy here uses myth as does the Kathakali man: "They are his windows and his ways of seeing. . . .He tells stories of the gods, but his yarn is spun from the ungodly, human heart" (Roy 230).

The mythical figure of Karna, taken from *The Mahabharata*, the repository of ancient wisdom of this country, is thus used here to symbolically suggest Velutha, who is the modern Karna both in his attempt to overcome the limitations of birth through prowess and his victimization by power and the *love laws* propagated by society. Karna, despite being the son of a god and a great warrior himself, suffers throughout his life because his mother Kunti violated the *love laws*, gave birth to him when unmarried and abandoned him. He suffers throughout his life the unfair conditions of society because despite being born a prince, he is brought up by a charioteer belonging to a lower caste. This inequality thrust upon him haunts him forever and he never finds his proper place of honour in society despite all his heroic

qualities. He cannot challenge Arjuna, the prince to a duel even after he accomplishes all the feats that Arjuna has achieved during the archery contest. Kripa asks for his lineage and Arjuna calls him an 'uninvited intruder' for challenging him without being a *kshatriya* (Buitenen 280). He cannot win Draupadi in the *swayambara*, in spite of having the same gifts of archery as Arjuna, due to his low birth. Desperately seeking the power of arms to overcome his fate, he presents himself as a Brahmin to Parashurama, who will not teach a student of lower caste. And after his birth-secret is revealed, he receives the deadly curse from his *guru* that he will forget all his knowledge of weapons when they will be most direly needed in the battlefield. Again, desperately seeking after power and recognition, he gets involved in the political game of the *Kaurava* Court and pledges eternal loyalty to the evil Duryodhana who makes him the king of *Anga*. Even then he is taunted by Bhimasena: "Son of a *suta*... You better stick to the whip that suits your family. You have no right to enjoy the Anga kingdom, churl, no more than a dog has a right to eat the cake by the fire at a sacrifice" (Buitenen 281). He knows that his is a losing fight even before the great battle of *Kurukshetra* begins, and yet he refuses to escape his fate. It is at this moment of desperate resolution that the author catches him praying to the Sun-god, his father:

He is Karna whom the world has abandoned. Karna alone. . . . A prince raised in poverty. Born to die unfairly, unarmed and alone at the hands of his brother. Majestic in his complete despair. Praying on the banks of the Ganga. (Roy 232)

At this moment appears Kunti, his mother, who abandoned him during his infancy because she gave him birth against the *love laws* of society – laws that decide who can love whom and how much. But ironically, now she has come to invoke the *love laws* herself. She reveals her real identity to him not because she wants to take him back, but because she wants to ensure the safety of her other five sons, the *Pandavas*, in the imminent war:

She had a promise to extract. She invoked the Love Laws.

They are your brothers. Your own flesh and blood. Promise me that you will not go to war against them. Promise me that.

Karna the warrior could not make that promise, for if he did, he would have to revoke another one. Tomorrow he would go to war, and his enemies would be the *Pandavas*. They were the ones, Arjuna in particular, who had publicly reviled him for being a lowly charioteer's son. And it was Duryodhana, the eldest of the one hundred *Kaurava* brothers, that came to his rescue by gifting him a kingdom of his own. Karna, in return, had pledged Duryodhana eternal fealty. (Roy 233)

The promise he makes instead is both a denial and an assurance, a reminder to Kunti of her guilt:

I promise you this, Karna said to Kunti, You will always have five sons. Yudhishtira I will not harm. Bhima will not die by my hand. The twins – Nakula and Sahadeva – will go untouched by me. But Arjuna – him I will make no promise about. I will kill him, or he will kill me. One of us will die. (Roy 233-34)

This is a promise that at once cripples him and impedes the achievement of victory. But he seeks a different kind of glory and fulfillment that cannot be given by mere victory in war. He goes to war giving contemptuously his inborn armour, with which he is invincible, as alms to the begging Indra, Arjuna's god-father, against the warning of the Sun-god; and he dies in the

battlefield at the hands of his brother who does not know him. Marginalized by birth then, he tries to achieve recognition for rash generosity and heroism in death. This is an empowerment at once tragic and majestic.

The empowerment that Velutha seeks also takes him towards a tragic end. There are a number of ways in which Velutha is equated with Karna in this novel. Like Karna he also seeks to overcome his marginal status – his birth in a lower caste – through his talent, and is equally denied the opportunity by society. He seeks recognition and fruition of life in the dangerous quest of Ammu's love and is crushed by the *love laws* that forbid any relationship between castes. His *Kurukshetra* in this sense is the caste-ridden society in which he is born, and his opponent its unfair system, and its enormous power, to which he has finally to succumb.

Karna seeks empowerment by joining a side to which he actually does not belong. He seeks recognition for himself by pledging loyalty to the *Kaurava* ruler Duryodhana, who uses him for his own purpose of winning the battle of *Kurukshetra* by employing him as an antidote to Arjuna, the greatest warrior of the *Pandava* side. In search of power and glory Karna thus finds himself caught in the power game of the dominant elite that crushes him. Velutha seeks empowerment by joining the Communist Party, a party that professes the ideals of a casteless society, one that he thinks will give him his right and due place in society. But like Karna he is also used as a pawn in the greater political game of power by Comrade Pillai, the local leader of the party. Pillai, 'the professional omeletteer', wants to fry his own omelet by using the caste issues and the workers' agitation, and Velutha is the egg he crushes to this end. So Velutha, the untouchable party member was left on his own by the 'touchable' Communist leader at the decisive moment of the conflict to die, like Karna, unarmed and alone: "the last betrayal that sent Velutha across the river, swimming against the current, in the dark and rain, well in time for his blind date with history" (Roy 282).

The myth thus plays here a major role in foregrounding the main argument of the story. Velutha, being born a Paravan, belongs to the lowest section of the society determined by the caste system – the untouchables. Like Karna, he is extremely talented, but crippled by his birth. Velutha's skill in craftsmanship gives him a kind of restricted entry into the upper-class society, just as Karna's skill in archery gave him entry into the court of Duryodhana and made him a valuable tool in the battles. Velutha was both a skilled carpenter and a magician with machines. He completed his education in the Untouchables' School and learned carpentry under a Bavarian carpenter, Johann Klein in the Christian Mission Society. He practically ran the whole system of the Pickle Factory in his multiple roles of a Mechanic, an Electrician and a Carpenter, and with the efficiency of an Engineer. His exposure, his education, his confidence in his skills and qualities, his modern notions and his belief in the Communist ideals made him resent the status of marginality thrust upon him by birth and seek empowerment and upward mobility as any member of the society.

However, Velutha forgets that his skills empower him only in the world of 'small things'. There is a bigger world with its own gods whose power holds sway over the society, not only because they are more powerful, but because their powers unite and operate mutually in order to crush any individual who poses threat to their authority. It is significant that all three untouchable characters in this novel are either practically or metaphorically

handicapped – Velutha's father Vellya Paapen is one-eyed; his elder brother Kuttappen is paralyzed. Velutha himself is the one-armed man of Ammu's dream: “a cheerful man with one arm held her close by the light of an oil lamp. He had no other arm with which to fight the shadows that flickered around him on the floor. . . . He could do only one thing at a time.” (Roy 215). His physical handicap in the dream is symbolic of his social handicap in reality. He is handicapped by birth, crippled by history. He is the god of 'small things' – of the lesser world of physical agility and machines, handicraft and carpentry, spontaneous feelings and love. But he has no control over the bigger affairs of the world – the world that is run by politics, caste discrimination, influence or money. Karna's skill of archery also earned for him a small place in the pantheon of the Kaurava court, but he was swayed by the Court politics of the Kaurava dynasty over which he had little or no control. We can remember in this respect that Karna lost his *kabach-kundal* – his protective earrings – just before the battle of *Kurukshetra*, just as Velutha lost the protection of the Communist Party before his fatal meeting with several hundred years of history of untouchability.

The strict notion of endogamy in the caste system which crucially distinguishes it from other systems of social stratification, is another major issue around which the plot of *The God of Small Things* develops. An inter-caste love or marriage is a dangerous threat to a caste-ridden society because it challenges the existing power-structure of the society in two different ways – first, by its attempt to overcome its strict notion of endogamy, and secondly, by giving importance to individual wishes over age-old social norms of stratification. So society has developed its 'love-laws' – laws that regulate who can love whom and who cannot. When these laws imposed by society are violated for love, it is regarded as an act of transgression. Kunti in *The Mahabharata* followed the 'love-laws' propagated by society when she renounced Karna, her son from the sun-god, in fear of the society's refusal to accept a child born outside the marital relationship. But when Ammu, a woman of the higher caste accepted the love of Velutha, a Paravan, their relation was pitted against the age-old order: “History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin. Its marks, its scars, its wounds from old wars and the walking backwards days all fell away” (Roy 176). In a high-caste patriarchal society where a woman is regarded as a property of the family such relationship is destined to suffer the collective reaction of all social institutions and be crushed brutally as if to make an example of it.

Jyotiba Phule, the Dalit leader from Maharashtra, severely criticized the Puranic mythology associated with the Brahmanical tradition as worse than that of any other culture since, according to him, it was in principle based on the ideas of inequality and tyranny of the dominant elite of the society: “. . . to keep a better hold on the people they devised that weird system of mythology, the ordination of caste, and the code of crude and inhuman laws to which we can find no parallel among the other nations” (Phule 120). He emphasized again and again the necessity to radically reinterpret this dominant mythology in order to fight marginalization, whether by caste, class or gender, on the ideological ground. He himself, for example, provided an alternative system of mythology in which the killing of various *rakshasas* by different *avatars* of Vishnu, the central myths in the Hindu religion, are seen as various stages of the Aryan conquest of the non-Aryans. Central to Phule's alternative system of mythology is the figure of Bali Raja, the original king of Maharashtra, ruling over an ideal

state of equality and prosperity. His defeat by the dwarfish Brahmin boy, Bamana, an *avatar* of Vishnu, through trickery is seen as an allegory of the domination of an egalitarian regime by deception and conspiracy of the invading Aryans. However, such efforts to give an alternative interpretation to the dominant mythology by giving upper hand to local gods or mass heroes seem inadequate and weak before the massive repressive structure and consolidating power of the mythology already available in the hands of the dominating elite. As Gail Omvedt rightly points out:

For several militant dalits . . . there is no hope in tradition; the Hindu majority (defined by Brahmanism and Rama) is solid one; the entire literature and mythology is pervaded with Brahmanism. Shudras and ati-shudras had been completely excluded from the literature, whether of the high or low tradition, and where they existed, they illustrated only the repressiveness of the system and its ability to prevent or co-opt revolt against it. (Omvedt 95-96)

Omvedt, in support of her argument, quotes from Baburao Bagul's essay "Dalit Literature is but Human Literature" where Bagul expresses his hopelessness about projecting the popular low-caste heroes like Karna or Ekalavya from the *puranas* as faces of protest against a repressive system:

The enemy had, of course, pervaded Indianness in its entirety; in traditions and customs, in the structure and system, in the books, words and minds.... The intelligentsia were committed to religion . . . heroes like Karna and Ekalavya are consistent with the cultural and mythical value-structure they have internalized . . . (They) are reconciled to the varna system; they are courageous, but because they have been denied the place they deserve in the system, they view life only in terms of suffering; these heroes . . . become simply toys in the hands of fate. (Omvedt 96)

Karna's giving away his inborn *kabach-kundal* to Indra to justify his fame of generosity, or Ekalavya's sacrifice of his thumb as a mark of obedience to Drona, the teacher who wants to see Arjuna as the most successful archer, thus perfectly suit myth's purpose of perpetuating the upper-caste supremacy, since these acts handicap Karna and Ekalavya both physically and metaphorically forever.

Thus, in the myths used in the dominant cultural tradition, we find the marginalized heroes actually serving the existing system in different ways in spite of their victimization by it. This reminds us of Barthes's words that the dominant class of the society is also privileged with a rich storehouse of dominant myths. The myths of the dominated are also weak and dominated like them, and often the mythical figures that are thought to represent the marginalized are actually used to solidify (covertly) the codes of conduct of the dominant system. It is, therefore, not surprising that the victims of the caste system today look upon the whole system of mythology as tools of oppression against them, and no more want to be fooled like Ekalavya into sacrificing his thumb as a mark of obedience, or like Karna who gives away his protective *kundals* to Indra even before the battle of *Kurukshetra*. We hear such a voice of the marginalized in Shashikant Hingonekar's poem "Ekalavya" published in *Asmitadarsh*, April/May/June 1989:

If you had kept your thumb
History would have happened
somehow differently.

But... you gave your thumb
 and history also
 became theirs.
 Ekalavya,
 since that day they
 have not even given you a glance.
 Forgive me, Ekalavya, I won't be fooled now
 by their sweet words.
 My thumb
 will never be broken. (qtd. in Omvedt 96-97)

In *The God of Small Things*, the comparison between two marginalized characters, one from the past and the other from the present, thus suggests that the relationship between the dominant and the dominated does not really change. History merely repeats itself in different circumstances. Karna, despite being a great hero, gets entangled as a pawn in the power game of the elite and is compelled to remain dependent on and loyal to that side of the elite from which he had received at least some sort of recognition. His fate is sealed because the side he has chosen is the losing one. Velutha, the modern Karna, also remains loyal till the end, to the Communist Party that he thought, though wrongly, as his key to freedom from the tyranny of caste. His rebellion and his downfall invest him with a tragic glory. But, like Karna, he is also compelled to remain in the fringe of the orthodox Brahminical social structure without being a fully accepted member of it. The mythical stories of Karna or Ekalavya are examples of the co-opting power of this hegemonic society that uses its great storehouse of myths as ideological apparatus to brainwash the marginalized and thereby thwart any chance of subversion. Arundhati Roy also shows, through the detailed description of the systematic torture on Velutha by the high-caste policemen in this novel, how Velutha is made an example for all untouchables to follow: "After all, they were not battling an epidemic. They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak" (Roy 309).

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Discordant 'Music' Disrupting Harmony: Cultural Hybridity in Amit Chaudhuri's *Odysseus Abroad*

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Abstract

*Culture is an integral part of a nation, and everybody embodies one's own culture through various customs and practices. Contemporary literature has shown a growing interest in cultural studies, as with increasing globalization and as an aftermath of colonialism, there is a significant transformation in the perception of culture in the society, especially with the diasporic Indians. This research paper is one such endeavour to trace the trajectories of cultural conflicts and identity crisis through the postcolonial ideas of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and liminality in Amit Chaudhuri's *Odysseus Abroad*, as the novel traces the odyssey of Ananda, a Bengali immigrant student in London. Though much of the modern fiction has projected the hardships endured by diasporic Indians, Chaudhuri's idiosyncratic exploration of the subject through his leisurely prose, artful humour and unpretentious language stands apart from the conventional mould.*

Keywords: Culture, hybridity, ambivalence, liminality, diaspora, post colonialism

Introduction

Amit Chaudhuri was brought up in the cities of Calcutta and Bombay and later settled in London. Most of his fiction is inspired by his own life as they portray the mentality of middle-class Indians and their day-to-day routine lives. His works also have a common theme of nostalgia and memory running through them, as the characters reminisce their past lives in a city or town, sojourning through immigrant and diasporic crises, identity and cultural conflicts. There are a few novels that reflect postcolonial anguish as the characters struggle to cope with the complex situations they are put in. Chaudhuri makes an extraordinary stand for subtle pleasures of life, like art, poetry and music, in a world driven by capitalism and marketing, and does not drive his novels with complex plots, but rather makes a cause for genuine and artful ideology, emphasizing the credo of 'art for art's sake' in his fiction. Understandably, Chaudhuri's leisurely prose style and his attempt to wrap plots subtly in a lackadaisical manner led to a few complaints, but he still garners widespread appreciation from literary critics. Through many of his interviews, Chaudhuri asserts and makes a claim that life happens in the mundane, and he once again proves that through *Odysseus Abroad*, thus situating himself within the literary canon.

Amit Chaudhuri's *Odysseus Abroad* is a parody of Homer's *Odyssey* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and the motif of the journey continues throughout the novel. The *odyssey* Ananda takes to reach London suggests a metaphorical journey in his search for his true self, as he finds himself trapped between two identities - a Bengali diasporic student in University College, London, and an assimilated identity as a student taking up western poetry lessons.

Through the ruminations of Ananda, Chaudhuri also illustrates post-colonial angst, showing how an immigrant in a foreign land struggles to adapt to the British culture while retaining his cultural identity. Chaudhuri adeptly contrasts the different diasporic emotions experienced by Ananda and his bachelor uncle Radhesh also called Rangamama. Both serve as counterpoints to each other, with Radhesh's keen appreciation for British culture contrasted with his nephew's disquietude toward London life, as the former has been a Londoner for decades.

Cultural Hybridity

Ananda's cultural crisis is conveyed by Chaudhuri in his clothing, studies, flat, friends, food, architecture, lifestyle, etc. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Homi Bhabha stated that “the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation”(211) Nasrullah Mambrol observes in his essay 'Homi Bhabha's Concept of Hybridity' that Homi Bhabha employs the usage of the term 'Third Space of enunciation' to represent the hybrid space. Hence, it is neither an absolute neglect nor a complete acceptance of a culture, but rather, 'the third space' is an interstitial space where becoming, metamorphosing and evolution of a cultural identity take place. Though Ananda tries to maintain his quintessential British identity during his stay in London, the Indian in him, more so, the Bengali in him refuses to leave no matter the circumstances. While he strives to maintain an equilibrium between British and Indian cultures, they remain inextricably intertwined and achieve a state of hybrid identity.

In a cultural framework, hybridity leads to ambivalence, as the dualities of the subject contrast with one another. In the essay 'Liminality, Mimicry, Hybridity and Ambivalent in Literary Speculations of Homi K. Bhabha', Valiur Rahaman reiterates that Bhabha's theory of ambivalence is “a state of mental or social or cultural or behavioural condition of people which includes positive and negative aspects of anything.” (Rahaman) Bhabha's idea of ambivalence refers to the duality in the opposed cultures of the colonized and the colonizer. Thus, the colonizer is susceptible to losing his identity when he tries to make sense of the assimilated culture. Similarly, Ananda experiences ambivalence when he encounters opposing cultures, viz., Indian and British, landing up in the 'in-between' space, neither here nor there.

Exactly this space represents the liminality suggested by Ashcroft et al. in *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*: “The importance of the liminal for postcolonial theory is precisely its usefulness for describing an 'in-between' space in which cultural change may occur.” (Ashcroft et al. 130) In another article titled, 'What is Liminality and Its Importance?' Supriya Maity observes that liminality and hybridity go hand in hand as “the present comes not as a break or a bonding with the past or future; our presence comes to be revealed in its 'discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities’” (Maity). *Odysseus Abroad* is a medley of such discontinuities that each of Chaudhuri's characters encounters often, and neither is it a break nor continuous, but rather somewhere in the middle. The hybridity of Ananda's life is evident in his transcultural medley, as his dual attitude of desiring to write in English, while simultaneously practicing Hindustani music, in a territory that is essentially not his own, is a

manifestation of this space. This is contradictory to his “already settled” uncle Radhesh, as the latter has thoroughly assimilated the British culture, still retaining his Bengali identity.

The characters of Radhesh and Ananda allegorize the mythical Odysseus and Telemachus, respectively. The author himself has opined in an interview 'Could I write a mock epic?: Amit Chaudhuri published on Mint that Ananda is representative of the mythical Telemachus as the latter makes the epic journey in search of his father Odysseus. Odysseus, despite being a globetrotter has a thorough sense of the world. As reflected through the character Radhesh, Ithaca and any other part of the world means the same to him. Nevertheless, for Ananda, it is not the same, echoing the fragility of Telemachus. Ananda's inability to make peace with himself is contrary to his uncle Radhesh who has clarity of discernment between cultures, and is not as affected by internal conflicts as his nephew. The foil to Ananda is Radhesh, whose embodiment is the ideal Ananda aspires to achieve, but fails miserably as he still cannot demarcate the boundaries between his London 'self' and Indian 'self', unaware of where his Indian 'self' ends and London 'self' begins.

Radhesh mimics the West in his dressing and attitude. This according to Bhabha's theory of mimicry is an ultimate disavowal of the colonizing authority, being pushed to the extent of mockery. Homi K. Bhabha reflects on Lacan's observation of mimicry which “reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage...It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of being mottled” (Bhabha 121). Radhesh's camouflaged identity is reflected in his British attire and citizenship as well as the fact that he reminisces and glorifies Tagore's poetry and eats out in Indian Sylheti restaurants as a prototypical Bengali. He mimics the British in his lifestyle, but still maintains a camouflaged congruence with his Bengali British affiliation. Nevertheless, he carries himself with ease, contrary to the conflicting duality in Ananda, so much so that it eventually feels like a mockery. His confidence in his own skin overpowers the colonizer's disposition, that nobody has power over him in any form. Radhesh does not give anyone, an opportunity to take him for granted for he knows his worth. He takes pride in his Sylheti ancestry though they have mutual hatred back home in India. However, once they are in the alien territory their bitterness and the differences of opinion blur away, as they value companionship and camaraderie above flimsy hatred back in India. In London, the members of Sylheti restaurant converse with Radhesh and Ananda in the mixed Sylheti-Bengali dialect and they take them on a tour around the restaurant.

Ananda's core being transcends Indian boundaries, as he half-heartedly merges with the western canon. He undergoes a massive cultural transformation, due to the interchange of the conflicting cultures. Though he wears the same corduroys as he did back home in India, and prefers lettuce sandwiches, he feels like he has transformed into a new self, and constructed a new identity, a hybrid one. He is not the 'Ananda', 'the happiest one', rather the subsequent shedding of his old identity has led to the hybridity. 'The new Ananda', paradoxical to his name, becomes more prone to existential angst. Homesickness accompanies Ananda throughout his journey, as he tries to come to terms with himself. He is a product of cultural dilemma and it aptly echoes in a review published in James Joyce Broadsheet: “The hero struggles with his hybrid identity. Homesick and acutely conscious that he is Indian, a

'marginalised man' in England.'" (A.S. 2)

Ananda arrives at a point, when he isn't just a victim of a cultural dilemma or a hybrid identity, but is now cognizant of the new binary: the one between the subordinate and the dominant. He eats lettuce sandwiches and converses in English back home in India, where power relations do not matter to him. Rather, he belongs to the dominant class or upper-middle class. His peripheral presence in London as an Oxford student obliterates his superior bourgeois self. This awakens the subaltern consciousness as an aspiring poet, an unpopular tenant, who cannot distinguish solitude from loneliness. He is slowly pushed towards a subaltern identity as he becomes the marginalised Bengali Indian, struggling to pull himself together because of his newly discovered 'otherness.'

Indelible Cacophony

Ananda feels conscious about himself when silence engulfs his indestructible Indian self. This is his feeble voice that he hears in his odyssey amongst the cacophony of London noise. Chaudhuri comments,

The silence in the studio flat when the window was down, the silence of the library or when he was at home reading, the lecturer's voice in a hall...emphasised...the proximity of this shadowy, indestructible thing, the self...he was married to his consciousness forever and ever (Chaudhuri 22)

Ananda's noisy neighbours play bass louder and stamp on the floor during late nights adding agony to the sound and fury of Ananda's mind. The noise of his neighbours like the Patels and Mandy over his roof is figurative of all the discordant voices within his head. But he "had no power over the noises his neighbours made." (Chaudhuri 25). Ananda still practices his Hindustani music in the mornings, his only recourse, much to the dismay of his neighbours as they sleep by midnight and wake up in the afternoon. Ananda, like any Bengali, is used to waking up in the early mornings and practicing his music back home in India. Not being accustomed to the late-night rock and bass of the cosmopolitan London millennials, Ananda deems it meaningless for his neighbours to engage in such trivial pleasures who have no hope for the future as Chaudhuri asserts,

The dull pulse-like beat started at eleven o'clock at night. It was a new kind of music called 'rap'... He had puzzled over why people would want to listen and even move their bodies to an angry, insistent onrush of words- words that rhymed, apparently, but had no echo or afterlife. (Chaudhuri 9).

This description of Ananda's perception of rock music exhibits his hatred of the musical tastes of the British. However, Chaudhuri contrasts this with the pure and soulful Hindustani music, which is full of life. However, Ananda is now denied the freedom to practice music, his only solace that soothes his irksome disposition, due to the ruthless neighbors who surround him. Further, he also believes that no literature in the world can measure up to the magnificent Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

Chaudhuri adroitly makes Ananda comment on the imperialistic nature of Britain, as the latter "couldn't find a connection between London and Bombay—except, of course, the red double-decker buses and post-boxes. It made him ill at ease—over and above having to

swallow the insult of having been ruled by this nation!" (Chaudhuri 11) Even his poetry is different from the usual norm, as he wonders if *Poetry Review* will publish his poems, as they usually publish "chatty" verses and not the ones with anguish and music like his own. Ananda mocks British architecture for its porous surfaces and even takes a jibe at the iconic Shakespearean sonnet "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day":

But for Ananda, it was summer—by being contingent—that came to brief life on his rediscovery of the poem in London, and not the beloved, immobile and fixed in eternity, because the imagination is drawn— not by sympathy, but some perverse definition of delight—to the fragile, the animated, and the short-lived.(Chaudhuri 42)

In his remarks, Ananda attempts to undermine the British weather conditions, which are subject to change at any given time, and not for the sake of eternal adoration of love.

Existential exile

There is a definite insoluble void inside Ananda as he feels left out and alone in his flat. Though he aspires to do a lot, he feels like he feels desperate about his current circumstances. Even as trifle an insect as a butterfly or a bee inside his flat, pushes him to the verge of being apprehensive of his future as he feels clueless. But once they leave his home, he feels empty as his momentary company is gone and he is left only with himself. He becomes an "exile in his home." (Chaudhuri 34). Ananda is wounded when his neighbours accuse him of having stolen the coin box. Chaudhuri writes, "Every fibre of his being said, "What am I doing here?' This is not my home," though no words formed in his head" (Chaudhuri 39) which precisely says as an outlander, the extent to which he was silently undergoing the perpetual taunts of his neighbours. Ananda contemplates the behavior of English men because they believe that it is "polite" to not recognize the existence of another. He was unaccustomed to living a trivial existence in India, so he finds it difficult to cope with living as a nobody in London. Ananda's futile existence seems to hold no significance in the eyes of the British. In the article, 'Portrayal of Cultural Consciousness in Indian Fiction: With Reference to Amit Chaudhuri's *Odysseus Abroad*' Vasisht explains the clash of disparate cultures that cause inner turmoil inside Ananda. In the company of his uncle and listening to his music, he felt a sense of relief from the mundane and insignificant nature of his existence in the world, as well as from the strain of his troubling thoughts. During the chaotic times of his life, music was a source of light that he could turn in order to purge his lonesome sufferings.

Conclusion

In this case, Ananda, an Indian immigrant in London struggles to figure out his cultural identity while wading through his daily routine, echoing Joyce's contention that "the epic begins in the ordinary." (Chaudhuri 193) It is through Ananda's mundane wanderings and meandering thoughts that one can observe Ananda's evolving cultural hybridity. As Christina Zwarg observes in her essay, 'O My Swineherd!', according to Derrida it is not identity but only "the process of identification that endures." (Zwarg, et al.) It echoes the emergence of Ananda's fluid and hybrid identity. *Odysseus Abroad*, unlike Homer's *Odyssey* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, with its journey motif, is a unique work in that it explores contemporary

issues such as multiculturalism, hybridity, existential crisis, and the complexities of identity crisis experienced by Indian immigrants. The struggle of Ananda in London is a ray of hope for all of the diasporic Indians, that they can find their purpose and determination to live in a place, that is different from their homeland.

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Developmentality and Discard Scapes: A Reading of Nuclear Desert Space in Uday Singh's *Pokhran: A Novel*

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Abstract

The paper reads nuclear desert sites as the manifestation of power regime at the peripheries regulated through the discourse of developmentality, utilizing the architectonics of colonial wastelanding. It takes into account Uday Singh's Pokhran: A Novel (2020) to unravel the politics behind appropriating the desert scape out of its supposed undesirability. At the backdrop of the novel, the desert forms the pivotal territory of our critical interrogation, a space that is discarded, reappropriated, neutralized and finally nuclearized. Drawing upon India's dominant postcolonial nuclear imaginary, the discourse of neocolonial governmentality imbues territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization of nuclear desert space. The process involves the politics of discarding peripheral spaces to produce them as power hotspots like nuclear bases. The attempt is also aimed at re-appropriating the spatiality discourse, dominantly concerned with urban centres, towards the peripheral zones- the nuclear desert(ed) site being a case in point here.

Keywords: *Deserts, Developmentality, Discardscape, Nuclear site, Pokhran, Wasteland.*

Introduction

The spatial turn in the 1970s has reasserted the importance of space in understanding socio-political relationships. Space has been widely discussed as playing a role in determining 'lived experiences' and constructing subjective identities. The idea of appropriation of space in the context of capitalist notions got attention in the works of Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, and Doreen Massey. Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1991), sees the capitalist model as “relying on deliberately privileged 'strong points' – on large-scale enterprises and cities” (421). He defines the city as the centre of the capitalist modal for appropriation and production of space which relegates “all other places passive and peripheral relative to centres – centres of production, of wealth and of decision” (421). As a result of an obsessive focus on the city, it is developed as a “point[s] of concentration or vortice[s]” with “a regulating role” (421). Other spaces, such as deserts, islands, coal mines, river tributaries, waste dumps, military installations, and viruses, are peripheral in the power structure. The paper argues that the discarding of certain spaces as peripheral is done through the wasteland aesthetics. It reads Pokhran nuclear site as the manifestation of discarded landscape utilized to serve the Indian nuclear agenda as represented in the fictional account of Uday Singh's *Pokhran: A Novel* (2020). Drawing initially from Henri Lefebvre's idea of the “production of space,” it argues that the Indian nuclear site at Pokhran has been strategically manufactured as a discard scape by utilizing the wasteland discourse to produce it as a nuclear site. The paper poses it as the power hotspot regulated through the developmentality regime.

The Indian nuclear project at Pokhran started with the establishment of the Atomic

Energy Commission (AEC) in 1948, paving the way for the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). The testing at Pokhran was done two times: first, in 1974, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and second, in 1998, under the leadership of the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. *Pokhran* (2020) deals with the nuclear test done in 1974 under the Smiling Buddha Project, famously known as Pokhran- I. Pokhran is a remote village located outside the Jaisalmer district of the Indian state Rajasthan. The test site is located 45 km northwest of Pokhran town and 4 km north of Khetolai village.

Pokhran (2020) is narrated in the first person by its protagonist, Chaitanya and addresses the different subjects like religion, politics, family conflict, migration, and human trafficking. Interestingly, it minutely addresses land redistribution in postcolonial India as part of the nationalization of the land project and the selfish local politics surrounding the redistribution. Nevertheless, with all these themes at the backdrop, it dominantly focuses on the nuclear fallout and its effects on the life of Chaitanya and other local populations. The narrative is weaved around various historical and political events by Uday Singh, who stayed in the Pokhran village before writing this book.

Literature Review

The origin of space and spatial studies could be traced back to the chronotopic scrutiny of Mikhail Bakhtin (“Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” 1937), in the poststructuralist geophilosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (*Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 1972-1980), in the postcolonial critique of Edward Said (*Out of Place* 1999) and Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture* 2004), and the feminist theories developed by Gloria Anzaldúa (*Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* 1999) and Doreen Massey (*Space, Place and Gender* 1999). The spatial turn in critical theory got impetus from Michel Foucault’s “archaeologies” and “heterotopias”. *The Production of Space* (1991) by Henri Lefebvre opened the Marxist perspective on space and spatial studies by providing neoliberal offshoots of spatial appropriation in urban settings. In the postmodern context of cultural geographies, we encounter the groundbreaking ideas of David Harvey, such as “time-space compression” and Fredric Jameson, who examines “the new spatiality implicit in the postmodern” (418). The heterogeneity of global spaces has been looked at by Marc Augé from the perspective of “non-place” and its functionality in what he calls “supermodernity” (Augé); by Michel de Certeau as “the strategical and tactical” modern urban space (Certeau); by E.C. Relph as “perceptual”, “existential”, “cognitive”, and “abstract” space (Relph). These perspectives on space open different extensions to read the spatiality but space as discard or wasteland has been hardly a matter of academic oversight.

However, the nuclear site at Pokhran has been dominantly studied as 'soft places' of power (Roy 2018); as the 'monuments' of modernity (Kaur); colonial politics of place-making (Das 2010); sites of othered identities (Das 2015); as a key component site of India's postcolonial identity (Chacko). The paper takes the critical insights from these studies and poses that the discourse around the nuclear site at Pokhran is not simply about shunning the binaries like east/west, us/them; rather, it involves the complex dynamics of postcolonial modernity implemented through the discourse of 'developmentality' to produce it as a nuclear

facility to serve the Indian nuclear agenda. The paper invites a neocolonial perspective of looking at the nuclear site at Pokhran as the hotspot of power regulation outside the city centre.

Methodology

The colonial rule in India has laid significant influences on the Indian way of modernization, and its complex disciplinary dynamics are deeply embedded in the postcolonial governmental framework. Colonialism, in a way, introduced “new technologies of governance” (Legg and Heath 6) in modern India. Sumit Sarkar maintains that “The polemical target is no longer the state as related . . . to class rule, exploitation and forms of surplus appropriation, but rather, the modern state as embodying Western (mainly rationalist) values” (Sarkar 187). The nuclear facility could also be included in the list as India has adopted it to get an entry to the nuclear club primarily monopolized by the first world countries. In their nuances, the neocolonial governmentalizing policies differed from those of colonizers. David Scott, in his article “Colonial Governmentality”, used the term “political rationalities” to theorize the “complexes of knowledge/power” (193) that shaped the colonial projects of 'political sovereignty. He insists on delineating the “multifarious governmentalities” (Legg and Heath 7) that emerged in South Asia at different points of time to estimate the emergence of “*modern* power in its colonial career” (196, emphasis in original). Partha Chatterjee has insisted that we cannot understand nationalism without considering modern governmentalities (Chatterjee 139). In India, neocolonial governmentality has reshaped itself and made the developmental discourse its major weapon. Governmentalities craft the very boundary between the social and the political. Prathama Banerjee proposes 'developmentality' to understand how “the social has been both represented and transformed in South Asia” (Legg and Heath 17). Developmentality challenges the universalism embedded in the governmentality discourse. Banerjee argues that the concept produced out of Foucault's re-reading of European history does not apply to all the histories of the worlds (81), and “there is no denying that the postcolonial regime in India did set up an elaborate governmental structure that deployed both older colonial rationalities of enumeration, classification, pacification and representation and new strategies of redistribution, planning and development” (Banerjee 86). These strategies parted ways from the governmentality paradigm and have taken the shape of 'developmentality' in neo-colonial India.

The idea of development and the production of nuclear desert is imbued through the colonial discourse of wastelanding, citing the discardedness embedded in the undesirability of the desert landscape as the primary reason to reappropriate it. The characteristics like minor, outlying and peripheral associated with these scapes make the appropriation of these sites more regressive. In *The Production of Space* (1991), Henri Lefebvre maintains, “[p]eripheral areas . . . abandoned to stagnation and (relative) backwardness, are more and more oppressed, controlled and exploited” (421). To recast spatial studies in wastelanding and discard frameworks, we are reading the appropriation of Pokhran nuclear site under the developmentality discourse.

Analysis

Pokhran: A Novel (2020) by Uday Singh is a fictional story about a famous historical event that made India recognizable globally as a nuclear power. It blends actual historical events with fiction and dives right back into the history to challenge the event to show the probability of the nuclear fallout happening during the tests affecting hundreds of people living in the surrounding areas. It traces through the life of the protagonist, Chaitanya, a “frail quadriplegic with limited abilities” (xiii), the problems caused by the eulogized event in the nuclear historiography which made India “proudly nuclear” (Roy 2013). He was born in Pokhran a year after the 'Smiling Buddha’ atomic test. Like him, a few other children, born disabled and having “soft atrophied muscles” (xiii), were implied victims of the untold nuclear fallout.

At the backdrop of the novel, the desert forms the pivotal zone of our critical interrogation, a space that is discarded, reappropriated and finally nuclearized. The desert landscape has a significant textual presence in the novel. Desert has often been bestowed metaphorical or symbolic space in literary studies. With its longstanding connotations with death and desolation, the desert seemed to be the apt site for the inaugural test of a supremely deadly weapon. Uday Singh's *Pokhran* depicts the desert as a silent landscape, sparsely populated inviting acute spatial and strategic attention. The population living on it is discarded due to the 'undesirable' characteristics of the space associated with it. The deserts are characterized as peripheral discarded scapes isolated from human habitation due to various factors, including topography and climate. BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre) preferred the deserts of Pokhran for the test because the temperature reaches to fifty degrees throughout the day, making it difficult for US spy satellites to record any activity at the atomic site. (“American Spy Satellites”).

A Desert is generally defined as “a region so arid,” “any unsettled area,” “unsuitable for human habitation,” and “wasteland” (“Desert”). Aidan Tynan in *The Desert in Modern Literature and Philosophy: Wasteland Aesthetics* (2020) defines desert as:

a natural wilderness or as a barren wasteland, as an ecology sometimes unusually rich in life and surprisingly fragile, as an idea of geographical extremity or alterity, as a sacred or accursed site, as a metaphor for nullity, as a subjective or existential terrain, or as an object of sheer aesthetic exultation. (1)

It is wild, barren, uncivilized, fragile, accursed, existential, and needs to be tamed. The developmental regime produces knowledge of “not-modern, not-rational, not-secular, not-civil subjects” (Banerjee 87). Desert, constructed as the most uncivil, backward, sacred and irrational, is tamed due to its manufactured discardedness. Discard is defined as something devalued, left out or excess matter (Hawkins). The desert space is considered unsocial because of its incapacity to nurture a human civilization. This intricate social and political play of the development dynamic played out during the conduct of nuclear testing in India.

Jean Baudrillard in *Simulations* (1983) shows the social, political and cultural relation of desert appropriation to human civilization. He asserts these spaces as

Where[ever] irreversible apparatuses of control are elaborated, wherever the notion

of security becomes absolute, wherever the norm of security replaces the former arsenal of laws and violence (including war), the system of deterrence grows and around it grows an historical, social, and political desert. [...] That is the true nuclear fallout: the meticulous operation of technology serves as a model for the meticulous operation of the social. (Baudrillard)

The idea of state building and development through modernization disguises the state's purpose to create a singular site of legitimate authority. It has territorialized the lands and spaces not only in the centre of the city but also in the peripheries. Itty Abraham contends, This project sought to replace other sites of allegiance and identity with its own autonomous space, through the transformation of the landscape and through the identification of the state's activities as uniquely modern: a project that depended crucially on the techniques and images of science and technology. In sum, it could be said that in seeking to avert the latent crisis, the ideological function of the postcolonial state was to naturalize the categories the modern and the scientific within (and producing) a field called India ("Science and Secrecy" 2136). The nuclear sites are the visible and "literal manifestation of the postcolonial - the scientific indigenous modern" (2137).

The 1894 Land Acquisition Act was used in postcolonial India to claim the right over lands and its populations. The Nehruvian idea of nationalizing private properties for the nation's integrity allowed the state to take over and appropriate the indigenous land for modernizing purposes such as big dams, capitalists projects like MNCs, industries and multi-purpose projects. The Balagarh Fort, utilized as a nuclear laboratory during the test, was handed over to the Indian government by Bhawani Singh, the last of the Champawat Rathores, "as part of the nationalization of land and property" (Singh xv-xvi). In the Indian state of Rajasthan, the 1963 Land Reforms and Acquisition of Land-Owners Estate Act was used to claim "palace, fort, building, or building plot" ("Bare Acts Live").

After "hand[ing] over the ownership of the [Pokhran] fort to the Indian government as part of the nationalization of land and property" (Singh xv-xvi), the state abandoned the fort, and it "had not been in use since 1952" (xv). The politics behind abandoning these spaces and turning them into ruins makes them available for reterritorialization. The initial silent landscape of the novel turns into a site utilized to conduct a deadly and violent atomic test. The villagers in the book seem surprised by the activity around the discarded and abandoned fort. The villagers, throughout the past years, were used to

seeing periods of hectic traffic and activity every five years, when politicians dropped by for their customary visits to their vote banks . . . This new and rather strange traffic was reticent, purposeful, and headed straight to the Pokhran Fort, Balagarh, that had not been in use since 1952. (xv)

The discarded fort and desert landscape has been nuclearized and neutralized through the discourse of Indian deterrence to serve the Indian agenda of nuclear development. Anna-Elena Maheu, in *Laying the Groundwork: Desert Spaces and the Sacralization of US Settler Colonialism* (2021), defines the nuclear desert as

A composite geography of militarised research centres, nuclear test sites, and nuclear waste storage sites [...] It is a space of national reckoning, trans/formation, and immense destructive and creative power—a space of cultural, direct, and structural

violence. (95)

Interestingly, Deleuze and Guattari, in their geophilosophical project, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972-1980), characterize a constant process of geopolitical transformation of space through the concepts like deterritoriality and reterritoriality. Deterritoriality occurs “when certain territorial entities lose their importance, in favour of other territorial configurations” (qtd. in Duran 315), and Reterritorialization is perceived as the emergence of “new centres of power alongside the old ones” (qtd. in Duran 315). Valerian Kuletz, in *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West* (2016), adapts deterritoriality as “the loss of commitment by modern nation-states to particular lands or regions” (7). This deterritorialized implementation of desert-as-wasteland discourse casts desert landscapes as ecologically and agriculturally useless and uninhabitable (7). Kuletz proposes the idea of “inverted logic” (16) to contextualize deterritoriality. The desert landscape, she claims, was “viewed by the state as desirable because of its undesirability” (16). The deterritoriality reinforces utility and evolves these landscapes in the narrative of national security, leading toward reterritorialization of the spaces, which Danielle Endres (2009) calls a process deliberately done to manufacture “wastelands [in]to waste sites” (Endres). The colonizers have used the wasteland discourse to justify their settlement in the 'othered' uncultured colonies. It became the basis for moral, political, cultural and, most importantly, economic justifications behind the colonial project. It has been appropriated by the neocolonizers to justify, first, the manufactured discardedness of the Pokhran Fort and second, for the production of Pokhran as a nuclear facility. Itty Abraham, in “Science and Secrecy in Making of Postcolonial State”, states that “building nuclear reactors in independent India was always about more than developing new sources of electrical energy” (2136).

Conclusion

This paper has established Pokhran as a peripheral discard scape produced using the regressive politics of developmentality, which goes beyond the traditional governmentalizing aspect of regularizing the population through the regimes holding the social life from the very heart of the city. The particular focus, exemplified using the fictional account of Uday Singh's *Pokhran: A Novel* (2020), has been on the neo-colonial form of wastelanding discourse in manufacturing the undesirability of desertscaapes. The novel dominantly centres on disability, local politics, migration and pain. However, the paper foregrounds it in the spatial studies domain and casts it as an anti-canonical narrative that provides a counterpoint to the popular imaginary lauding Indian nuclear expansion.

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Speciesism and Ecology: Interplay and Interpretations of Venita Coelho's *AIA Trilogy*

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Abstract

The manifestations of speciesism throughout socio-environmental history reflect the bio-power politics endorsed by human/animal binaries that celebrated human supremacy. Following this, the Anthropocene has witnessed innumerable ecological tragedies, ecophobia and ecocide that have paralysed the ecosystem. This realisation by ecocriticism with animal studies and Posthumanism aimed to re-orientate our interaction and interpretation of animals conditioned by speciesism; a variety of anthropocentrism that generated tension between humans and animals. In this regard, the article shall explore the structural presence of humans and animals commissioned by speciesism in Coelho's AIA Trilogy to open necessary scope for inter-species dialogism. Further, ideas like anthropomorphism and theriomorphism shall be discussed to challenge and deconstruct the human(ity)/animal(ity) binary; along with concepts such as 'subhuman' and 'companion-species; which would be explored as quintessential to look at nonhumans with compassion, reverence, ethical responsibility and stewardship. Such a stance appears relevant in the Anthropocene for the untimely extinction of animals has accelerated the impending Apocalypse.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism, Speciesism, Anthropocene, Animal Studies, AIA Trilogy.*

Introduction: Understanding Speciesism in Ecological Considerations

While the term speciesism seems to have gained popularity through the latter part of the Twentieth century with the steady emergence of several anti-discriminatory camps for nonhumans as advocated by ecocriticism and Animal Studies; it would be misleading to deny its presence as an ancient mechanism that was closely rooted to the western conception of anthropocentrism but has gradually grown as an independent area of research; through its association with the modern animal liberation movement which has allowed its scholars to explore the conventional yardsticks to morality, rights, entitlements, ethical responsibility and welfare of animals. The term “speciesism”, however was introduced by Richard Ryder in the year 1975; whose conceptual framework was further elaborated by Peter Singer in his seminal work, *Animal Liberation* (1975) which attempted to trace the speciesist attitude of biased interests towards humans, while keeping all other species against them as an inferior category, irrespective of their cognition, emotions, mutations and perceptual faculties. The renewed interest in Animal Studies accelerated with its growing association with other mainstream theories and prevailing forms of discriminations like classism, anthropocentrism, racism and sexism. Following this trend, ecocriticism also traced its conceptions to animal liberation in both theory and practice, as both essentially are forums of resistance to

discriminations, exploitations and oppression to anthropocentrism. However, this was not the case during the first wave of ecocriticism that fundamentally emphasized on nature writings which focused on the ecosystem as a generalized unit; unlike the animal liberationists who focused their concerns and considerations on singular nonhuman organisms. Such an attitude was revisited in the subsequent waves of ecocriticism with its realization of close dependence and interrelations between humans, nature and animals as integral components to understand the *real* and *holistic* mechanism of the ecosystem and their connections with humans.

Towards this end, Singer's *In Defense of Animals* (1985) marked the second wave in Animal Studies as it attempted to locate speciesism and animal liberation in contemporary readings and situations. To this, Tony Milligan attached speciesism with ecocriticism as he claimed that “[s]peciesism [w]as a [v]ariety of [a]nthropocentrism” and therefore overlooking of species, for Price was a “supercilious insult” (Milligan 231 and Price 192). In addition, Welling & Kapel also stated that “without animal justice, the cause for environmental ramifications would be lopsided as it forms a substantial part of the ecosystem that has been closely associated to the social and ethically framework of humans” (Garrard 139-140; Welling & Kapel 106). These realization also resulted in the emergence of Animal Studies as a theoretical paradigm that grew as a response from the Animal Liberation movement that was grounded on the ideals of ethics, rights, welfare and co-existence between humans and nonhumans as advocated by eminent thinkers like Peter Singer, Paul Walden, Greg Garrard, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, Cary Wolfe, Tom Regan, Jacques Derrida and Donna J. Haraway. In their efforts, they not only emphasized in the revival of interest, awareness and sensitivity for animals but also questioned and challenged the structural superiority of human(ity) to expand and reorient the ideology and politics of speciesism. This was done with the intention to (re)locate humans in the larger functioning of the ecosystem while also generating a holistic and inter-species interrogation of bio-power, oppressions and discriminations of the nonhumans.

Speciesism: An Ideology

As a concept, speciesism attempts to understand the complex dynamics of interactions and interpretations between humans and animals that had largely been anthropocentrically scaled. In this framework, animals have been perpetually 'othered' as a secondary category for speciesism fostered the pre-designed discourse that “continue[d] to prioritize human beings, thereby excusing the exploitation or extermination of other species” which furthered the politics of the Anthropocene wherein humans are regarded as a singular force of influence that shape, control, alter and transform the ecosystem, while attaching intrinsic value to their own specimen (Ratelle, 2015). Adding to this, Tony Milligan in his essay, “Speciesism as a Variety of Anthropocentrism” cautiously stated that “inter-species comparisons are notoriously difficult to make and there may often be something that we can miss about particular cognitively impaired humans when compared to cognitively normal non-humans.” To this end, there have been structural stereotyping and conditioning of animals as an inferior category whose ruthless exploitation, denial of ethical responsibilities sanctioned and institutionalized killing of the nonhuman *others* with a capitalist and imperial

intent (231). Such an attitude further resulted in the physical, emotional and spiritual detachment between humans and animals which consequently limited their interaction and (mis)representation in social and literary narratives. Such a reductionist exercise denied animals their identity, roles and entitlements in social, literary and theoretical narratives that systematically channeled their *presences* to lurk in the periphery of social and natural marginality (Taylor 273). Keeping these ideas in consideration, the article shall attempt to interrogate the speciesist tendencies in Venita Coelho's AIA Trilogy. To this end, the biopower politics of speciesism shall be explored through the cultural homogeneity and fixations commissioned by speciesism and anthropocentrism that had internalized and legitimized nonhumans into stereotypical images, relations and roles that *always* belonged to a “different moral category” outside humans (Cavaliere 54). In addition, it also justified Man's systematic and institutional exploitation of animals through the hierarchical structure of the human/animal binary. For this purpose, animals have often been reduced as the 'alter ego' of humans that are often “*used* to map out constitutive features of human culture” through representational techniques like anthropomorphism and theriomorphism. Within this context, “animal often functions as silent witnesses or points of comparison” while also being a counterpart and negation of human concerns (emphasis added) (Baker 1; Rajamannar 14 and 72). Following this, animals have been seen as “mute, non-rational, instinctive, amoral,” creatures that are often presented as “absent referent” who have been erroneously and cruelly positioned both outside and opposite humans as marginalized subordinates (Blake 2). In this regard, “most human beings [have become] speciesists” who have readily sacrificed the “most important interests of members of other species in order to promote the most trivial interests of [their] own species” (Singer 9). This, for Haraway normalized oppression, exploitations, objectifying, violence moral outrage, extremism and manhandling of nonhuman animals; which for her was an act of “criminality”. In fact, the “*meaningful* domination, by which humans claim[ed] *exclusive* possession” over “other-than human living beings” further reaffirmed the exclusivist notion of speciesism (Baker 6; Haraway, “Becoming-with-Companions: Sharing and Response in Experimental Laboratories” 122).

Ideological Challenges of Speciesism

Such a reductionist attitude towards the nonhumans as endorsed by speciesism has not only led to the misrepresentation and negligence of nonhumans' presences but also resulted in the motivated stereotyping, abuses, exploitations and killings of animals by humans. This was because animals for both Kant and Heidegger as cited by Singer, were “not self-conscious, and [were] there merely as a means to an end. That end is man”. Such a framework denied any direct duties of humans towards animals which consequently deprived them of liberty, dignity and rights (203). This indifferent attitude of humans towards animals was further intensified through Renaissance and Enlightenment that saw a sudden rise of manhandling animals for vivisection, experimentation and toxic testing. However, such an unethical practice was legitimized by Thomas Aquinas and Rene Descartes, as they advocated that “animals do not suffer. Not possessing language, they do not possess reason. Not possessing reason, they are not feeling beings, but mere automata” with *only* instinctual

responses (Steiner, on citing Aquinas and Descartes 58). Towards this end, the formulation of the Cartesian doctrine insinuated “the emergence of modern bio-power” that not only marked a distinction between humans and animals but also attempted to justify animal abuses and exploitations that took a worse turn as development, consumerism and research advanced (Jodey 14). In this regard, the Scientific and the Industrial Revolution witnessed large scale domestication of animals in various sectors like farms, slaughter-houses, laboratories, industries, residential houses, circus, zoo and sports arenas; where they were often captivated, manhandled and altered for research, commercial, illegal trading and monetary benefits. Recognizing this, Coelho in *Monkey See, Monkey Do* attempted to expose the horrific abuses, infectious diseases, untimely and unnatural deaths of animals in medical, pharmaceutical, commercial, industrial and cosmetic companies as illustrated through the fictional companies TUPAC, A-SUP and LaRose that conducted unethical toxic testing on rats, frogs, zebra, rhino, alligator, orangutan, giraffe, beagles. This resulted in “milky eyes,” blisters and blindness among the victimized animals as electrodes were stitched under their skin. In fact, animals such as rabbits were frequently used for research experimentation for “they [couldn't] make a sound [while] with other species that howl in pain, they cut the vocal chords”. Despite this, it was monkeys that were “very popular as a laboratory animal for many years. Used majorly in experiments with electric shocks”, their skulls were saw opened to “attach electrodes to the brain and watch the activity” (51-52 and 62).

While, these inhumane practices were justified as a necessary act for conducting medical experiments throughout the AIA Trilogy; for innovating cure to severe human health problems like heart disorders, Alzheimer and cancer; Comte Chastain's confession in *Monkey See, Monkey Do*, highlighted the gruesome reality of the bio-power politics in scientific experimentations and vivisections. For Comte, the scientific testing on animals was completely an inefficient and “virtually useless” exercise; for cancer had been cured “in mice several times over, but in humans- never. The simple truth [was] that products for humans should be tested on humans” which was rarely done. While these acts have denied animals' their dignity, morality, ethical responsibility; it has also exposed several species to extinction like the dinosaurs, woolly mammoth, Dodo, the hangul deer, the Yangtze giant tortoise, Guam rails and the Hula painted frogs; a concern that Coelho extensively discussed in her novel *Dead as a Dodo*. In addition, the novel *Tiger by the Tail* also traced the hunting of sharks for their fins and dolphins for consumption and ritualistic practices by the Japanese which led to their death by “thousands every year” (204). To this end, the novel *Dead as a Dodo* also discussed the consumption of tigers and dogs in China and large scale consumption of turkey in America during Thanksgiving. Addressing these concerns, Coelho further explored the emotional shock, anger, fear, sadness and helplessness experienced by animals who complained of the severe dominance of anthropocentrism and speciesism that has made humans “wrong[ly] live like the world was made *only* for [them]” (emphasis added) (53). In addition to the exploration of the emotional capacities of animals, Coelho also traced their linguistic, cognitive and reasoning capacities through the introduction of 'JungleSpeak', a linguistic system that was used by the AIA team and animals for providing a platform for the animals to express themselves throughout the trilogy. Using this linguistic system, Kela and the comrades of Shadow were able to express their helplessness and anger towards humans

who “eat us, milk us, use our hair, skin, secretions... [In fact,] [t]hey grow us specially to use us. And no one cares if we are used up entirely” as they fail to “see us as sentient beings who can feel pain like them”.... or joy. Or sorrow. We are mere things to them”. Realizing this situation, the animals also knew that if “left up to mankind, we'd all soon be dead as dodos” (Coelho, *Dead as a Dodo* 104-5). Such a stance illustrated the deepened integration of speciesism and anthropocentrism in humans who considered themselves as “superior species” against animals that did “not have the range of intelligence and emotions that we do”. While they may “feel pain [b]ut they don't have feelings. They are merely animals”. In this context, “animals don't matter. Humans do” and therefore the cruelties faced by animals appear justified and made invisible “for [the larger benefits of] human welfare” (Coelho, *Monkey See, Monkey Do* 39-41). Such situations highlight the politics of bio-power contestation where humans are considered as the *only* “immortal beings in the whole world” who “have been given dominion over the birds and the beasts of the earth. They aren't our friends. To most of them we look like lunch. Stop thinking like a child and recognize the real world” (Coelho, *Tiger by the Tail* 234). While animals have been victimized with scientific experiments and vivisections, they have also been manhandled for their skins, ivories and furs that are used to make fashionable coats, shawls, leather beats, bags and shoes. Understanding the seriousness of this problem, Coelho raised an ethical campaign through Eva, a beauty pageant winner and the brand model of “Fur Association of Traders” in the novel *Monkey See, Monkey Do*, where she readily substituted her cause of 'world peace' for animals rights. These anti-speciesist efforts amplified through the Enlightenment period that witnessed large-scale oppressions and (ab)uses on animals in agriculture, domestication, commercial produce and research expedition along with industrial and medical experimentations. These serious concerns and considerations regarding animals have been explicitly dealt by Coelho throughout her trilogy, with an aim to spread awareness about the unethical exploitations, discriminations and abuses experienced by the animals among her targeted children audience.

Moving Beyond Speciesism: Conclusion

Understanding the seriousness and urgency of the ideological tension arising from speciesism, there have been efforts to locate counter-narrative for speciesism, which may instill into an enthusiasm in us to counter the social menace. Delving into this effort, one would easily observe that there have been several silent acts that have been direct to minimize the tension arising from speciesism. In fact, our socioenvironmental history of the ancient period has been a witness to the prevalence of “weak” anthropocentrism, which while generating tension between humans and animals; also fostered a reverential attitude towards nature and animals through the social structures of animism, totemism, primitivism and paganism. To this end, nonhumans had been considered as divine, ancestral and supernatural agents; which made conservation and partnership possible between humans and animals. This idea was traced by Venita Coelho during the tour of the Louvre Museum in *Monkey See, Monkey Do* (2016) which comprised of several significant paintings that reflected the long association between humans and animals. A similar depiction could be seen in the beliefs of the Bon religion of the Sera Monastery. Elaborating on the idea, Coelho in her first AIA novel,

Tiger by the Tail (2013) drew attention to the “Tree of Life”, which emphasized on the importance of co-existence and partnership between humans, nature and animals; a trait that Coelho considered was necessary to maintain sustenance and solidarity in the ecosystem. This idea was also celebrated by Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Empedocles of Agrigentum and Xenocrates who campaigned against speciesism. However, the most prominent leader of this camp was Saint Francis of Assisi who advocated for compassion towards *all* animals whom he addressed as “brothers and sisters” (Singer 197). In response to this, several contemporary cultural and literary narratives have attempted to include non-anthropocentric stories that were previously excluded and misrepresented to generate and maintain the essence of anthropocentrism and speciesism in our society. This inclusive approach shall allow in the addition of 'new' knowledge and perspectives of the nonhuman 'other' that had previously been unknown to humans. Such a radical effort may subsequently aid in the dismantling and crossing of speciesism; with an intent to create a neutral inter-species space for dialogism and deliberations between humans, nature, culture and animals; while allowing humans to re-explore themselves beyond the fixed conception of anthropocentrism and speciesism. In this attempt, the approach shall not only open potentials for the 'post' in Posthumanism but also instill the necessary instincts of co-existence and co-evolution through the process of “in-becoming” and 'companion species'; which may be seen as a quaint-essential to deconstruct the human-animal borders, for it could entitle humanitarian rights, dignity, ethics, moral responsibility and wellbeing to animals that were previously denied through anthropocentrism and speciesism.

Advocating the necessity of anti-speciesist trends, Coelho introduced an “unusual” team in her AIA trilogy that mainly comprised Rana (a human), Bagha (a tiger) and Kela (a monkey). Through this inter-species association, Coelho not only wanted to highlight the exemplary sensitivity, brotherhood and solidarity among the members. Such a setup further highlighted the application of the concept of 'in-becoming' and 'companion species' in AIA association; as advocated by Donna Haraway in her work, *When Species Meet*; wherein it emphasized on the “story of co-habitation, co-evolution, and embodied cross-species sociality”; which were consequently established on empathy, love and hope that the AIA considered as quaint-essential features to save the world (278). In this regard, the motto of the AIA was established as “Save the Animal, Save the World”; an idea that has become the foundation of contemporary Animal Studies, ecocriticism and Posthumanism. Understanding the importance of such an anti-speciesist approach, Coelho throughout her trilogy celebrated companionship between species while they engaged in a series of (mis)adventures to save the environment and animals in the postnatural period of the Anthropocene. In fact, for Smith, this sense of “fellow-feeling” also added “empathy and sympathy particularly with those less fortunate than we are” and aided in the moving from “the ends of man” and the systematic confinement between man and animal (175). Such an interdisciplinary approach seems to be gaining significance and relevance in the Anthropocene that has been witnessing an increased extinction of flora and fauna that has drastically altered and paralyzed the equilibrium of the ecosystem. To this end, Coelho attempted to explore new potentials and cues in her narrative style to understand and include the unheard signs, sounds, emotional responses and behavioral pattern of animals that further influenced humans' to rediscover

their natural and animalistic potentials that have been repressed through rigorous conditioning by culture discourses as endorsed by anthropocentrism and speciesism.

The anti-speciesist engagement of the trilogy by Coelho further allows us to raise several pertinent questions on the “damned and cruel race” of human(ity); with an aim to direct our thoughts to think anew along with the reconsideration of “taken-for-granted assumptions about the world and its inhabitants” (Coelho, *Monkey See, Monkey Do* 188 and Taylor, 278). Such representations further encourage us to hold necessary and timely debates and activism to tackle the menace caused by anthropocentrism and speciesism in the Anthropocene. Towards this end, Coelho through her AIA trilogy wanted to influence her readers to think differently from the pre-designed binary of human(ity) and animal(ity) which for Shefali Rajamannar appeared to be “the “post” in posthumanist thinking” (8). In this regard, posthumanism in collaboration with ecocriticism and animal studies appear to be a probable critique to speciesism as it recognizes the problems inherent in the binary of human(ity) and animal(ity). Adding to this, Charlie Blake et.al, in the “Introduction” of *Beyond Human: From Animality to Transhumanism* stated “that the critique of speciesism is a necessary advance in the cause of respecting nonhuman interests” for it creates a crucial point of negotiation through compassion, stewardship, moral and ethical sensibility, tolerance, empathy and mutual respect between humans and animals (7). Such a response from humans seems urgent as we are currently living an irreparable environmental crisis; which not only requires an expansion in our interpretations but also a restructuring of our imagination to rephrase and re-accentuate the ecological crisis in the Anthropocene. In this regard, Posthumanism appears “promising as a means of breaking down Speciesism as a *fundamental* institution” (Ratelle 140). In fact, these 'new' posthumanistic tendencies have not only allowed in the generation of cross-dialogism across borders but also in the dismantling and remapping of the nature/culture and animal/human binaries in the postnatural period to subsequently acknowledge and include the presences and alternate narratives of the nonhumans beyond human(ity). This shift towards Posthumanism has further garnered a new trend of additional responsibility and deep commitments of ethics, stewardship, solidarity, dignity, equilibrium and morality in the relationship between humans, nature and animals which may help in restoring equilibrium, stability and harmony between natural and cultured spaces in the Anthropocene.

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A Mother's Dilemma over a Queer Child: A Critique of Manju Jaidka's *Gumshoe Mania*

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Abstract

Manju Jaidka's latest novel, Gumshoe Mania strikes a flawless congregation of the quest novel and the academic one. The novel is a psychological study of the feelings of a conventional mother and an unconventional son and her homophobia towards his queer sexual orientation. The LGBTQ theme has been dealt with by the novelist in a unique way with the mother, Reema as the focal point of the novel. Reema's only son, Parag alias Picasso alias Pikachu alias Pico is her world, her primary concern with everything else relegated to the secondary position. As Pico grows up, he starts distancing from her physically as well as emotionally. After finishing college, he decides to move to New York without taking his mother into confidence and finally succeeds in escaping from her protective envelope. The present paper is an attempt to study the quest of a mother for her only son who has broken all possible ties with her, only to confront his homosexuality. The paper also endeavours to trace a mother's dilemma, her homophobia, her shock and rejection of her son's peculiarity, her coming out of the stereotypical shackles and her final acceptance.

Keywords: *Quest, Queer, Sexual orientation, Homophobia, Acceptance.*

A noted academician Manju Jaidka has made her presence felt on the literary landscape as a writer of a play, poems, and novels apart from non-fiction and academic publications. Her first creative pursuit, a play entitled *The Seduction and Betrayal of Cat Whiskers* was published in the year 2007. Since then she has not looked back having penned the novels, *Spots of Time* (2007), *Scandal Point* (2011), *Amaltas Avenue* (2014) and *Gumshoe Mania* (2021). Besides, she has also authored anthologies of poetry, *For Reasons Unknown* (2013), *Saudade* (2020) and a non-fictional prose, *The Next Milestone: A Mother's Journal* (2017). She has dealt with diverse themes and issues, especially socio-cultural and psychological in nature. Undoubtedly, her works spotlight the complex nature of life and the resulting adjustments and frustrations.

In her latest novel, *Gumshoe Mania*, Jaidka strikes a flawless congregation of the quest novel and the academic one. The novel does not just bring forth the theme of parent-child relationship in the post-modern world but also the themes of ambition and abandonment, personal quest for identity and personal choices, all set in a framework of mystery and suspense. Above all, it is a psychological study of the feelings of a conventional mother and an unconventional son and her homophobia towards his queer sexual orientation without understanding that "Sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct aspects of the self" (Katz-Wise 1011). Queer is anything which is at odds with the normal, the dominant and the legitimate. The queer theory has recently gained a lot of importance in academic discourse. In fact, queer theory is one of the fields of post-structuralism that grew out of feminism and gender studies. As an academic tool, queer theory came about in part from gender and

sexuality studies. It is a much newer theory that gained prominence in the 1990's, and contests many of the set ideas by challenging the notion of defined and finite identity categories, as well as the norms that create the binaries. It is a critical approach to examine human sexuality. One of its key concepts is heteronormativity, a worldview that regards heterosexuality as the normal sexual orientation that is preferred and reinforced through various social institutions such as marriage. Thinkers such as Michael Foucault, Eve Sedgwick, Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Butler have contributed to the development of this theory. Michael Warner has opined, "Almost everything that would be called queer theory is about ways in which texts - either literature or mass culture of language - shape sexually... (Warner 19). Thus, this theory challenges the binary division designed traditionally. Queer not only connotes transgressing norms but also crossing the boundaries and not fitting in the expected models:

Once the term 'queer' was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse. In recent years 'queer' has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies. (Jagose 1)

Literature is an imitation of life and paints a picture of the society through plot, characterisation and appropriate words. Contemporary Indian English literature is the reflection of modern society and the LGBTQ community is a reality of this modern society. Though Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* talked about homosexuality almost eighty years ago, there have been novels like *A Life Apart* by Neel Mukherjee, *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur, *My Magical Palace* by Kunal Mukherjee and *The Boyfriend* and *Hostel Room 131* by R. Raj Rao in the recent past that have dealt with homosexuality and its various implications. What distinguishes *Gumshoe Mania* is the way in which Jaidka has tried to capture the theme and its vicissitudes. In fact, the theme of queer sexual orientation has been dealt with by the novelist in a unique way with the mother, Reema as the focal point of the novel. Originally named Seema, who christens herself as Reema in the pursuit of breaking all barriers, "The name her parents had given her was Seema, a name she did not like....she discovered another name that appealed to her. Reema. Not only was Reema phonetically close to Seema, it was also close to the persona she wanted to assume" (Jaidka 14), the protagonist has a deep interest in detective fiction. Coming specifically to the title of the novel, the connotation is clear and striking. "Gumshoe" refers to a sleuth or a detective. Reema is obsessed with the life and work of a detective. Her "mania" drives her to study all - be it Vyomkesh Bakshi, Agatha Christie, Hercule Poirot, Miss Marple, Sherlock Holmes, or any other celebrated detective, "Her interest in detective fiction continued and when she grew older, she moved from teenage idols like Vyomkesh Bakshi to other "gumshoes" as they were called" (15). She eventually earns a Ph.D. in the genre. However, everything remains in theory and not in practice and she is unable to fulfil her dream of becoming a detective, "How she wished she could actually live a life of action . . . pursue the exciting career of a female sleuth." (16)

Eventually, she gets the chance to become a real gumshoe in the quest of her only son. The son having broken all possible ties with her but for occasional and insignificant phone calls, she suffers from intense pain of abandonment, ". . . when Pico left home, Reema was like a disembodied spirit" (20). And then her detective genius, her "gumshoe mania"

comes to her rescue. Yet she is more of a mother than a detective or anything else. She is a perfect example of a post-modern woman who despite her modernity, unconventional lifestyle, diverse interests and preoccupations, is a stereotypical mother. Like any other over-attached, over-protective and over-possessive mother whose world revolves around the well being and safety of her child, Reema too proves true to the 'mother archetype.' The Jungian psychology as enshrined in Eric Neumann's *The Great Mother* is quite evident in her character. Like Isis, Reema's only son, Parag alias Picasso alias Pikachu alias Pico is her world, her primary concern with everything else relegated to the secondary position. Her unique condition as a single parent further reinforces her possessiveness and she is unwilling to let him explore the world lest she should lose sight of him. But despite all her efforts to hold on to him, he succeeds in escaping from her protective envelope in which he feels circumscribed, "He was finally free of the shadow that had loomed over his existence from the day he was born" (20).

As Pico grows up, he starts distancing from her physically as well as emotionally. He seems to be bent upon asserting his independence and not to share any of his plans with his mother. It is a very difficult phase for Reema. She fails to understand the change in his behaviour and feels shattered, "Like a caterpillar morphing into a golden butterfly, her little one was changing right under her nose. All she could do was watch. Watch with incredulity, in a mix of amazement and dismay, as the chrysalis underwent miraculous transformations..." (39). After finishing college, Pico declares that he wants to go to New York for his research work in the field of artificial intelligence. Excluding his mother from his future plans, he takes the decision of moving to the greener pastures without taking Reema into confidence. When he breaks the news to her, she receives it in complete silence. "Keep Mom away! Run from Mom" (40) seems to be his sole motto or intention. Finally, one fine day, he goes away with the promise of staying in touch. He does keep his promise but only for a few months when he calls Reema every weekend, though for only two minutes or so. Gradually, the calls become rarer, transforming from weekends to fortnights to months, "The gaps became longer and longer but the nature of calls was always the same" (41), giving no clue of his nature of work or his place of dwelling. Reema adjusts and gets used to his callousness by socialising with friends and reading her detective stuff but does suffer from pangs of loneliness, missing him greatly. Her heart grieves to know about his well being and to be close to her "eyes' apple," her Picasso. But he never lets her have an idea of the type of work he is doing or the type of life he is leading.

Reema does not give up and thinks about making herself tech-savvy to track the whereabouts of Pico. Ankit, her neighbour and almost of her son's age, becomes her tutor during the course of her technological sojourn, "So, began a strange partnership between Reema and Ankit. Every afternoon, between 3.30 and 5.30 pm, Ankit would come . . . teach her the intricacies of the computer world" (48). After a rigorous training, Reema is fully equipped with almost everything about the cyber world. Her main purpose of acquiring the new and indispensable skill is to find out the whereabouts of her son, ". . . she was excited, so excited because she knew what she wanted to do; she knew what she had to find; she knew that she could now play the sleuth. She would track down her baby, her little boy, her darling Pico" (53). Thus, her new found talent coupled with the older one - her gumshoe instincts lead her to

track Pico on social media whom she befriends successfully under a pseudo identity, the assumed name of Frenny Ujjwal. Every day, she visits Pico's Facebook page and tries to grapple the mystery of most of the posts that go above her head, “. . . they dealt with subjects she was unfamiliar with” (70). Nevertheless, the sneaking bestows Reema with a solace of mind as she perceives that her son is happy and well settled. Yet, the mother in her longs to be in close proximity to him, “to hold her child close once more” (70) like she used to in the past.

Finally, the cyber space informs Reema that her little Pico, the grown up Parag Malhotra is an eminent computer scientist at the University of Columbia. She is greatly elated and makes up her mind to reach out to him if he is not reaching out to her, “She would go ahead and track him down, plan a trip across the seas and surprise Pico wherever he may be” (95). She gets to know that Pico would be organizing a conference in Honolulu in the coming January and decides to go there and confront him. However, her health complications, her retrograde amnesia pose a serious threat to her prospective solo adventure. Eventually as fate would have it, her old classmate and friend, Tiny, becomes her companion in the quest of her only son. She successfully tracks him down, is face to face with him at Honolulu in the guise of a veiled woman, suppressing her desire to unveil herself and shower her eternal love upon him. Her “Find Pico” mission leaves her heartbroken when she discovers that her son is a gay, “It was Pico . . . Reema was thunderstruck. Frozen. Rooted to the spot, she did not know what to do” (152).

Reema believes in the stereotypical dictum that same sex behaviour is some kind of an illness, “. . . It was widely believed that homosexuality was an illness or a psychological problem that perhaps could be prevented or cured” (Rastogi 9). Though her attitude towards the gender diverse is full of all sorts of apprehensions, yet she tries not to be judgemental and tries her best to understand their predicament, “Why did the world not accept those who were “different”? After all, gays, lesbians and the “third gender” also comprised human beings who had no choice in being what they were. And there was no denying they were “good” people . . . Then why was there an unwarranted prejudice against them? Why didn't the world accept them unconditionally?” (Jaidka 90). She reflects upon the issue but only as an outsider. She tries to think rationally and logically but only till the time she confronts her own flesh and blood as one of them. The knowledge of her son being a gay is difficult for her to digest. She is dumbstruck, “I'm shattered . . . I'm a broken woman” (175). The world seems to stand still for her. Her mind does not work, “Dead silence. Reema's mind was in a tizzy. Pico, her baby and gay! It could not be true . . . But no, it could not be true. An inner voice cried out in vain.” (174)

Pico's queer sexual orientation, “. . . the LGBTQ issues that everyone seemed to be discussing those days” (90) is perceived by Reema as a problem and not something normal. In spite of her liberal upbringing, extensive education and broad outlook on life, she is shocked and behaves in a stereotypical framework of a mother who wishes to see her children well settled in life as normal human beings, “To get married to a nice girl, have children, be a good husband and father” (177). As any other parent, it is difficult for her to come to terms with the queer reality, “A same-sex relationship is tolerated and approved only as long as it masquerades as non-sexual friendship and does not conflict with marriage and parenthood” (Vanita 226). What seemed pretty normal to her in her friend and companion, Tiny, seems to be an “incurable disease” (Jaidka 176) in Pico. She knew about Tiny's homosexuality right

from her university days. In fact, she was drawn towards him the minute she set her eyes on him, a kind of love at first sight. But gradually she, as well as other girls who were madly in love with Vikramaditya Tomar nicknamed Tiny by his seniors, realised that he had no interest in the opposite sex, “Tiny was different, as she discovered later...female attention was the last thing he sought” (28-29). He was a wonderful human being, well read, well mannered, helpful, supportive, amiable, “never bragging or swearing or drinking or womanising” (29). Reema and all other friends respected and supported Tiny's different sexual orientation. Though supported by his friends, he could not get any support from his family members. Being very traditional, they were not ready to accept his sexuality “... families with a strong emphasis on traditional values (e.g., importance of religion, emphasis on marriage, emphasis on having children) were perceived as less accepting of sexual minority orientation than less traditional families” (Needham 1193). They thought it to be a kind of a disease that would cure with the right kind of treatment, “He tried to explain to them that he was interested in women only as casual friends, not in sexual terms, but they refused to listen, convinced that once they shackled him in matrimony, he would “normalize” (Jaidka 32). Instead of understanding his peculiarity, that, “Homosexuality is also a design of Nature” (Vanita 247), the parents took him to doctors, counsellors and holy men, leaving no stone unturned. That worsened Tiny's situation and he sank into depression. Finally he ran away from his home, his family members, his country, “...a nation fraught with repression and piety, compelling its homosexual refugees to seek amnesty in other, more sexually enlightened cultures” (Gandhi 87) and settled in America- one of the sexually liberated countries, “... either the United States or Britain- countries that have well established gay and lesbian communities . . . and therefore have greater sexual and artistic freedom” (Summers 664).

Ironically and incidentally, Tiny, who is leading a comfortable gay life in America away from his kith and kin, becomes Reema's partner and confidante in her mission “Find Pico.” The novel successfully drives home the fact that what seems normal and acceptable in friends or acquaintances is highly abnormal and objectionable in one's own family members, “A recent study found that one of the major factors that results in the stigmatisation of LGBT people is parental reaction towards homosexuality. The study goes on to conclude that most LGBT people are acceptable to family only if they agree to behave like hetero sexual” (Patel n.pag). Jaidka focuses upon the LGBTQ struggle for existence and acceptability, to make their gender acceptable in the hearts and minds of the society in general and their family members in particular. The novel also brings to the fore 'homophobia'- the fear and dislike of homosexuality and of those who practise it, “One basis for this fear, many argue, is the perception that homosexuality and homosexuals disrupt the sexual and gender order supposedly established by what is often called natural law” (Fone 5). Sailing on the same boat, Tiny tries to justify Pico's behaviour to Reema. He tries hard to make her understand that Pico too must have gone through hell as he had gone through years ago:

Why do you think he's avoided you all these years? Because he did not have the courage to come out of the closet and tell you he's gay. He's gone through hell too, . . . I've gone through it all, Reema, and know what it's like. There must have been nights when he couldn't sleep, ashamed of himself. Night after night, day after day...he must have contemplated self-destruction too” (Jaidka 176).

Pico had feared rejection from his mother and thus avoided her. He knew he was different and needed a hideout, “He probably knew his sexual orientation while he was still with you but he must have gone into a denial” (176). However, it is next to impossible for Reema to take the revelation normally. She fails to acknowledge that homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality, that these men, “. . . respond to women as social, but rarely as sexual beings. . . . Almost none of them express any desire to be other than what they are, even though many of them keenly feel that they are outcasts in a world that condemns what to them seem natural and imperative emotions.” (Fone 306)

Undoubtedly, Tiny plays a crucial role in the novel by making Reema understand her son's predicament. He not only acts as Reema's friend, companion and counsellor but also as an 'alter ego' of Pico emphasising the fact that it is perfectly all right to be a 'gay,' “Let him be, Reema. Let him be himself. Don't force conventionally accepted norms on him” (Jaidka 177). He makes her see and understand that Pico is happy with his partner Samuel, “She watched them go out of the door . . . She saw Pico link his arm with Samuel's (161), and also that he would be happier if he could get emotional support from his mother. The final realisation that dawns upon Reema through the lines of Kahlil Gibran written by Tiny, “. . . Your children are not your children. They are sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you. And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. . . .” (181) console her. Finally, she let go of her over possessiveness and accepts Pico's life and choices. She let go of her fear, accepts his peculiarity, accepts the rainbow, “the symbol of gay pride” (170) and his freedom, “He's flying free somewhere in the azure skies under the brilliant hues of a rainbow” (182). She realises as stated by Michael Warner that, “You can't eliminate queerness . . . or screen it out. It's everywhere” (19), accepts the 'new normal' and emerges a winner.

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“Bathed In Sun and Salt”- Interrogating the Postcolonial Space and Cityscapes in the Poems of Ranjit Hoskote and Ashwani Kumar

Sreetanwi Chakraborty*

Abstract

Interrogating space, theories of cityscape and sentiments can be seen as one of the most potent ways of understanding the intricacies of modernity in selected Indian English poetry. Both Ranjit Hoskote and Ashwani Kumar create memories, explore the obscure passages surrounding human myths, love, loss, and the verbal portrayal of pulsating cities. The sentiment that we find in their poems can be studied from a subjective intensity for restoration. Ideas of land, occupying space, chasing stories through cities, re-reading myths connected to their homelands give them a sense of living as a part of a certain space. Simultaneously, while reading their poems, we find an urgency, a kind of quest, a way to delve deeper into the roles that define human survival. Homecoming, wife, grandmothers, often verging on some surrealistic impressions give rise to a consummate poetic journey, or, as poet Ashwani Kumar says, as looking at the 'hallucinatory cliff of my existence.'

Keywords: *Space, Cityscapes, Homeland, Indian English Poetry, Poetry*

Introduction

Defining and interrogating space, cityscapes and nostalgia in selected Indian English Poetry is a vast storehouse of possibilities. Space, cityscapes, and nostalgia are three-pronged, but traversing all the geographical, cultural, and personal fissures, they also remain interconnected at points. Being a part of a space and being apart from space are two different ideas altogether. We need to explore questions like who is occupying the space, from whose vantage point are we looking at space, how does any space help to develop poetry through cityscapes then? And likewise, how do the space and cityscape become a part of the individual as well as collective memory and nostalgia? In the large corpus of Indian English poetry, spanning around the 1970s and afterward, constant experimentation has been going on in terms of locating the poet's state of mind amid the changing cultural and political scenario. As an aftermath of decolonization, the influence of experimental English and the changing facades of subcontinental poetry have undergone substantial changes. Both Ranjit Hoskote and Ashwani Kumar reveal soul-searching elements in their poetry - from the mundane household scenes, roadmaps, passages less-travelled, pedestrians, shops, and sellers dealing with dreams, there is a new and innovative angle manifested in Indian English Poetry. Hoskote has managed editorial and cultural commentary along with a kind of esoteric flavour imparted to his poetry. On the other hand, with Ashwani Kumar's poems, there is a relevant introspection into the chaos of poetry, that is demarcated by both order and change. Fleeting travel scenes, surrealistic images of the *ghats* of India and resurrecting the images of nostalgia are some of the recurrent themes that we find in his poetry. Both Hoskote and Kumar's poems are replete with symbolic ideas that remain concealed for most of the time and are always not

explicable in the simplest senses. Going away from a certain space, rummaging through the pockets of new and old cities revamp history and give rise to specifically Indian goals and perspectives. Earlier, in the works of Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel or A.K. Ramanujan, the concept of the city has been rampant, regional spaces and their ambit, animals, people, poets, bygone moments, and nostalgic reverberations that are created within the poetic prism. Arnab Kumar Sinha, Himadri Lahiri, and Sajalkumar Bhattacharya in the introductory part of their book *Contemporary Indian English Poetry and Drama: Changing Canons and Responses*, have pointed out how the 1980s were marked by the emergence of new poets who started experimenting with new themes and framed new anthologies. A reference to poet Ranjit Hoskote further elaborates how he has been most influential in discovering city life, youth, and politics in his works. They further add a reference to "The group of 'Bombay Poets,' comprising Saleem Peeradina, Santan Rodrigues, Manohar Shetty, Ranjit Hoskote and Eunice de Souza, concentrated chiefly on the representation of the urban life of India (Naik, 128). Their poems capture the various facets of the urban culture with a profound sense of honesty and irony" (Sinha, et al. 4).

The entire landscape of postcolonial Indian English writing undergoes numerous experimentations in the works of Ranjit Hoskote and Ashwani Kumar. Ranjit Hoskote is a cultural theorist, critic, Indian poet who, besides many accolades, has also won the Sahitya Akademi prize for translation. Ecology, environment, the condition of the Kashmiri mystic poets, and some of his major works are *Zones of Assault*, *The Cartographer's Apprentice*, *Central Time*, *Jonah Whale*, and *The Sleepwalker's Archive*. Many of his poems have metaphors that deal with the luminous and opaque aspects of life, light and darkness, crudeness, and sophistication of humanity. The modernist tradition is well-explained in many of his poems, with slight touches of irony at particular points that enable readers to discover the common man under the cosmos. He is an immaculate storyteller, with an inclination to discover the modern space-narratives. The song of the nomads, mirages, birds, natural world, and the prosaic acceptance of the surrounding changing around him document the times lost in past and the advent of an uncertain future.

The rightful approach to an extension to modernity, with larger linguistic, social, and political ramifications, can be seen in another Indian English poet of our time. Ashwani Kumar is an Indian English poet from Mumbai, a writer and an academic by profession. His poems are marked by the banality of regular life, humour, irony, and escapes into the pages of narrative history, myths, and personal camouflage to search for identity. Some of his most notable works include *My Grandfather's Imaginary Typewriter* and *Banaras*. Apart from these, as a social scientist, he has also made notable contributions in *Community Warriors* and *Power Shifts and Global Governance*. Exploring multiple layers of human congregation stretched across the vast palette of the Indian scene, Kumar's poetic oeuvre mainly consists of jolt in the narratives. The freshness of idea, symbol, image, and spirit that permeate his poetry destroy the fixed idea of locales, fixed spots and time, and become rich artistic pieces of universal poetic significance.

Exploring the mosaic of Postcolonial space: What Hoskote and Kumar's poems reveal

The case of postcolonial space is a curious one, as there are shifting perspectives about the occupancy of the space, the borders that are created around the space, and the various manners in which the central source of postcolonial power spreads its tentacles across a specific location. In his poems *Effects of Distance*, Hoskote writes:

Call it providence if the day should turn
Upon its hinges, letting light colonise

This empire of jars and shutters, this room. (Hoskote 14)

From an intensely dominating act by the providence and underlining the diurnal movement as adhering to the protocol that providence creates, from a simple, microscopic level, Hoskote's poetic charm enunciates the dubious concept of space allotment. He lets the light colonize the 'empire of jars and shutters' in an enclosed local space, which is the room. The relationship of the colonial light's burden for the fugitive, the various shades and combinations of blue that remind the poet of conqueror's eyes, ink from a pen, and the colour of airletters, all are instances of the spaces through which the timorous rays of the light trigger their enterprise. A more intricate poem-picture is negotiated in the *Recycled Poem* of Ashwani Kumar, as part of his book *Banaras and the Other*. He reminisces:

In my latest resume
You will find droplets of nostalgia of
Ugly days that my father
Spent in Rangoon.
Or Siberia.

I don't remember exactly. (Kumar 23)

Words that are blown out of an often surreptitious and an often-explicit mode of contact with the outside spaces tinge the poet's nostalgia. The poem is a poignant depiction of the days of the Russian Treaty, of the little boy who was enamoured by the stories of his father's 'revolutionary days.' Many of his poems in *Banaras and the Other* highlight this looking, longing, and yearning for the days that are lost, for the vagabond traveller who usurps the loyalty of his imagination to travel to distant lands. Kumar's idea of space varies from congealed winters in Delhi to Russian political treaties, American slangs, Chinese travellers, colonial *Aney Marg*, to the mountains of Lhasa, where "lazy, mean, truncated Einstein's theory of relativity laid frozen under the ruins of time". (Kumar 62)

In the introduction to their edited volume *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture* Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone highlight the idea of the postcolonial space in manifold in cultural trends:

The idea that space plays a significant role in how one defines one's own identity and, equally, how that identity is defined by others, is continually foregrounded in postcolonial studies. (Teverson and Upstone, 21)

In the well-defined matrix of Indian English literature, the cultural encounter between colonial and postcolonial spaces have always given rise to conflicting situations. In terms of acquiring and using an identity that remains extremely volatile in adhering to, or in deviating from the allotted space to them, the new forms of poetry remain amenable to multiple

interpretations. Nissim Ezekiel's Bombay, Agha Shahid Ali's Kashmir, Kamala Das' Malabar, and Calcutta are not just mere spaces, cartographical representations of cities of dreams, hopes, or desertion, but they are more than that. These cities act as metaphors for the growing demands of a sensitive urban milieu, occupying fragmented stories of their inhabitants. In Ranjit Hoskote's poem *The Map Seller*, a poem from his collection *The Atlas of Lost Beliefs* we find the art of poetic eloquence and space narration in the following lines:

The pedlars start shouting, *Say your piece! Say your piece!*

I'll start calling out names and pulling countries from it:

Big countries, small countries, countries broken in two,

Countries the size of handkerchiefs and countries engorged. (Hoskote 18)

The repetition of country names, reference to the space created by the colonial powers, and hegemonic autonomy highlight the sense of the continuous usurpation of individual space. The atlas represents place names, colour codes and definitions of locales seen in his poetry; in fact, poems like *The Map seller*, *Letters from Ugarit*, and *Seven Islands* all point out to this curious amalgamation of nostalgia, memory, and a comprehensive strategy to understand the vast and intractable nature of the postcolonial space. His imagination is fertile, it moves in meandering motions across the gliding territories of 'sand-wrought storm-humped' islands. Lost rivers and spits of reclaimed land coincide to form a unique blend of poetic practicality and evocative extravaganza.

From the Churchgate Gazette to Waking in Ayodhya: Exploring Sentiments in Cityscapes

In an interview given to Centre for Stories, Northbridge, Australia, when poet Ashwani Kumar is asked about his advice for emerging poets, at one point he mentions how poetry for him is a 'magical, surreal experience', and adds further:

In *Waking Early in Ayodhya*, a poem in *My Grandfather's Imaginary Typewriter*, I challenged conventions and delved into taboo-breaking memories of primal love-making in Ayodhya in the aftermath of the demolition of Babri mosque. ("Interviews: Five Minutes with Ashwani Kumar")

On making a critical inquiry into the study of cityscapes in Kumar's poetry, we can take an instance of *Waking Early in Ayodhya*:

Waking early in Ayodhya

I recall my late-night dreams

Highlighter pink cheeks, pine lips, mascara eyes,

Long lonely collar bones

Honey suckle breasts, queen size lotus buttocks,

I remember only broken parts not the whole body... (Quadri and Anjum)

For the poetic eyes, the city transforms into a platform for myriad individual and collective socio-political encounters. Situating the city of *Ayodhya* not just as a mythical place, but as a metaphor for both change and continuation, the poet shows the unhindered growth of the cityscape. In remembering and emphasizing the story of the 'banished king', 'historians' and 'jealous saints', and simultaneously, amusing the readers with lines about intense lovemaking

and dream, postcolonial identities restructure their roles at more local levels. Pitted against the deep-rooted hypocrisy of modern society, the alternative modes of existence spring up in love, dreams, and longing about both fertility and futility. The condition of post-partition, post-independence India, inventing alternative discourses of life and death every now and then, become some of the pivotal areas of observation for the poet. The changing scenario in *Banaras*, a rigorous study in a departure from traditions and indigenous myths to a bustling town with a new corporate touch, Kumar's *Banaras* becomes the site of contestation of several images. In the poem *Anatomy of Baranassey as told by Major James Rennell*, a part of *Banaras and the Other*, critical questions about the boundaries of religion and spiritual practices are explored; with the advent of technology, what suffices as the changing notions of urban living are made more intense with pauses, striking images and tone:

A new republic had dawned on the holy town.

With black ink on the index finger,
Unbaptized Hindus, prime-time anarchists,
Part-time secularists and the

Famous Internet Baba had assembled

On the banks of the polluted Himalayan river... (Kumar 5)

There is no response for any totalitarian idea that might obfuscate our looking into the present condition of Banaras. With a kaleidoscopic vision that includes anarchists, secularists, and technologically advanced saints, Kumar's poems are a look into the myriad untold forms of the nativity that lay deeply embedded in a fast-developing cosmopolitan culture. In this connection, it would be appropriate to refer to Nicole Scröder's book *Spaces and Places in Motion: Spatial Concepts in Contemporary American Literature*

Like other related concepts, most notably culture, space and place have undergone extensive and far-reaching reconsiderations, most of which emphasize human agency and involvement in the production of (social) space. (Scröder 21)

Hence, the production of a social space and the relatability of the human agency become quite obvious while studying the various shades of Banaras. Even Hoskote's poems *Pilgrim*, *Port of Call* and *Gulf Nocturne*, all from his collection *Hunchoprose* elaborate space either as the absolute yet some abstract idea, or some landform that people, birds, and animals occupy at a particular point of time. In *Pilgrim* he writes:

Did I ever think
Heaven would ripen its doors
Before their right season
Expecting me to arrive

Any day now my boots caked with mud... (Hoskote 9)

The journey continues in a vast and expansive mode with a surrealistic gleam into the residence of an ideal heaven. The new trends of Indian English poetry deal with numerous mirages that are hidden in the cityscapes. The poets narrate dreams and words untold, dreams broken, compulsions to migrate from one city to another, and again finding the city as a shelter. There is no scope for any unidimensional or restricted view of the cityscapes, if we look at the decadal growth of the poems in the Indian English sector. There is nothing called the classless society, rumours remain, there are individuals who can still be found in a

gestational mode waiting for some revelation to be at hand. The poets immerse themselves into images that revolve around some infirm future, revitalizing the pages of history of birds, animals and human beings, danger, wolves, night trains, guns, flames, and strapless bra cups- the unique idea about space, locale and spot all undergo a curious assimilation and transport the readers to a world of sublimation and practicality. A grand dissection of the poems of Kumar definitely reveals the claustrophobia and the futility that is associated with a turgid concept of space and land. 'August 1947', the 'Asiatic Library', 'Oxford Street', 'colonial Robin Hood', 'honourable men in monkey caps' are not just words and phrases used in his poem *From the Archives of Asiatic Library*; they are burning metaphors for the flimsy use of borders, a tangent smile on the controversial aspects of the country's partition. The poem does not infuriate, it does not revitalize insensitive nostalgia as well. The poems are practical, they have a prosaic tone, breaking away from the stereotypical ways of dealing with the hinterlands of space, location, land, and geography. Again, while looking at Hoskote's poem and the spatial interventions, in *Harbour Thoughts* for instance, a part of his book *Central Time: Poems 2006- 2014*, it is seen how he tries to define and elaborate the idea of a land in the following manner:

Land is what you sight from a storm-broken ship,
 The mirage they forgot to sink: You hold it
 In your eyes, mouth clenched
 Around a flask
 Of brine... (Hoskote 64)

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the variegated terrains of Indian English poetry have become a site for rigorous intellectual exercise. There are primary, secondary, and tertiary spaces created in lines, unveiling sentiments that have a distinct aura of their own. Sometimes, poetry becomes a dwelling place for realizing unfulfilled sentiments, and sometimes, the Indian English style and words become a resistance against the long-drawn colonial impression on the Indian saga. Bombay in Ashwani's poems, and Kashmir in Ranjit's poems do not subscribe to being only a single space- they encompass a distinct cultural pattern and try to re-evaluate the monolithic structure of native, foreign, and forms of globalization. The sphere of private space does not suffer from any sudden decrepitude, on the contrary, it somehow starts amassing the nuanced patterns of the public space in its larger system of growth. With global diversification, the local condition also undergoes a drastic alteration in values, in humanitarian perspectives and in responding to a growing sense of loss or gain. Both the poets who have been discussed as a part of this paper acknowledge the age-old, traditional myths associated with different cities and yet do not segregate themselves from the consequences of a modernist appraisal of the same. What remains is a crucial study in cityscapes and spaces, in lines that are free from any canonical baggage.

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Dalit Women Voices of Dissent: Rewriting Bodies and Reinforcing Resistance

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Abstract

Through a reading of the selected poems of Meena Kandasamy (Touch 2006) and Sukirtharani (Wild Words: Four Tamil Poets 2015), this paper attempts to look at the different dimensions of exploitation Indian Dalit women are subjected to, using the female body as ingress and paying more attention to the inequalities, ideological values, and identities, and finally how women come out of their secondary status to voice their predicaments/concerns to the world. It also sheds light on violence triggered upon the bodies of women as a tangible manifestation of gender politics. Through the works of the aforementioned Indian Dalit Feminist writers, the paper thus not only lays bare the covert body politics of patriarchy but also focalises the move from linguistic analysis to a broader ideological context while also representing a paradigm shift by advocating ways of emancipation for Dalit women.

Keywords: Dalit; Selfhood; Bodies; Identity; Agency; Resistance

“In this society, if you are born into a low caste, you are forced to live a life of humiliation and degradation until your death. Even after death, caste difference does not disappear. Wherever you look, however much you study, whatever you take up, caste discriminations stalks us in every nook and corner and drives us into a frenzy” (Bama 26).

It is an undeniable fact that India is regarded as one of the biggest democracies in the world, but ironically still finds itself in the clutches of the *Chaturvarna* System. And so there exists a deep relationship between patriarchy and caste, and the most adverse effects of it could be seen in the state of women and that too the Dalit women who are doubly colonized. Bama, an acclaimed Dalit feminist writer in her famous work *Karukku* (translated from Tamil into English by Lakshmi Holmström, 2012) – referred by critics as more of a testimonio than an autobiography – vividly portrays and voices the trauma of caste oppression faced by the Dalit community, specially women. She talks about the horrors and horrendous degree of exploitation women experience, thus delineates the perilous situation faced by them:

All women in the world are second-class citizens. For Dalit women, the problem is grave. Their Dalit identity gives them a different set of problems. They experience a total lack of social status; they are not even considered dignified human beings...

Dalit women have to put up with triple oppression, based on class, caste, and gender. (qtd. by Limbale 116)

In Dalit politics, as in general politics too, a woman is often used as an instrument and not as an individual in her own right. Sexual relations are always at the core of such politics. Body – the metaphor – becomes the substratum through which the oppressions suffered by the Dalit community and the female gender at large are communicated to the world. The displacement of women is brought about by society either on purpose by forced eviction, rape, or murder or through natural disasters resulting in the emergence of child labour and/or commercial sex work.

When the term 'body' is discussed, it is essential to understand the various

interlocking circles of which the initial experiences of gender are one. The second is how the body is perceived psychologically and the attendant questions pertaining to one's identity, desire, and subjectivity. The third is how culture and language define particular bodies as regulated by specific gender roles. The related concepts of difference, myth, religion, and folklore too are to be looked into. The fourth is how the body is socially and politically governed by gender, paying more attention to family, caste, class, ethnicity, etc.

The 'body' is thus central to the feminist discourses of gender and as a symbol, it can be used as a means of resistance and encounter against the power structures. It is known that Power dynamics are fluid, complicated, and highly contextual, and it does not exist in a static state. As a result, there is constant resistance and change. Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1976) maintains that “where there is power there is resistance and yet, and rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (95). Besides the paradigm of docile bodies, Foucault sees a transition towards a new method that puts women in the enterprise of surveillance. In this reference, Millet claims that hierarchized surveillance is highly relevant in the context of social power in Indian society. Since there is a hierarchy based on caste, everyone comes under surveillance in hierarchical order, and women face the worst predicament of this disciplinary power. Patriarchy collectively or rather in solidarity maintains “its economic hold over its female subjects” (Millet 39) by subjugating women through hierarchized surveillance.

The paper based on the selected poems from the Poetry Anthologies viz. *Touch* (2006) by Meena Kandasamy and *Wild Words: Four Tamil Poets* (2015) by Sukirtharani attempts to envisage the violence triggered upon bodies of women as a real and substantial testimony of power/sexual/gender politics operated in patriarchal/gendered society. Their poems espouse how power can be circulated through poetry. The third-world women who are facing threefold domination, viz. racial, patriarchal, and caste-based (esp. Dalit women who unlike Hindu women are unable to enjoy caste and class privilege), have no other way than to write their true stories that are based on the experiences of the body, and voice their beliefs even in the face of acute criticism from men, in general, including Dalits. In this way, marginalised bodies have challenged the mainstream discourse.

Unlike the old generation of Dalit women writers, the new generation of Dalit feminist writers are not ready to echo the sufferings and oppressive conditions of their elders. On the contrary they are bold, confident, aggressive, and courageous. Bela Malik writes that “the younger women [are] most militant and less willing to tolerate the terms of their existence” (323).

Meena Kandasamy is one such social activist writer from Tamil Nadu known for her astringent attack on the social doldrums of constructed domination of women. Her works unleash the power and sexual politics that tells aloud the stories of many silences, specially of Dalit women. Kamala Das is the poet from whom Meena seeks inspiration as her first collection of poetry entitled *Touch* (2006) carries a *Foreword* by her. This anthology is an acoustic, aggressive attack on the perpetuation of the social oppression of Indian women in the form of sexual harassment, sexual politics, denial of female sexuality and gender discrimination. Her portrayal of women not merely as victims, but as rebels too fighting against injustice, inhumanity, and discrimination against them, qualifies her as a writer who has championed the cause of women. In this anthology of poems, she castigates the Patriarchal society and reproaches it for not treating women at par with men. The idea that women are seen as mere objects and slave/property to men is stated in the poem, “Songs of Summer:”

To make her yours and yours alone
 You pushed her deeper into harems
 Where she could see the sunlight
 Only from the lattice windows.
 Domesticated into drudgery she was just
 Another territory, worn out by wars. A slave
 Who maintained your numbers. (lines 33–39)

Witch hunting is another phenomenon of humiliating, assaulting, abusing, and even killing women. And more often it is a Dalit woman who is taken as a witch by the upper-caste which further reiterates the story of constant subjugation and patriarchal oppression of women. Kandasamy in one such poem titled “Hymns of a Hag” assumes the role of a witch to attack and lashes at both the perpetrators of the crime as well as the system that permits the man to do so with prerogative:

I fancy myself being a witch
 Broomstick borne and black as pitch.
 Thin, stark-naked, and with fire for eyes.
 Killing men whom I despise . . .
 Haunting oppressors to shave their heads.
 Cutting all their holy threads. (lines 1– 4; 11–12)

Instead of giving up her agency and voice, Kandasamy is willing to assume the role of a witch to “Experiencing joy as they bleed. Dance, rejoice my [her] black black deed” (lines 13–14).

Women's sexuality is wilfully constructed as being 'loose', a myth is created that they are 'available'. Their unprotected availability on fields, construction sites, and other workplaces in order to earn a livelihood has made them available to men (esp. Upper caste men) who perceive them as property available for sexual gratification as “. . .the patriarchal caste system in everyday practice defines Dalit women's relationship with dominant caste men/women and Dalit men in all areas of life as one of availability, affordability, accessibility, amendability, expendability, and adjustability” (27).

Another reason behind the act is to maintain inequitable power relations in a hegemonic patriarchal, casteist, and sexist society. It is interesting to note that the upper caste maintains the laws of purity and keeps themselves segregated from 'impure' Dalits but finds no objection in fulfilling their sexual needs with a Dalit woman rather it is viewed as a dominant caste male right. The irony goes like this that the very shadow of a Dalit pollutes the upper castes but the heinous act of raping and molesting Dalit girls does not impinge a scar on their face/identity (read: the notion of purity). Meena Kandasamy in another poem titled “Narration” brings forth this fact. The line goes like this:

I'll weep to you about
 My landlord, and with
 My mature gestures—
 You will understand:
 The torn sari, dishevelled hair
 Stifled cries and meek submission.

I was not an untouchable then. (lines 1–7)

Humiliation and pain that follows the sexual assault leave the woman with no choice, but to die. The gory scars on her wretched body are constant reminders of her disgrace and helplessness while the perpetrators have already found easy escape because they have

“already mainstreamed – Their Caste is the classic shield” (“Shame”, lines 8–9). But the victim, in order to purify herself “...takes the test of the fire - the ancient medicine for shame. (“Shame,” lines 25–26). Tracing the intersections of caste and patriarchy allows us to place the action as a part of a larger Brahminical society; a society designated to allow upper-caste men authority over female bodies. In fact, their entitlement to women's bodies stems from this deep-rooted Brahminical patriarchy, not merely patriarchy.

It is true that violence committed by upper caste men is often naturally endowed, institutionalised and socially legitimised due to their positionality as belonging to upper caste. And so, Dalit women are compelled to adhere to the systematic script that is set out by the patriarchal caste ideology to direct and control (through sexuality and agency) them. In turn, women who speak out against them are shamed for disrupting the community and/or family honour. However, Kandasamy is bold and fearless in articulating her concern for her caste and so we find her poems filled with anguished cries, and interrogations as she tears through the silence to ask, “India, what is the caste of sperm?”/ India what is the cost of life?” (“We Will Rebuild Worlds”, line 74). She sees her poetry as a means of deliverance for Dalit women. She declares in her poem “Nailed” published in the anthology of poems entitled *Ms Militancy* (2010) that:

“Men are afraid of any woman who makes poetry and dangerous / portents. Unable to predict when, for what, and for whom, she / will open her mouth, unable to stitch up her lips, they silence her” (lines 1–3).

Kandasamy is the first Dalit woman writer to choose English as a medium of expression. She believes that by writing in English, she would reach the audience in every nook and corner of the world. In one of her poems, she mentions of the English language, not the one spoken and thought by English men but her thinking (her mother tongue); a language where the words are not necessarily in capital letters but small, a language that is exclusively native and free from the sway of control of the white man's elite society. She is conscious of her linguistic identity and freedom too. In the poem titled “Mulligatawny Dreams” she enounces that:

I dream of an English
full of the words of my language.
an english in small letters
an english that shall tire a white man's tongue.

.....
an english that doesn't belittle brown or black men and women
an english of tasting with five fingers
an english of talking love with eyes alone. (lines 6–9; 21–23)

Colonialism, dominance, and politics of power are the undercurrents of this poem. The English language has been considered the [speech] of privilege since colonial times, which when introduced in British India as a medium of education could only be accessed by the elite class [upper caste]. In order to invert the power hierarchy, Kandasamy intentionally chooses the English language as a medium of her expression and that too for the downtrodden Dalits for writing imparts her power to speak about her people in her own 'voice' which:

... is often assumed to reflect both consciousness of one's interests and an expression of agency. Embedded in the ideas of agency, voice, and freedom are relations of power, the ability to not just articulate or to act/decide, but importantly, to be heard, to be able to influence meaning-making, . . . within a politics of intersectionality. (Rao 418)

Another leading Tamil Dalit Feminist voice and social activist of contemporary times is

Sukirtharani, who was coldly inducted into the system of caste discrimination at the tender age of a grade two student. In an interview, she stated that “As Dalit students, we were segregated from the others during various class activities... The impact of that segregation continues to be a sharp, unhealed wound in my mind even today” (Sukirtharani 2021). The incident resulted in a rude awakening of consciousness which later became the voice of the unrepresented. Lakshmi Holmström - the translator of Sukirtharani's works - in *Wild Words: Four Tamil Poets* (2015) believes that the Poet's writings reverberate with echoes of feminist poets from varied backgrounds and nations such as Kamla Das, Tasleema Nasreen, Kutty Revathi, and a few African writers. Sukirtharani, who is known for her eco-feminist writings, translates the agony of the disparaging norms of society into words, which gives life and blood to her poems. Her poems are replete with themes considered indecent (read: forbidden/taboo) to be discussed amidst polite society.

The poet under the study has garnered attention for poems like “My Body” and “Infant Language” which are manifestations of the expressions of disapproval and refusals of being allowed the freedom to write her beliefs onto paper. Discourses of injustice in the name of caste, gender, and expression of sexuality are equally looked down upon, as any step taken to shed light on the sufferings and utterance of one's acknowledgment of their sexuality.

The poem “My Body” is an artful poetic expression that delineates the affliction of a defiled (read: a raped) woman drawing images from nature to communicate the fate suffered by scores of Dalit women. Sukirtharani like Bama recounts anecdotes from communal history or collective memory to draw parallels between various aspects of nature and the pain associated with the act of violation viz., land/body, tiger/perpetrator, the stillness of body/the calm after a storm, the violent act of rape/brutal feeding:

A tiger, replete from its kill,
wets its blood-smearred mouth
at the swift water-streams.
.....
A vortex, whirling clockwise,
agitates the earth. The day's heat
dissolves into the night's coolness.
In the end, Nature becomes
my body, lying still. (lines 11–13; 16–20)

A woman and her body are considered to be the bearer/carrier of future generations and are also responsible for upholding norms of tradition and culture. Values and ideologies are fiercely protected from resisting ideologies as well as the influence of the host/woman as well, hence the occurrence of brutalities and crimes against the female gender proliferates to encertain docile submission of the second sex. Nadia Brown and Sarah Allen Gershon (2017) too opine in this context that, “bodies are sites in which social constructions of differences are mapped onto human beings” (1).

In yet another poem titled “Infant Language,” Sukirtharani voices the language of pain while employing metaphors like pregnancy, motherhood, and childbirth, used to portray the struggles of the poet who wishes to bear a language that once born will mark the dawn of a new era rather than a scar of past grievances that paint the Dalit history (of marginalization). Sukirtharani dreams of a language whose meaning would be as wide as the skies and that would be conveyed through signs and gestures. The birth of this infant language will thus become their agency and mode of communication that will put an end to the era of the unvoiced being side-lined to the periphery and also bring about a change in the hierarchy of

position where those previously cast as the unworthy will now be the privileged center.

The poet compares the poem and her writings to a foetus developing and struggling to be born after its gestational period, with its birth it will become a beacon enabling the marginalised to voice their anguish, trials, and tribulations, to take charge of their subject position that they should have possessed since long.

You will read there my alphabet and feel afraid.

You will plead with me in words
that are bitter, sour, and putrid
to go back to my shards of darkened glass.

And I shall write about that too, bluntly,
in an infant language, sticky with blood. (lines 19–24)

Similar to a newborn, this infant language is bathed in blood signifying the treatment (read: atrocities) they were subjected to, which more often than not were brutal and inhumane in nature, for the lone reason that they were born in the Dalit caste.

It is noticeable here that both the writers under study write in different languages viz. Kandasamy in English and Sukirtharani in Tamil, but both of them dream in just one language i.e., the language of the oppressed; seeking a casteless gender-just society. In fact, the craft of their language is their beautification of brutality. While reading their poems, readers are hooked to the words and images, metaphors and humour, sarcasm, and puns, that shock and provoke them to re-think and re-conceptualize the hierarchies and power structures that work in contemporary society. They, therefore, focus on the body as the appropriate site to recover, revalue, and rehumanize the marginalized (female) subjects.

Undeniably, when a woman embarks upon the task of writing, it is quite certain that she wishes to alter and redefine the established values. If women come together to effect political or social change by challenging the patriarchal notion of women's subordination, they are acting with agency. That is why the agency of a woman requires her to act effectively against her own oppression and subordination; it expresses a woman's capacity to make changes in her personal life, giving her a sense that she can 'be herself'. And in this sense both the chosen writers are assertive and emphatic, subtly subverting their caste, gender, and regional identities.

In the present century, if women wish to liberate themselves and find true equality with men then, they have to be less conscious of themselves as bodies (read: docile bodies). Works by authors in the discussion thus attempt to create a counter-discourse by bringing consciousness to the Dalit community and showing them the path to liberation from patriarchal upper caste control which could be attained only through appropriate knowledge and effective education; by developing optimism and increasing understanding of civil rights. Confidence and identity can be restored by instilling a conscience about patriarchal discriminatory practices.

In a nutshell, it can be said that both Kandasamy and Sukirtharani – while gaining their understanding of feminist consciousness – claim their space, evolve their selfhood, and attain subjectivity. This consciousness is developed through a historical analysis of the awareness of wrong; the desire to develop a sense of sisterhood; the aim to change the condition of women; and, most importantly, to develop an alternative vision of the future based on the principles of humanism; a world where gender and caste would not remain problematic categories but one of the several interrelated elements that frame one's subjectivity.

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Understanding Dalit Ghettos in Autobiographies: The Intersection of Caste, Space and Trauma

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Abstract

*The obstinate notion of pollution and purity has made the lives of the Dalit an unceasing story of affliction and abuse. The social stratification and the injustices transpiring out of caste have been repeatedly challenged and interrogated. However, the psychological and spatial impact of caste has remained unexplored. This paper aims to interrogate caste as a social structure that produces trauma at both the human and spatial levels. Analysing caste-based trauma in the two autobiographies - Sharan Kumar Limbale's *The Outcaste* and Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*, the paper examines the Dalit ghettos as a site of trauma and the authors' experiences in it. It will study the traumatic co-relation between the authors' and their ghettos to understand how caste violence operates on both human and spatial level.*

Keywords: *Dalit autobiography, ghetto/place of politics, trauma, caste violence, animality*

“Under your fascist sky
Slowly pants the terrified Dalit ghetto”.
(Solanki 2011)

A prevailing social order based on notions of purity of descent and birth-ascribed membership in occupational groups, caste has subjugated millions of people to a life of degradation, shame and humiliation. It is a lived experience characterized by an absence of choice or autonomy. Contrary to other experiences where the subject has a choice of participating or declining participation, the experiences of caste do not extend to its subject any such choice. Even if the experience is repulsive, the subject is devoid of the choice to escape or transform it (Guru and Sarukkai 34 - 35).

The social relations governed by caste have left a deep scar on the minds and bodies of those belonging to the lowest rung of the hierarchy. Caste and its violence are not just a single event or a series of events but a pervasive everyday reality of the Dalits. It is not a fortuitous occurrence but a social doctrine that holds certain sections of society as subordinate to the higher castes. The Dalits' experience of trauma is not extraordinary but an ordinary reality.

the rivers are the veins of the cosmic person, and the trees are the hairs of his body.
The air is his breath, the ocean his waist, the hills and mountains are the stacks of His bones (qtd. in Prime 28).

Accordingly, spatial and social segregation is intrinsic to the caste system and the continued practice of untouchability. Places are marked as sacred sites of worship and an abode of divinity. A Hindu temple, for instance, is said to represent the purity of the Hindu upper-caste

body and thus is deemed inaccessible to the Dalits. Spatiality, therefore, lies at the centre of the caste purity, and the exclusion of the Dalits maintains the purity.

Caste is a place-making ideology that thrives on using and abusing spatial resources through the ghettoization of the Dalits. Such a form of segregated living has inflicted civilization violence and trauma upon them, profoundly affecting their meaning-making process.

Locating Trauma and Spatiality in Dalit Autobiographies

The autobiographies *Joothan* and *The Outcaste* by Valmiki and Limbale sensitively depict the traumatic lives and experiences of living as the lowest in the caste order. In narrating their traumatic memories of caste violence, the two authors have frequently presented us with emotionally vivid accounts of particular events, places, smells, sounds, and kinesthetic information.

Valmiki begins *Joothan* with a description of the Chuhra Basti. He recalls the house of his neighbour Chandrabhan Taga, Muslim weavers and Jhinwars, the Dabbowali pond around which the Chuhras had built their homes. His recollection quickly takes on a sensory mode as he remembers, "The muck was strewn everywhere. The stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs wandering in narrow lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights—this was the environment of my childhood" (1). For Valmiki, the first encounter with caste violence was the very space of Chuhra Basti which fills him with shame and disgust. He remarks, "If the people who call the caste system an ideal social arrangement had to live in this environment for a day or two, they would change their mind" (1-2).

Limbale, in *The Outcaste*, describes the ghettoization of Dalits as "we did not know what a village actually meant as we played and grew up only in Maharwada" (5). In Maharwada with 'heaps of garbage, dogs and pigs' as 'our only companions', the Dalits perceive themselves as 'the garbage the village throws out' (ibid). Even the river was separated among the castes. Upstream water of the river was for the upper caste villagers, while the downstream was for kumbies and shepherds and the lowest end for the Mahars and the other downtrodden. Buffaloes and cattle were washed on the water meant for consumption by the Mahars.

As the authors encounter harrowing experiences of hunger, forcible cleaning/consumption of human excreta, and skinning of dead animals in the ghetto, they undergo spatial trauma. Their spatial location of Chuhra Basti and Maharwada creates intense bodily experienced and retained traumatic experiences.

The ghetto is not just an empty, socially neutral space but the primary source of trauma for the Dalits. The events of caste violence in the ghettos permanently shatter Limbale's and Valmiki's ability to construct a sense of self. Such experiences produce within them an 'inner ghetto' which incorporates feelings of shame and distress. It affects the psychological structures of the self and affects the system of attachment and belonging that links community and individual. Once they leave the ghetto, they undergo a complete sense of detachment from the place and its members as a whole. Expressing the detachment, Limbale writes that "whenever I visited my village during vacations, I was bored. I could not

tolerate the filth in my house. I had lost interest in the dreary village. It depressed me" (90). Similarly, Valmiki conveys that "when the earth of the village becomes barren, one no longer has the desire to irrigate and fertilize it. When one's village is no longer one's nothing to lose in leaving" (46).

Metaphorical Animality in the Ghettos

Limbale's autobiography is a traumatic account of his life torn apart by the ordeal of caste, illegitimacy and place. Growing up as an 'outcaste', Limbale embarks on an agonizing search for self and belongingness. However, his search for meaning within Maharwada ends in dehumanizing himself and his community. Through his extensive use of animal imagery, he expresses the subhuman and animalistic milieu of the Maharwada. Limbale perceives the Mahars as "animals of different species" for except for their physical body, they are entirely devoid of any markedly human identifiers (101). Maharwada is defined by a scarcity of resources. As such driven by intense hunger, they fight vultures and dogs to feed on the skin of dead animals.

Limbale observes that the overwhelming presence of dead rotting animals, pigs, vultures, frogs and dogs, has profound impact on its inhabitants' psychical being that they begin to act like one. He recalls incidents where "we... cried lie waterfowls, tied frogs around our necks...We too shrieked like pigs (65-66). In another incident, he compares Devki, the local abortionist, to a sow eating her own piglet (67). Further emphasizing the animal-like state of the Mahars he compares his consumption of a lump of a baby's excrement while drinking water from the river with the herd of pigs who survived on human shit (65).

Within the spatial context of Maharwada, Limbale subverts the notion of the mother as an ideal of creation and life and instead presents her as a someone who wishes, "someone should fall in a well and die. Only then may we get something to eat" (72). For him, the animals and humans of Maharwada are identical.

It is essential to note here that Limbale's profound animalization of his Mahar community stems from his ostracization within the community itself. He doesn't solely carry the identity of a Mahar but also that of an outcast bastard. A significant amount of his life is spent on questioning his identity as he remarks, "Half of me belongs to the village, whereas the other half is excommunicated. Who am I?" (39)

He carries a dual identity, one as a Dalit and another as an excommunicated bastard. While the trauma of being a Mahar is an omnipresent element in Limbale's narrative, the bastard self further adds a sense of humiliation to his Dalit self, driving him to the edge of dehumanising himself and his community.

Valmiki on the other hand uses animal imagery to re-humanize the Dalit ghetto. His assertion that "for me, animal sacrifice is a symbol of terribly inhumane and violent mind-set" (93) after witnessing the slaughtering of a pig calls to the entire humankind to outcast their inhuman dispositions. The pig slaughtering incident is an essential passage for Valmiki's transformation from a victim to a witness of the trauma of not just his self but also the animal. Empathizing with the piglet Valmiki undergoes a shift in his position from the victim to now a perpetrator.

With trembling hands, I put the knife in the piglet's chest and pressed. It screamed loudly.... Though the knife had penetrated its heart, the piglet had not died. Stupefied, I held onto the knife that had plunged into its heart. When it still did not die, those people had put it on the fire. The piglet had screamed the moment it felt the heat (54).

In this incident, Valmiki takes on the role of a perpetrator as he kills the pig. One can read here the helplessness of the pig, symbolizing the vulnerability of Dalits (for they are treated like animals) and Valmiki as the slaughterer represents the caste Hindus. However, as a perpetrator with newfound power and control over his victim, Valmiki does not find pleasure in his position as a perpetrator. Instead, “at that moment I had felt as though blisters had erupted all over my body. The vortex of pain and disgust that I was caught up in at that moment had soiled” my innermost self (54).

The act of slaughtering was not just an assault on the pig but an assault on Valmiki's inner self as well. In being distressingly affected by the pain inflicted upon the pig, Valmiki reflects on the human side of the perpetrator. Reversing the traditional role of a perpetrator as one who promotes forgetting and silencing to one who identifies with his victim's plight—the pig, Valmiki provides a counter-narrative to the perpetrator, victim and bystander relationship. Against the traditional role of a perpetrator who demands passivity from the bystanders, Valmiki, by experiencing the pig's torment, appeals to the bystanders to share the burden of the victim's pain.

Trauma is traditionally considered an experience belonging to the victim. However, as a victim of the caste mechanism, Valmiki carries his trauma with him even in his role as a perpetrator. By incorporating the other, i.e., the pig's pain, Valmiki appeals to his perpetrators to realize their vice as well. He reconstructs the traditional notion of trauma as an experience belonging solely to the victim and incorporates the perpetrators and bystanders to participate in it.

Valmiki provides the ground for the caste Hindus to inculcate a sense of empathy and, in the process rehumanize themselves as well for in the device of dehumanization, it is not only the victim whose humanity has been stripped, but the perpetrators are also stripped off their humanity.

Valmiki aims not to generate sympathy for his perpetrators but to reinstate the dissolved humanity of both the caste Hindus and the Dalits. By demonstrating that the perpetrators too can experience traumatic effects as a result of their atrocities through his experience with the pig, Valmiki dismantles the unequal distribution of power between the perpetrator (caste Hindu) and victim (Dalit) and attempts to build an ethical stand towards the consequences of traumatic inflictions, thereby foregrounding a narrative of healing the traumatized being.

The Ghetto as a Witness to Caste Violence and Trauma

Gopal Guru states that it is the responsibility of the Dalits to voice their abuse because they hold the unique position of being a "witness from the inside" (82). Laub suggests that it is essential for the traumatic event(s) to be articulated, told and transmitted and equally crucial

for it to be heard. For trauma to be comprehended, there is a necessity for the victim of violence to have a witness. Thus, for the authors to articulate their trauma, they also need to have a witness. (66)

There is however a lack of witnesses among the Dalits in the ghetto since, as Valmiki says, the Dalits have "suffered everything in silence. Honour and prestige had no meaning for them" (22). There is an absence of the will to tell their narratives because caste oppression convinces its victims that their otherness and inhumanity is a natural phenomenon, thereby underscoring their confidence to talk back to the oppressors.

Nevertheless, driven by the necessity to tell, the authors turn to their spatial surroundings constructing an intimate link between themselves and the place as victims and witnesses of caste violence. In the events where Limbale consumes human excreta, and Devki is compared to a pig, they act as a witness to the dangerous conditions of the animals and the calamitous environment of the ghettos. Similarly, the images of pigs living on human shit and devouring their offspring highlight the ecological deprivation of the ghetto and its animal inhabitants.

Further, the ghetto also, in turn, bears witness to the infliction of caste trauma on the Dalit's physical and psychic being. The ghetto functions not only as a site of traumatic encounters but also bears witness to the unspeakable nature of the author's traumatic experiences. Limbale instils his inner turmoil in the natural elements of the ghetto, such as trees and rivers. When he writes, "Then her eyes overflowed with tears, and she felt like an uprooted tree" (34), or "I too was drifting with the flow of the river" (60), he manifests his traumatized self into the nature. He conceives the ghetto as a potential subject to bear witness to his trauma and thus forms a natural kinship with the ghetto.

Omprakash Valmiki highlights the transformation of the ghetto from a site of trauma into a witness. The Chuhra Basti, full of visual and sensory triggers of the choking stench of muck, raw ides and fresh bones, forms Valmiki's experiences. Though the Chuhra Basti is marked by traumatic legacies of violence, suffering and loss, it also bears witness to his trauma.

Frightened, I picked up the three-day-old broom. Just like me, it was shedding its dried up leaves. All that remained were the thin sticks. Tears were falling from my eyes. I started to sweep the compound while my tears fell (6).

The "teak tree" bears witness to the humiliation inflicted upon Valmiki. The tree functions as a voice of reality that Valmiki cannot fully articulate. The teak tree, which the perpetrator uses to humiliate Valmiki, later acts as a witness to his trauma. As the tree sheds its leaves while Valmiki is being humiliated, the tree witnesses the trauma of Valmiki, who is at the moment too traumatized to comprehend the violence. The tree is thus a confederate to the creation of traumatic knowledge, for it is on the tree that Valmiki inscribes his trauma for the first time as he says, "Just like me the tree was shedding its leaves" (6).

Conclusion

The Dalits have undergone inter-generational and multi-faceted forms of discrimination under the working of the caste system. The caste practices have left an

unmistakable mark of social division and inequality and have severely damaged the community's identity. A sense of 'otherness' marks the Dalits. Their life and identity are invariably built around being the 'other'. Thousands of generations have continued to endure this injustice. It is not the pain of any one person, nor is it just an event of a specific historical moment—it is the anguish of many thousands of people, experienced over thousands of years. Their experiences are constituted not only in relation to the upper castes but also in relation to the politics of violence, segregation and gender that surround their existence. Their life itself is a traumatic reminder of their wretchedness, and their narratives exhibit their struggles to emerge from the oppressed subjectivity that they have long internalized. Through their narratives, they engage in articulating a history of silence and subjugation and their trauma.

In the texts examined, we see how the authors' spatial location dramatically contributes to their trauma. The notion of place is a culturally constructed phenomenon wherein the dominant group achieves its hegemonic powers by inflicting the cordial groups with violence. It is, as Dawson observes, a site where the oppressed acquire their psychological sites of trauma (155).

Valmiki and Limbale both begin their narrative by describing the place where they were born and spent a significant time developing their perception of themselves and others. Their description of the ghetto is not a nostalgic account of the past but a painful recollection of degrading events. They remember not the beauty of the ghettos but look back with feelings of revulsion, shame and despair, for it was what they were forced to feel. Through their experiences of living in Chuharbasti and Maharwada, one can infer that the place is not a kind of void but a space characterized by socio-cultural relations between the upper and lower castes.

The authors share an intimate relationship with their ghetto where both act as agents in (re)defining trauma. The authors' lived experiences present trauma beyond individual minds and bodies but as part of the place in the social, environmental and structural contexts around us.

Trauma is animated externally and internally. The authors and their ghettos undergo caste violence simultaneously. The ghetto is not a passive space but is actively engaged in representing the trauma of the authors. On the one hand, it serves as the site of acquiring trauma as it instils a deep-rooted sense of shame and anxiety in the Dalits, yet it also furnishes them with an agency to mediate and express their trauma. The ghetto, designed by the caste perpetrators to castigate the lower castes, provides them with a counter-narrative to articulate their exploitation and oppression.

We see that the ghetto remains not just a site of trauma but provides the ground for Limbale and Valmiki to transform from victims to witnesses. By associating with nature's natural and animal elements, Limbale and Valmiki can create witnesses for their experiences and thus emerge from the culture of silence. Through their identification with the ghettos, the authors find a sense of identification with the self. The ghetto is thus a conflicting space for the Dalit experiences. It is at once traumatizing yet provides potential grounds for healing.

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The Shapes of Dystopia: Reading Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* as a Feminist Critical Dystopia

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Abstract

*Currently there is a global renaissance of dystopian science fiction which began from 1980s onwards in the Anglo-American literary world and appears to have gained momentum in India from the beginning of the twenty-first century onwards. A major shift is registered in contemporary dystopian novels of women writers as they put emphasis on critical thinking, express hope from within a dystopian setting and remain open-ended. This feminist reappropriation of the genre of dystopian science fiction has heralded a new oppositional and resisting form of writing. This paper attempts to study one such feminist dystopia, *Escape* (2008) while making use of Tom Moylan's concept of 'critical dystopia' as the theoretical framework for analyzing the novel. The aim is to show that Manjula Padmanabhan effectively draws upon dystopian narrative tropes to analyse issues such as gender, reproduction, female body, sexuality, environment, and technology among others.*

Keywords: *feminist, critical dystopia, hope, gender, utopian impulse*

Introduction

The genre of utopia has clear definitions that lay out its boundaries and characteristics. Darko Suvin writes that utopia is “the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community” (132). Etymologically, the term utopia comes from ancient Greek. This neologism is formed by joining the word *topos* (place) with a negative affix – *ou* (not) and the positive affix – *eu* (pleasant or good). Thus, utopia is understood as both – a “no-place” i.e., a place that does not exist while simultaneously being a “good place”.

While coining the term dystopia in 1868, John Stuart Mill retained this double meaning embodied in More's term. Mill's antonym inverted only one of utopia's two concurrent meanings. He converted *eu* – 'good' into *dys* – 'bad' while keeping intact the parallel meaning of utopia as imaginary or 'no place'. This retention of utopia's sense of nowhere might suggest that utopia or dystopia as a genre has no connection with the author's *historical spacetime* (Tom Moylan's term for the historically-bound real world of the author). But both utopia and dystopia present historically and culturally specific response to particular social dilemmas. As David W. Sisk notes, “dystopian fiction is fundamentally concerned with the writer's present society and builds its horrific power on extrapolating current trends to what the writer considers their logically fearsome conclusions” (7).

Critical Dystopia

A shift to the conservative Right in the 1980s and 1990s in the USA and UK, led to the proliferation of dystopian science fiction. This 'dystopian turn' in Anglo-American science fiction has been addressed by a series of scholars, primarily by Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini. These dystopias written mostly by women writers like Octavia E. Butler, Marge Piercy, and Ursula K. Le Guin have helped in recovering science fiction's oppositional and critical potential and have been termed as 'critical dystopias' by Tom Moylan in his work *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000).

Criticality for dystopia involves hope rather than closure in a pessimistic world. Besides, it involves looking at the ways in which a dystopia comes into existence, rather than just offering critique of a dystopian world. It acknowledges that there are no simple solutions to the problems presented in dystopian narratives. The protagonists in critical dystopias are often marginalized characters such as women, people of colour, and non-human creatures. In critical dystopias such ex-centric subjects are not obliterated or subjugated by the system as opposed to the classical dystopias. In her article, "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction", Baccolini writes that "by rejecting the traditional subjugation of the individual at the end of the novel, the critical dystopia opens a space of contestation and opposition for those groups – women and other ex-centric subjects whose subject position is not contemplated by hegemonic discourse – for whom subject status has yet to be attained" (520). In other words, critical dystopias foreground the narratives of those individuals who would otherwise appear at the periphery in a classical dystopia where protagonists are mostly white or male. The presence and voice of these characters provides a counternarrative to a hegemonic discourse. Furthermore, critical dystopias reject the traditional subjugation of the protagonist at the end of the novel. For Baccolini critical dystopias "allow readers and protagonists to hope: the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse *within* the work" (520). Critical dystopias maintain utopia on the horizon. Paradoxically, it is in the critical dystopias that utopian impulse is most strongly expressed.

It is now commonly accepted that with the publication of Margaret Atwood's, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), science fiction, especially feminist science fiction turned towards dystopia. Baccolini views it as a conscious feminist intervention on genre writing to explore issues which are important to women. In the Indian context, Begum Rokeya Shakawat Hossain pioneered the genre of utopia and science fiction with *Sultana's Dream* in 1905. She comments on the condition of women in India by depicting a feminist and ecological utopia called Ladyland where men are secluded to the mardana and look after the domestic life, while women rule the public sphere. After a lull of many decades, the genre of utopia has been revived in India in the twenty-first century by a new and promising wave of novelists, who have chosen the dystopian narrative framework to embody their stories. Manjula Padmanabhan's 1998 play *Harvest* and her novel *Escape* (2008) paved the way for the current proliferation of dystopias. It is curious, though that some of the most prominent dystopias that have come out in India in the twenty-first century have been written by women such as Rimi Chatterjee (*Signal Red*, 2005), Priya Sarukkai Chabria (*Generation 14* 2008) and

Nayantra Sahgal (*When the Moon Shines by Day*, 2017). It is not only female writers but even male science fiction writers in India such as Anil Menon (*The Beast with Nine Billion Feet*, 2009), Shiv Ramdas (*Domechild*, 2013), Sami Ahmad Khan (*Aliens in Delhi*, 2017), Prayaag Akbar (*Leila*, 2018), and Samit Basu (*Chosen Spirits*, 2020) are imagining dystopic future scenarios in which society has descended into more or less totalitarian states and human freedom is curtailed.

The question arises why women writers show a preference for dystopia over utopia. Addressing the question of “why dystopia”, Baccolini in her article entitled “Dystopia Matters: On the Use of Dystopia and Utopia” notes “the utopias envisioned by male authors had not been radically different places for women, and through history women had and still have often been citizens of dystopia” (2). Women's dystopian visions draw attention towards crucial issues of gender inequality and women's lack of control of their reproductive rights as well as their bodies and sexuality. Dystopia allows them to demonstrate how “gendered identities are not “natural” but are instead the products of an androcentric, totalitarian discourse” (3). Thus, dystopia has become the preferred form for women to put forth resistance in the twenty-first century. By imagining worse worlds, they encourage us to think critically about our own world and take action to change it.

Escape: A Feminist Critical Dystopia

Manjula Padmanabhan is one of the leading literary voices in modern India who has internationally acclaimed works such as *Harvest*, *Kleptomania* and *The Three Virgins and Other Stories* to her credit. Her novel, *Escape* interrogates women's relationship with technology and state power. It introduces a post-apocalyptic scenario in which women have been almost completely eradicated by the male dominated state apparatus and they are substituted for a new, genetically-engineered class of drones that are adept at performing household chores and working on the farms. The protagonist, Meiji is the only survivor of this femicide and the novel documents Meiji's and her uncle Youngest's quest to escape the tyranny of the state machinery.

Escape is set in a nameless place called “The Forbidden Country.” There are many hints to suggest that Padmanabhan is talking about India but by refusing to assign a name to this country, Padmanabhan universalizes the issue of women's marginalization. Ruled by the autocratic Generals, it is a desolate world where women are termed as 'vermin'. There is no word 'women' in this country and even feminine pronouns are prohibited. Not only this, all the products associated with femininity are banned. Manjula Padmanabhan takes “the reduction of women” (72) convention observed in feminist science fiction by Sarah Lefanu in her work, *Feminism and Science Fiction* (1989) to its extreme. Lefanu has pointed out that in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) women's social roles are severely limited. In the Republic of Gilead, women are reduced to separate functions as they are divided into castes of Wives, Aunts, Handmaids, Marthas, Econowives and Widows. Similarly, in Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937) women are reduced to a biological function as they are kept solely for breeding purposes. Such reductions are a routine practice of a patriarchal society.

Padmanabhan goes one step further and depicts a complete erasure of women in the dystopic 'Brotherland'. Here, women are wiped out once the Generals master reproduction technology. They are hunted, raped, burned or publicly executed. Men being silent witnesses and accomplices to this excruciating violence. Hence, the notion of men as 'protectors' is defiled and the readers' attention is drawn towards the horrible cruelty that has been meted out to women since centuries.

The need for an official Other frequently figures in dystopian fiction, here women are that marginal group against which society defines itself by exclusion. This is much along the lines of Foucault's discussion of the insane in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and that of the homosexuals in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976). Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) argues that "otherness is a fundamental category of human thought" (xviii). Women are "defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the absolute – she is the Other" (xxii). Women thus become for men the "other," the objects against which masculine identity is formed. The Generals seek to enhance solidarity among men by promoting an organized hatred of women. According to the discourse propagated by the Generals, women weaken the society and the nation at large. In their manual entitled *Vermin Tribe: An Analysis*, the Generals denounce women by arguing that "they were small and dim-witted, incapable of caring for their needs outside the home and obliged to seek the constant protection and supervision of men" (255-256). The General justifies the violence on women to their inferior status – their low intellect and lack of strength.

The Generals argue, "Females are driven by biological imperatives that lead them to compete for breeding rights" (271). Women's biology is used to justify their genocide. The citizens are led to believe a woman's sole role is reproduction. Here, gender is constructed as though it were a direct cultural and immutable correlative of biological sex making it static instead of evolutionary. While men are able to rationally transcend sexual biology women it seems cannot breakaway entirely from their biology. "Women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men" (Grosz 14). Feminist thinkers recognise that the capacity to give birth is the ground upon which exploitation of women operates. According to de Beauvoir, childbearing, childbirth and menstruation are draining physical events that tie women to their bodies. Feminist thinkers have sought to counter this biological determinism, or the view that biology is destiny. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir has famously claimed that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". Helen Cixous seeks liberation from this phallogocentric view that identifies woman with the body and dismisses her by championing the body – "the immense material organic sexual universe that we are" (269). Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) proposed that in order to solve the problem of gender inequality biological reproduction be replaced with ectogenesis, that is, the development of embryos in artificial wombs. It appears that Manjula Padmanabhan is writing in direct response to Firestone. While Firestone imagined that women might seize the means of reproduction through the technology of artificial wombs and be freed from the "tyranny of reproduction". But Padmanabhan shows that the same technology in the hands of a misogynistic dictatorial regime could be fatal for the entire female population. Feminist

dystopian fiction calls into question whether or not an excessively technological or scientific society could be beneficial for women.

The text while representing a dystopian society, also explains how it came into being. The female genocide is justified under the banner of development called “bold vision” (323). This is how Youngest describes the Generals' strategy: “They claimed they had the blueprint for a glorious leap forward, in which every horizon belongs to our country. They promised that their plans would eradicate poverty, disease and hunger from our nation. But in order to succeed, they said to the families they approached, they needed all our money, our unquestioning support and of course, complete and absolute secrecy” (323). The Generals think of themselves as utopians who can bring unprecedented progress and prosperity to their nation. They take money from “industrialists, bankers, and politicians” and invest it in acquiring the cloning technology (269). After acquiring cloning technology, the pair of brothers known as Generals begin to multiply mysteriously and it is only then people begin to comprehend the “nightmarish dimensions of their so-called bold vision” (323). The 'Brotherland' is a utopia gone wrong. But the Generals believe otherwise and only boast about their achievements. Their 'utopian' rhetoric is evident in speeches such as: “We have banished the pain of loss. The pain of failure. The pain of death. Yes. That is what we have achieved, my brothers!” (218). What makes *Escape* a critical dystopia is the manner in which it critiques the concept of utopian planning. What the Generals are celebrating in their messages of creation of a utopia are clearly not things they have done for betterment of humanity and the earth, rather the triumph of transnational capital while completely ignoring the social and ecological cost of their schemes.

Padmanabhan further demonstrates the ways in which a society functions in a closed totalitarian way to preserve its 'utopian' agenda. If there is one mechanism that is central to reinforce the totalitarian foundations of a dystopian society that is the use of panoptic surveillance to keep the population under constant surveillance and, thus, avoid any kind of rebellious outburst. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1995) borrows Jeremy Bentham's idea of the panopticon to depict the impact of constant surveillance on its subjects. The panopticon is a prison design, a cylindrical building where inmates are invisible to one another, but are all visible to a guard stationed in the centre of the building. The point of the panopticon is that control is achieved through what Foucault calls 'disciplinary power', a form of power that is constant, unnoticeable and internalized. The guards might not be observing each inmate but as inmates are not sure whether they are being watched at any one time, they must always act in accordance to the rules. Control is thus achieved through self-surveillance of the people. Foucault notes,

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (202-03)

The surveillance mechanisms and tools such as dynamic surveillance orbs (a vehicle that climbs up the sides of buildings like a giant spider taking pictures and recording conversations), satellites that can zoom in on the pearl drop in your ear” (48), maintaining of

each citizen's data record and Boyz are employed by the Generals with the intention of disciplining his subjects and also for rooting out delinquents. Panoptic surveillance, obliteration of historical documents and literature, and the rise of a cadre of the cloned Generals make the "Forbidden Country": "a self-contained world, impervious to external interference" (324). The citizens of the "Forbidden Country" are not only forced to comply with the law of the Generals but are also made impervious to any outside influences.

As dystopias give voice to the anxieties of a given time, it was the increasing number of unchecked crimes against women that prompted Manjula Padmanabhan to write her dystopian novel. It seems the constitutional provisions have proved futile to curb the various forms of gender based violence which has attained horrifying proportions in the twenty-first century India. The novel goes on to highlight the societal impairment that is caused due to the absence of women. Young men deprived of female companionship are seen to be desperate to do anything to get it. The Generals themselves point out that the condition of most of the estates is dwindling as lack of women means lack of encouragement to work. Due to her association with an all-male world, Meiji also remains unconscious about her womanhood and her individual identity for a long time. Also, Padmanabhan is voicing the idea that a world without women is a world bereft of emotions. The impassive drones, emotionless Generals, and unintelligent and brutal Boyz affirm that a world that is ruled merely by scientific domination and technological tyranny lacks emotional exuberance.

There is an integration of environmental and feminist concerns in the novel. The Generals view nature also as an enemy to be subdued and exploited. The ideology that authorizes oppression based on gender is the same ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature. Women are abhorred for their ability to give birth and nurture life and nature is hated for its excessiveness. Male-controlled industrialization, technology and science and the government's capitalist ambitions have turned the country into a radioactive wasteland. The country is nothing but "a featureless wasteland, with no cultivation to be seen, no farms, no villages" (112).

Dystopian fiction is usually structured in terms of clashing oppositions, in the sense that there is always an element which departs from the oppressive society, and challenges the dictatorial regime. Meiji's uncles represent the sole big resistance against the omnipresent Generals by hiding their niece. But, in their attempt to put up resistance, the three brothers have made Meiji live a life of denial. They have stunted her growth using herbs and potions. Therefore, despite being sixteen years old she looks like a child in appearance. She is secluded, lonely and remains unaware of her femininity as well as the outside world. Her curious questions regarding her body and sexuality are not appropriately answered. Even the mirrors in her apartment are fixed above head height. As there are no full length mirrors, she can't see herself in totality and has not developed a self-conscious yet. In all these aspects, Meiji symbolises the fate of women in the patriarchal system. As Rositta Joseph observes, here "the reader is reminded of our traditional society where the first form of violence against women is in the denial of knowledge and freedom, denial of self-awareness, denial of the right to form their own destinies and shape their own lives" (6). Meiji laments her captive existence as she asks Youngest, "can anyone want to live like this, always hiding, always terrified, your

captive little freak?" (387).

Conclusion

Manjula Padmanabhan's narrative can be put under the category of what Moylan calls 'critical dystopias.' By portraying a misogynistic hell, Padmanabhan is voicing her anger about the misogyny of the present, and her anxiety about a future where violence against women reaches to the point of extermination. Under the rule of a despotic General and his clone brothers, Youngest's act of volunteering to take Meiji out of this country to one that is safe for women provides a utopian horizon to the text. The virtues of selflessness and caring exist in opposition to the cruelty of the government. The text refuses closure and challenges the necessary pessimism of dystopian genre as it presents an open ending. The novel ends on a hopeful note as Meiji promises herself that she will tell the world what Youngest has done for her and if she manages to escape, she vows to come back to take him out of the wasteland. Depressing as the scenario may be, the narrative tells us that we will endure even the worst scenarios.

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Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of the Tree Metaphor in A.K. Ramanujan's "Carpe Diem"

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to approach the poetry of A.K. Ramanujan through cognitive poetics, a cognitive literary approach that draws upon principles of cognitive science. The paper presents an analysis of a lesser-known poem of Ramanujan "Carpe Diem" using the cognitive poetics developed by Margaret. H. Freeman and Peter Stockwell, with an emphasis on the way the poet cognises the world around him. Cognitive poetics, defined as the art and science of literary reading, focuses on the cognitive process of reading and meaning-making. By studying this poem using a cognitive approach, an attempt has been made to understand how Ramanujan sees ideas like TIME and thinks perceptions. This facilitates the presentation of his poetic vision as expressions of mental experiences compressed into a final image, TREE in the poem. This analysis will be substantiated by traditional critical analysis of the poem and excerpts from the poet's diary entitled Journeys: A Poet's Diary. Such an analysis presents this poem as a conceptual and figurative conversation amongst various philosophical traditions.

Keywords: A K Ramanujan, Cognitive Poetics, Indian Poetry in English, Conceptual Blending, Conceptual Metaphor

Introduction

According to Margaret Freeman, "From a cognitive perspective, meaning is neither semantic, nor pragmatic, but encyclopaedic: that is, it arises from the cumulative association of experience, conceptualisation, context and culture" (432). This is in line with what A. K. Ramanujan thought about his work, which is a description of his aesthetic experience and perception of art. According to him, the body and the senses come together in apprehending nature, realities and identities, and thus emerges "meaning(s)" (Rodriguez 174). This coming together of experience, conceptualisation, context and culture with the help of body and the five senses is not the way meaning is made by readers alone, but also encoded by the writer. Perhaps, this was the mechanism with which Ramanujan built his symbols and metaphors. Conceptualisation is a process in a loop; so, to decode it, we require to adopt a technique that itself is a process. And Cognitive Poetics, with its free play between mind and word, very suitably makes its way into the frame of conceptualisation. Thus, it becomes imperative to revisit Ramanujan's poems and understand them from his conceptual domain, for which Cognitive poetics and its techniques are most relevant.

In this paper, I shall illustrate how in Ramanujan's poem "Carpe Diem", Ramanujan's oft-used TREE symbol functions as a conceptual/cognitive metaphor and evokes a conceptual and figurative conversation among many poetic and philosophical traditions. The poem "Carpe Diem", an uncollected poem that was published in *Journeys: A Poet's Dairy*,

has been chosen for doing a cognitive poetics analysis of metaphors using Peter Stockwell and Margaret Freeman's Cognitive Poetics. This poem was first published in an Indian journal, *Thought* in 1957.

Methodology

Cognitive Poetics is an application of cognitive science to literary reading, drawing heavily from cognitive linguistics, which is, in turn, grounded in cognitive psychology. It is a cognitive literary approach that places emphasis on the poetics of a literary work. 'Cognitive poetics' is a term that was first coined by Reuven Tsur in the 1970s to characterise his personal cognitive approach to literary texts. It particularly "addresses the aesthetic elements of sound and structure in poetic forms without invoking the theory of blending" (Freeman 103). According to Reuven Tsur, cognitive poetics "offers cognitive theories that systematically account for the relationship between the structure of literary texts and their perceived effects. By the same token, it discriminates which reported effects may legitimately be related to the structures in question, and which may not" (1). Margaret H Freeman, inspired by Reuven Tsur's notion of cognitive poetics, uses the term in a more general sense; in that it incorporates more recent cognitive linguistic research, especially research that is being done in conceptual integration, blending and metaphor. Peter Stockwell's cognitive poetics is applied linguistics steeped in the stylistic tradition and is also known as cognitive stylistics. Like Freeman's notion of cognitive poetics, Stockwell's cognitive stylistics is grounded in cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology. The difference, however, exists in the extent to which stylistics is used to account for the textuality of the text in question.

The conceptual metaphors framework is best suited to study Ramanujan's poem because there exists a "secondary level of signification in the description of concrete objects and personal experiences, which is typically exploited by the author to create beyond images and metaphors a 'second language' of personal symbols, conventions, and meta-poetic play" (Rodriguez 173). Ramanujan manages to create such a metaphor and symbol of TREE by a mechanism of "semantic density" (173). A deeper study of this secondary level of signification of TREE metaphor can provide insights into Ramanujan's ability of conceptualisation. The skill of conceptualisation as identified in Ramanujan's poetry takes us beyond localised semanticity. However, it requires viewing metaphors and images not by a one-to-one linguistic substitution according to categorical domains in a conceptual structural phenomenon, but by investigating further the interaction of complex metaphor systems that collide to represent abstract concepts (Freeman 4). This idea of studying metaphors systems and their interaction to cognise the objects and experiences of the world was first introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson through the concept of conceptual metaphors, in their book *Metaphors We Live By*. According to them, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (3). This eventually gave rise to conceptual integration networks/ blending theory and other cognitive-literary approaches to the study of metaphors grounded in cognitive linguistics. This forms the basis of both Peter Stockwell's and Margaret Freeman's cognitive approach.

Analysis

We will first analyse Ramanujan's TREE metaphor using Peter Stockwell's method of cognitive stylistics analysis. According to Stockwell's research, simile, analogy and extended metaphor are the most visible conceptual metaphors, and allegory, the most invisible conceptual metaphor (107). The visibility and the invisibility of the stylistic expression of a conceptual metaphor is based on the schema management that takes place in the cognitive models. Schema is a cognitive stylistic tool that helps to decide which parts of either of the cognitive models are used in encoding and decoding meanings. Literary image schemas are usually constructed using semantics.

The following analysis will illustrate how Ramanujan's schema management, an important cognitive skill that is fundamentally metaphorical, aids in building the conceptual metaphor of TREE IS TIME, stylistically realised as metonymy in the poem. This schema management is made explicit by Ramanujan while playing with semantics, leading to the "semantic density" that Rodriguez attributes to Ramanujan's poems (173).

The following is the poem "Carpe Diem":

Pluck the moment,
said Epicurus.
But when we pluck,
does the fruit forget
the tree's inverted image
moping in the root,
and the slow certainty
of the earth shouldering volcano
waiting in the green hereafter? (Ramanujan 43)

Tree is a recurrent metaphor or motif in Ramanujan's poetry. This concept of TREE and related concepts like FRUIT, SEED and ROOTS take the form of different conceptual metaphors in various poems - TREE AS SEED, TREE AS BODY, TREE AS LIFE etc. This poem highlights two kinds of continuities— one, that of time and the other of philosophies that occupied Ramanujan's thoughts. In the first two lines, the concept of "seize the day" or "pluck the moment", that is often associated with the Epicurean philosophy, is made explicit; what makes this poem stand out is how Ramanujan fuses this philosophy with the image of the Upanishadic cosmic tree, which is an "upside-down cosmic tree with the branches in the earth and roots in the air as a metaphor for immortality and the interconnectedness of creation" (qtd. in Rodriguez 165).

In using the object "moment" for the transitive verb "pluck" in the first lines and using another object "fruit" for the same verb immediately in the third and fourth lines, thereby, using parallelism in linguistic structuring, Ramanujan has made metaphor identification simpler; one can discern the conceptual metaphor of FRUIT AS MOMENT. Further, Rodriguez comments, "Ramanujan highlights the present immediacy of aesthetic experience" (73) in the first two lines, confirming that FRUIT IS TIME (PRESENT). However, in the subsequent lines, Ramanujan juxtaposes the two metaphors FRUIT and

TREE which share a synecdochic relation to express that the present moment or FRUIT cannot be cut off from the TREE which is inverted, and also is symbolic of interconnectedness and immortality of creation; it stands for the time in the eternal sense, in this poem. Therefore, that is the conceptual metaphor of TREE AS TIME (ETERNAL).

So far, I have delineated conceptual metaphors for TIME (PRESENT) and TIME (ETERNAL). However, we do not have metaphors for TIME (PAST) and TIME (FUTURE), for it is a given that the inverted tree stands for interconnectedness and continuity and that the poet is trying to use the inverted tree motif to drive home the point that the past and future are contained in the present and hence, time is continuous.

Further, Ramanujan invokes the nature imagery of the “earth shouldering volcano/ waiting in the green”. We can understand 'earth', 'volcano' and 'the green' as concepts in relation to concepts of TREE AS TIME (ETERNAL) and FRUIT AS TIME (PRESENT). The EARTH may be deemed the past of the FRUIT and the TREE, for the tree and the fruits grow from the earth. So, I, as a reader, have conceptualised a metaphor EARTH AS TIME (PAST). The expression “slow certainty” confirms this conceptualisation because the past, from the standpoint of the present, is a certainty. Thereafter, the volcano in the green and its ties with a tree evokes a scenario of an uncertain future of a tree that grows beside an active volcano. Studies show that a tree might either burn and stay charred by the molten lava or in the rarest of rare cases, survive and continue to grow after a volcanic eruption. This leads me to conceptualise another metaphor of TIME, i.e. VOLCANO AS TIME (FUTURE), for the volcano activates an image-schema for the concept of FUTURE, in the poem. Additionally, the words like “waiting” and “hereafter” confirm this conceptualisation.

Thus, TREE is a conceptual metaphor that is stylistically realised as synecdoche in relation to FRUIT AND EARTH. The synecdochic connection with VOLCANO is an artificial one unlike the natural synecdochic connection that exists between a TREE, FRUIT AND EARTH (Stockwell 107). While all other forms of metaphors are a result of cross mapping between source and target cognitive models, synecdoche, a type of metonymy, is an example of mapping within a single cognitive model. In establishing a synecdochic connection between a 'tree' and a 'volcano', Ramanujan expands the cognitive model of 'tree' and also the 'volcano.'

This is exactly the kind of difference that exists in the cognitive metaphors that are structured in the everyday language and in poetry. A 'volcano', which does not usually belong to the semantics of a tree, is brought into the cognitive framework of a TREE. Therefore, Ramanujan's conceptual metaphors are products of his “capacity for integration and assimilation” (Rodriguez 184), and his ability to conceptually project his thoughts (shaped by his concrete experience of the world) into the world of his poems by relating one thing to another (Freeman 470).

In fact, this kind of mapping between the two concepts in the poem, TREE and TIME, is not arbitrary and a mere conceptualisation of an informed reader. This metaphorical projection of Ramanujan's conception of time onto the domain of tree and its parts can be evidenced from the poet-scholar's note that he scribbled on his curriculum vitae document when he was a research fellow in Linguistics at Deccan College, Poona between 1958 and 1959, before he went on to obtain a Fulbright Scholarship to study in the US, a few months

after “Carpe Diem” was written. The note reads thus, “My five fruitful years in Belgaum taught me how much can be done in a day if one lived in the Present Discontinuous and plucked every moment” (Ramanujan et al. 43).

A keen look at the note will reveal that Ramanujan has used the same verb “plucked” in the poem too. Also, the adjective that he has attributed to the noun 'years' is 'fruitful', again, thereby confirming the mapping of TIME (PRESENT) onto the domain of FRUIT, which is metonymically related to TREE, which is in turn mapped into the domain of TIME (ETERNAL), using the Upanishadic cosmic tree image.

So, a question that may be asked is what concept activated the conceptualisation of another concept? Did his idea of time give rise to the tree and fruit metaphors, or is it vice-versa? This is the question that Freeman's cognitive poetics analysis of metaphor explores. We will now look at the insights Freeman's cognitive poetics offer for the study of Ramanujan's use of metaphors in “Carpe Diem”. According to Freeman, “doing a one-to-one substitution literary analysis leads to critical disagreement over a poem's meaning” (2). A cognitive poetics analysis ought to give an understanding of how a poem operates at several levels, thereby revealing how critical readings may be compatible rather than contradictory (2). It is this that will help understand the “secondary-level signification” that Rodriguez cites is the speciality of Ramanujan's metaphors and images.

The cognitive stylistic analysis that has been done previously is a one-to-one substitution literary analysis in which I have mapped each element of the source domain 'tree' onto the abstract or target domain 'time'. In conceptual metaphor theory, the image-schematic structure of the target domain 'time' determines which image-schematic structures from the source domain 'tree' are mapped onto it. This is the invariance principle as postulated by Lakoff and Turner. For example, it is based on our understanding that time consists of past, present and future that we have been able to understand which parts of the tree represent which element of time.

In this poem, however, there also appears to be a reversal in metaphorical mapping constraint because, simultaneously, the inverted tree image, that stands for eternity and interconnectedness, shapes our understanding of Ramanujan's conceptualisation of time, and its elements (past, present and future) being a part of one another. It is this sort of mapping that perhaps leads to Rodriguez to make the following observations about the poem: “Ramanujan highlights the present immediacy of the aesthetic experience, but he is also aware that it cannot be cut off from the umbilical cord of cosmic creation, for past and future are contained completely in a fleeting moment of insight” (Rodriguez 73). Rodriguez has arrived at the secondary-level signification of the image and the conceptual metaphors the image activates without adequately accounting for it. Additionally, I would like to bring your attention once again to the note Ramanujan scribbled in his curriculum document, “... how much can be done in a day if one lived in the Present Discontinuous and plucked every moment” (Ramanujan et al. 43). Though, the focus is on trying to regard the present as discontinuous from the past and future and “pluck” it, one should note that Ramanujan manages to speak volumes of his idea of the Present Continuous in this one statement by introducing it with a wishful 'if', as if to say that one's attempt to live in the present may not be fruitful due to the inevitability of Present Continuous, i.e., the seamlessness with which the present dissolves

into the future and becomes a past. Incidentally, many years later, Ramanujan, in one of his last interviews with Ayesha Kagal for Economic Times, states that such moments of one's awareness of being in the "present" is a rarity:

The present is the most illusive, just as literal is the most elusive of meaning ... though those rare occasions when you feel you are really living in the present, are extraordinary, because they open out the way nothing else does. But it's such a rare event ... Nothing that one does in the most abstract realm is unconnected with one's emotions and one forgets that" (qtd. in Rodriguez 165).

So, it can be seen how it is not possible to point out if the 'time' concept structured his concept of 'tree' or vice-versa, because they happen to structure each other simultaneously. This kind of a cognitive poetics reading, focusing on the direction of the constraint was applied by Freeman herself in her analysis of Emily Dickinson's poem "My life had stood a loaded gun" in which a reversal in metaphorical mapping illuminated the commonly perceived meaning of the poem and brought about an interesting and seemingly valid new interpretation. This was compared with common analysis of metaphorical mappings that were based on the invariance principle.

In terms of conceptual integration networks or blending theory, "Carpe Diem" is an example of symmetric two-sided network, in which topology from both input spaces (tree and time) appear in the blend, the poem. Unlike in Dickinson's poem, one cannot tell which of the two is the organising frame of the blend, because in the first line of the poem, 'time' becomes an organising frame to help understand what the 'fruit' stands for. However, once the image of the inverted tree is presented, it becomes a conceptual metaphor that determines and shapes the reader's understanding of time. Again, a reader's understanding of the semantics of time like "certainty", "waiting" and "hereafter" determines one's understanding of how the "volcano", "earth" and "green" are connected to TREE. Further, that understanding confirms to the reader, Ramanujan's conceptualisation of time as being an eternal entity and its elements—past, present and future being interconnected. Therefore, there isn't one emergent structure in this blend, the poem.

This is the crux of Freeman's cognitive poetics study of metaphor. Her emphasis is not on one-to-one substitution, but to recognise the direction of the constraint and investigate if reading against the grain, i.e, reading against the invariance principle can provide deeper insights about a literary text and the metaphors that make it (5). This does not mean that Freeman's cognitive poetics approach to metaphor is better than Stockwell's cognitive stylistics; in trying to look for a better approach we will miss the point. The point that is being made is that both of these methods are in continuum and work to illuminate the poem further. These two analyses are merely a sketch of the rich interweaving found in this nine-line poem by Ramanujan. A full-length cognitive stylistic study of the poem is beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusion

Thus, it is seen how "cognitive science is responsible for placing metaphor at the centre of language and thought in general. However, for cognitive poetics, these general

insights can be returned to the literary sphere in order to understand more clearly how metaphor works in literature” (Stockwell 105). Further, Freeman augments Stockwell's point by stating that “most metaphor studies in the cognitive linguistic tradition have focused on conventional, everyday metaphor and not literary metaphor” (1). However, “their formulations of metaphor's theoretical underpinnings have already proven useful to literary scholars interested in developing a deeper understanding of metaphor use in literature” (1).

This theme of continuity is reflected not only in the linguistic structure of the poem, but also the conceptual structure of the poem, because no one domain constrains the conceptualisation of another domain constantly, as was shown in the second analysis.

Significantly, this is also an evidence of how the poem itself is an organic conceptual and figurative conversation between the Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. The cognitive poetics analysis of the poem, the literary critical work on the poem, Ramanujan's diary entry in relation to the poem and his interview on a similar theme convey that Ramanujan did not counter one philosophical tradition with another, but synthesised both these philosophical traditions – Epicurean and Upanishadic into an image to model his notion of time. Therefore, Amalendu Bose affirms “the intellectual plenitude of Ramanujan's 'Carpe Diem' is distilled in its nine-line total length” (58).

One may observe that the answer to the question asked by Freeman's approach remains vague, in the sense that there is no one path in which the poem was constructed, nor can be read, i.e, understanding time in terms of tree and tree in terms of time. It happens simultaneously as shown in the analysis. What then is the real point of the analysis? Has the question of how Ramanujan cognises the world and compresses into an image been answered? The analysis that shows a symmetric two-sided network can be extrapolated to our understanding that Ramanujan's very manner of thinking was in continuum. Speaking of his thought and creative process, Ramanujan himself described it as “a concentric continuity; the 'substance' of his personal experiences—his 'inner' forms—and his 'ways of shaping experience'—the 'outer' forms—are 'continuous with each other' and one cannot 'tell what comes from where’” (Rodriguez 138).

This kind of an analysis makes a case for reading A. K. Ramanujan, using a cognitive poetics lens which focuses on the process of reading and meaning-making. Ramanujan himself said, “I would say that the meaning is in form. The particular nuance is what you experience; you are not looking for some big thought. Even the biggest thought must come to you in a particular form; it must be embodied. The how is as much the what as the what” (qtd. in Rodriguez 229).

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Ecocentric Analysis of Toru Dutt's *Our Casuarina Tree* : Redrawing the Aesthetic Contours of Human and Nature Interface

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Abstract

The paper presents an in-depth analysis of 'place' vis a vis human and nature interface in Our Casuarina Tree, a masterpiece of Indian Literature in English. It theorises how nature and 'place' are represented in literature and brings to light the inevitable hegemony of socio-cultural discourses which relegate 'place' and the nonhuman world to the status of the other, rendering it marginalised, misrepresented and mute. Ecocriticism approaches the natural ecosystem with a view to gauge ecological repercussions of literary representations and its determinant role in the way one perceives nature as an entity to be idealised, created and enjoyed. The narrator has a dominant presence in the aforementioned poem who describes her love for the tree and renders its existence meaningful. This anthropocentric construction of the tree and nature as memorable and meaningful are purely commodified behavioural consequences of rendering nonhuman sans agency, mute and marginalised. The article presents a powerful literary attempt to re-imagine the cultural dynamics of nature and place in Toru Dutt's poem.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, ecosophy, place, thingness, tree

Introduction

Anthropocentrically, human beings ascribe human-like attributes to the inanimate, nonhuman and natural things to put them in a perspective and construct a world centred around what humans consider as civilization, culture, moral and ethical. In the process of doing so, one tends to overlook or avoid the inevitable question of unrepresentability of nature as such. It reminds me of the 'hard problems' of nature writing since the times of Henry Thoreau, William Wordsworth, Edward Abbey till the postmodern times of Don DeLillo, Ruskin Bond, for that, too much trees into the text does not make it an ethical nature writing. They have tended to focus less on nature per se, as Dutt does, and more on writing about nature, particularly the testimony of exceptional observers aware about and (therefore) in tune with the local environment. When it comes to the description of specific environments, places, and natural occurrences, as well as the representation of the global biosphere and environmental crises more broadly, nature writing has a difficulty. The most difficult challenge is that, at any scale, natural processes and environments do not lend themselves well to the forms of representation that literary texts may provide. Analogies, metaphors, long descriptions, and narratives are unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. Toru Dutt also appears to be concerned with her personal narrative rather than to improve her reader's understanding of the relationship of man with place and environment, as well as the assumptions about natural resources that inform the culture dependent on these things. The narrator's memory and her love for the siblings remains central to the structure of the poem which relegated the role of the tree to a secondary, rudimentary and 'does not matter status'. She fails to realise that the fondness and nostalgia of her past life is rooted into the magnificence of the tree as a symbol of nature that is always pushed into the background to bring anthropocentric views of

literary representation into the focus. However, one must not forget that the tree is not merely a product of the poet's imagination or view of it; rather it is the tree and the ecosystem which enables the narrator to experience the beauty and uniqueness that she feels for the past while in the company of her siblings. Just imagine that the tree had not been there, would the poet still feel the way she does? The answer is obvious. This apparent pervasiveness of nature and nonhuman world around us plays a tacitly crucial role in the formation and development of the person in us.

After decentering the narrator's view of the tree and its existence, one sees the tree as sign and progenitor of ecological balance which imparts meaning to the life of the human and the nonhuman in and around it. The magnanimous 'Casuarina Tree' is a natural home to a number of animals and birds, in addition to, an ecosystem in itself and resembles nature which sustains plants, birds, insects and humans without any discrimination. The philosophy of ecocentrism questions hierarchies and places the whole of the creation on a single plane of existence wherein 'everything is connected to everything else.' The poet, the tree, and the nonhuman coordinate to produce a magnificent panorama that the poet witnesses from her house's casement, where she frequently has epiphanic moments of delight and revelation amid chirping birds, buzzing insects, and grazing animals. In terms of the poem's treatment as nature writing, it's vital to recognize that the poet views everything through a hackneyed anthropocentric lens and does not prioritise an ecocentric view of the natural ecosystem's primacy, instead keeps human's subjective experience at the centre. The mention and description of the tree appears to be a sequel to the love for the siblings, with the tree serving as an afterthought. Human names, faces, attributes, and behaviours are meaningless unless they are temporally and spatially specified; these attributes must be linked to a concrete physical environment. The poet of *Our Casuarina Tree* uses a pathetic fallacy to portray the tree as wailing in her absence. She conveys her belief that the love of individuals who have lived and played in the vicinity of the tree will guard it from the curse of oblivion by immortalising it. There is no indication of any other natural life in the Casuarina tree's neighbourhood, which is littered with human footprints. The contemporary man, like the poet, believes all that is required to save nature is hope, trust, and ideal love. Such concern for the tree and the nonhuman brings us back to the hard problems faced by nature activists and writers, who simply represent nature in literature, discuss these representations during seminars and conferences, and use tree-derived paper to discuss the tree in order to save it from the conditions created by such human behaviour. It is a hypocritical nature of human hope and faith that makes the poet also believe that merely love of individuals will immortalise the tree, which is symbolic of the natural world.

In the light of the ecocritical argument, the present study examines how the poem *Our Casuarina Tree* represents place against the background of cultural and social narratives. The poem will be critically scrutinised as a narrative about the changing dynamics of place in the modern times. The estranged self of the poet becomes nostalgic about her siblings with whom she played and enjoyed. The poet's attitude towards nature is a bit tinged with cultural dominance and control of how we encounter nature and nonhuman. The poet is primarily concerned with humans and renders the natural entities to a secondary position, indicating how humans associate their experiences with socio-cultural setups rather than giving credit to place, nature and grooves in which human experiences of love, beauty and life exist and grow. The article first introduces the theory and discourse of 'place' within the field of ecocriticism, followed by a detailed descriptive analysis of "Our Casuarina Tree" in the light of ecocritical discourses about nature and 'place'.

Theory and Discourse of 'Place'

There is a hegemony of anthropocentric discourses in mainstream literary theoretical and hermeneutical concerns, as a result of which nature and place have been muted, marginalised and almost rendered non-existent, or are taken for granted. Those associated with ecocritical scholarship examine cultural conceptions and representations of nature to analyse the relationship man shared with his place, natural world and other species. Frederick claims that ecological consciousness creates a space for perfect ecological relationships “in which plants, animals, human beings live in such harmony that none dominates or destroys others” (147). The discourse of ecocriticism is broadly based on philosophy of environmentalism, the ethics and aesthetics of ecosophy, the philosophical language related to nature, which motivates eco-theorists to discuss issues of theory and praxis in various fields of learning, focusing on issues of dynamics of nature/culture and human/nonhuman relationships. Speaking from an eco-epistemological angle, ecocritical studies also address issues related to the relationship between reality and its representation, the real and the imagined. It also includes how literature shapes our perception of the world and influences social behaviours and attitudes. Glen A. Love in the work “Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism,” (Glotfelty xxx) speculates that literary studies have remained indifferent to the environmental crisis in part because our discipline's limited humanistic vision has led to a narrowly anthropocentric view of what is consequential in life.

As an ecocritical category, 'place' enjoys an important status in eco-literary studies. Glotfelty, who pioneered modern eco-studies, asked whether “in addition to race, class, and gender, should place become a new critical category” (xix). Similarly, thus emphasising connectedness rather than illusions of autonomy, most eco-scholars agree that literature, via metaphors, should help us feel the relatedness of the self with 'place'. Defining literature and its interpretation as a dialectical energy transfer and considering it as “stored energy” (Rueckert 108), 'ecocriticism' discovers something about 'ecology of literature' and its function in the biosphere. Reading, according to Glotfelty and Fromm, is an energy transfer between poetry and the biosphere via critics and teachers who help a poem release its energy and information so that it might flow through the human community and be converted into social action. Eco-critics have often noted that the critical importance of 'place' as a fundamental ecocritical category has failed to garner support in its favour because of mainstream literary theory's thrust upon cultural studies. This exclusion has generated a toxification of literary studies, where only those disciplines are in demand that study anthropocentric discourses and consider every other thing in the universe as secondary. This has roots in Western ideology, for that “industrial capitalism first appeared in Western Europe and was spread by colonialism” (Kerridge 539), and a well-known tradition of regarding the earth as a fallen world, given the biblical story of a place called the Garden of Eden, a recurrent motif in Western culture, laying emphasis upon the world's original exquisite purity and the inevitability of loss. Moreover, Enlightenment humanism rendered a lasting blow to eco-consciousness and our embeddedness in nature by separating humanity from nature (Kerridge 539), through applying principles of Cartesian Reason. These binaries and dualisms led to a reductively poor understanding of human relationship with nature, resulting in the large-scale “cultural phenomenon of ecological denial” (Plumwood 79). Christopher Manes contends that “nature has shifted from animistic to a symbolic presence, from a voluble subject to a mute object, such that in our culture only humans have status as speaking subjects” (46). Manes further claims that the annals of literary discourse need to make an

agenda of listening to place, its requirements and ways. Since humankind is, in fact, an entity rooted in a particular place, we cannot think about the world merely as a set of resources and be blind to all natural aspects that make it worth living.

Analysis of “Our Casuarina Tree” from Green Perspective

Even while there is a romanticised vision of nature and a representational conception of nature in critical studies, there is a nature that may not be aptly described by either conception, and this should become the subject of enquiry. Toru Dutt associated human qualities to the natural world, as she described the tree embracing other trees, “A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound [...] the giant wears the scarf ” (lines 4-6) which is inevitably a component of human perception. However, by romanticising nature and the nonhuman through literature and language, we run the risk of constructing and perceiving nature as a subjective but an exotic illusion. Having said that, this research paper tries to display various complex ways in which human and nature are intertwined, generating a web of identity and meaning that continuously shifts and takes on new forms. Toru Dutt's poem describes a tree that is surrounded by houses, buildings, towns all around. It is as if man and culture has rendered nature as extinct and marginalised, minimizing natural place. The poet idealises the tree along with other plants that house birds and animals and a glorious view on the far end of the town. The first stanza of the poem presents/constructs a romanticised image of nature whose attitude often does more harm to nature than any other form of writing about nature. Because by presenting such a cultivated and tame view/image of nature which is carried across generations, man does not experience or present nature in its original and raw form. However, real nature has eluded all definitions since time immemorial. Ecocritics argue that nature isn't there to entertain us or make our world musical, as Dutt's poem depicts birds singing for the poet's comfort and enjoyment. Nature, on the other hand, exists in its own right and by forcing entertainment and utility value to it, we are actually killing it, exoticizing it and exterminating its existence all together. In fact, man gives human-like agency to nature and the nonhuman elements of the world to claim ownership and exercise control over the material realities of existence.

If we reverse the anthropocentric view of man being the centre of the universe, we encounter endless possibilities of seeing the world, especially the relationship of man with his environment. The mainstem writers of literature have failed to see the importance of natural, geographical and nonhuman spaces in the lives of humans. They fail to see that life seems beautiful not in itself but in the context of the place and natural world. This falls in line with the post-structuralist view where meaning and identity are relative: i.e., relative to the place and environment in which we reside and cohabit. In the view of current ecological crises, there is a dire need to redefine man's relationship with his place and surroundings. The poet in the poem seems happy not because of being in a mansion and having a panoramic view of the outside world but solely because of the magnanimity of the tree and the place which sets the context of such a view. Speaking wistfully, we are yet to formally acknowledge the importance of natural and nonhuman spaces in our happiness index.

Man's anthropocentric views about nature construct it in a manner that reflects man's own convenient perspectives that accommodate his narratives of power and control. We encounter nature on the basis of what structures we have learned. The tree in the poem is treated as an object and according to the distinction made by Brown between thing and object, the thing becomes an object when it gains socially encoded value. We look through objects in

context to history, society, culture and what they disclose about us. Bill Brown invigorated thinking about the thingness of a thing apart from cultural, cultivated and utility-based meanings of a thing which he terms as an object. He said, “We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily” (4). Arjun Appadurai, on the other hand, describes the thingness of a thing by giving a concept of 'Methodological fetishism' which according to him is a way thing asserts itself and refuses to accept a formal truth. He further argues “even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context” (5).

In the light of above discourse about object and thing, Toru Dutt's treatment of the tree appears to fall in line with what Bill Brown calls an object. The poet's construction of material reality of the tree is reflection of her own whims about the materiality of place and the tree. It is a type of narcissistic romance with one's own imagined reflection in objects which is far from what things actually mean and stand for. Her representation of nature and the tree is a reflection of a cultural phenomenon that is nothing but a flux and spectrum of self-centred human consciousness that adamantly refuses to acknowledge the 'thingness' of things beyond their cultural utility. The tree and the specific place in the poem where the poet celebrated and spent her childhood is merely an objectified reality of the poem as the place is remembered only when she feels the need to be entertained in the nostalgic aroma of her past experiences especially with her siblings. After having rendered the being of place and tree explicit, the 'thingness' of the tree and place begins to take on a peculiar newness that defies depiction and expression, implying that literature must do more than simply exotifying nature for the sake of it.

The shocking revelation, perhaps made inadvertently by the narrator, that the tree was not dear to her because of its being or thingness; and symbol of nature against the backdrop of which we imagine, live and celebrate life. The tree was, on the contrary, dear to her because of the memories of her siblings related to the tree. Dutt writes:

But not because of its magnificence
 Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
 Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
 O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
 For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear. (lines 23-33)

The above-mentioned stanza is a clear illustration of humanity's hackneyed, deformed, and selfish mentality, negating nature's influence in experiencing good and sorrowful memories from the past that make life worthwhile. It is quite noteworthy how anthropocentric cultural attitudes and beliefs influence our reactions to our environment. Without the tree, the poet's beautiful and unforgettable days would have been nothing more than a fantasy. The context of nature set up with the Casuarina tree in the backdrop makes it possible for the poet to have a good time. Not just the separation from siblings, but also the poet's migration to an urban setting and physical disconnection from the tree and the natural surroundings is having an effect on her emotional health and happiness which she fails to acknowledge. If nature disappears from the lives of humans, the way it has disappeared from the aesthetics of human relations, the stories might seriously be impacted and we won't be capable of sharing love, emotions and human values. In other words, we can say that humanity as a discourse is nothing but the byproduct of possibilities afforded by ecological balance. Writing about how

modes of representation have changed in postmodern literature, after the disappearance of nature from human life, ecocritics claimed that postmodern fiction is represented by waste.

Though the poet shows love towards the tree, this love is more framed by the poet's treatment of the tree as an anthropocentric being having human qualities. She ends the poem with the faith that the love of those who have lived and played around the tree will protect the tree from the curse of being forgotten. The closing lines "That would thy beauty fain, oh, fain rehearse,/Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse" (lines 54-55) reflects purely romantic love towards nature which germinates from seeing nature as a part of human life and not vice versa. The tree is dear to the poet not because of what it stood for outside of human thinking and perception about it but because of the pleasure it afforded to those who lived around it. The tree in that sense, becomes an embodiment of a pleasure giving institution which continues to live in the heart and memories of people. The scholars and critics have usually been carried away by the vogue of ecocriticism and have praised the poem for its nationalistic love for native land and the tree. These scholars have drawn parallels between the tree and India, the motherland; just as a nation like India nurtures a wide variety of peoples and cultures in its fold, the tree also nurtures a variety of life forms in and around it. This cultural interpretation of the poem renders the being of the tree and the place called India as anthropocentric entities, used as cultural symbols rather than inevitable material realities that lay the foundation of what we fancy and idealise as culture and nation. Natural places become cultural spaces of recreation as a result of such objectifying descriptions of nature in literature and other art forms.

Conclusion

Finally, making ecocritical concepts to bear upon "Our Casuarina Tree" highlights and reveals new realities about literary analysis by problematising the representational concept and meaning of the tree and the place and infuses it with new ecological consciousness. The entire literature needs re-reading, highlighting the dynamics of human and nature relationships. Toru Dutt's poem represents nature and place as secondary, a reality neglected by the current scholarship about the poem. The title of the poem itself reflects the possession of nature by humans. Literature and language seem to appear as tools, which brands and constructs everything, discarding the objective and material reality of things. The poet's memory and love for the tree and the native place is perpetuated not by her love towards nature but by her love for other humans. As humans it is but natural to love and relate to other humans but such a love is oblivious of the fact that aesthetics of human existence are merely the by-product of ecological material realities that escape our eyes. At glance, the story mainly seems about nature, but deeper critical reading unravels the complexities of the real nature of the relationship between man and his environment. The analysis of the story brings to the surface a much more wide-reaching relevance of ecocritical analysis of Toru Dutt's poem.

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Exploring the Ethics of Care with reference to *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa* from the *Mahabharata*

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Abstract

*The article aims to investigate a sustainable way of living in the world with special emphasis on the ethics of care and concern for the human and non-human entities inhabiting the world. The question of living with others is different from living by exploiting others; if the former implies a world of coexistence, the latter suggests a relationship of aggression and subjugation over others in an anthropocentric world. At a time, when the world discourse is concentrating upon ensuring ecological balance, sustainability and possible coexistence between planet and people, what could be possibly the best place but to look back at the classical texts like Mahabharata which preaches dharma and morality? The article will concentrate upon two comparatively less discussed concepts *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa*, from the epic and their relation with ethics of care as a possible way of attaining sustainability in life, while problematizing the impracticability of following *ahimsa* as the 'greatest dharma' in worldly life. Talking simply about interdependence, coexistence and reverence for others is not going to solve the problem of an anthropocentric universe. We need to practice empathy for others in our everyday existence. The recognition of others is possible only through the recognition of ignorance in self and potentialities in others while being responsible for them.*

Keywords: *Care ethics, nr amsya, Anukrosa, Mahabharata, sustainability*

Introduction

The sudden outbreak of the Covid 19 and its worldwide catastrophic loss of millions of people, brought human activities to a standstill across the globe. The horrifying effect of Covid 19 pandemic has gone beyond the boundaries of developed and developing nations, forcing us to introspect over the kind of world we desire to live in, a technologically advanced world of material prosperity, always shrouded by the fear and insecurity of nuclear threat, terrorism, biological warfare or a sustainable planet where progress of people is in tune with the planet and the prosperity of few members of one species will not be achieved by smothering the others. The pandemic has shown us the glaring inequalities in our societies; the disparity at the social and economic level has adversely affected the lives of poor and under-privileged people. It is a sad truth that more vulnerable beings tend to get more exploited in our society. The virus, however, spared neither the richest nor the poorest, making us conscious of the fragility and vulnerability of human existence. At the same time, the world has witnessed instances of caring, mutual support and cooperation for others, giving glimpses of a caring and livable world. It is high time that we engage more and more on the importance of ethical discourse to address the issues of ruthless aggression and senseless exploitation by human beings for pursuing their selfish motives. The anthropocentric/human-centric interest has made us oblivious of human values of care, respect and reverence for other lives. It is in this alarming situation, ethics of care may offer the last refuge to save mankind as well as the

planet from imminent catastrophic events caused by nature or human beings.

The crisis of ecosystem which is the result of historical exploitation of nature cannot be resolved by new science or more developed technologies; we can neither go back to traditional society ruled by nature's laws nor we can live life without the progress, prosperity and convenience, modern technology has offered. What we need is a sustainable way of living on the planet causing minimum violence to others, or at least, we have the sensibility to feel empathy for other beings. We could possibly look back at classical texts which preach reverence and morality; instead of a simple devotional approach towards other beings and things, we may try to inculcate some of the ethical and caring philosophies which may be relevant today for a sustainable world. It is believed that all human beings are by nature ethical beings (*Homo Ethicus*) and it is the awareness and consciousness of ethical values and well being which humanize the non-human and make one responsible and caring for others. I would like to explore the concepts of *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa* from the *Mahabharata* as *parama dharmas* and their relation with ethics of care as a possible way of to live in the world and coexisting with other beings in life.

Mahabharata has successfully and very effectively emphasized upon interdependent relation between human and nature, reinforcing an innate ecological awareness of human society at the moral and spiritual level. It depicts that all kinds of lives on this earth form a part of this universe. In *Mahabharata*, the entire creation is considered as a divine body. Humans have obligation to protect nature for their own survival and enrichment whereas brutality and manipulation against nature will cause destruction of the earth. The concept of *Dharma*, propagated in the *Mahabharata* has multiple implications; what it means is to live in tune with nature (Fitzgerald 249-263). Among its various interpretations, it refers to moral obligation of an individual to do his duty unconditionally for the society and the universe. It is a collective of all such activities which help to sustain and strengthen the cosmic order and strengthen an individual. The opposite of *dharma* is *adharmas* which is destructive to the universe. Man's egotistic living, senseless violence and cruel behavior towards others without any sense of consideration or empathy is *adharmas*. Human aggression and selfish interest can never be just to nature or to the fellow beings. It is the responsibility and obligation of a human being to work on his/her self, practice self-restraint in order to curb the demonic aspects.

Understanding *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa* as a Bridge between *Ahimsa* and *Himsa*

The concepts of *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa* in the *Mbh* (abbreviation of *Mahabharata*) tradition of *dharma* are relatively less studied and they deserve a special attention in order to understand the negotiated *ahimsa* or non-violence, the *Mbh* tradition upholds. *Ahimsa* or non violence has always been celebrated as the *parama dharma* or the highest/greatest *dharma* which should guide our life; but interestingly if the concept of *ahimsa* has been celebrated four times in the epic, the *nr amsya* has been upheld as the highest *dharma* nine times (Hittelbeitel 207) in the epic. *nr amsya* which literally means the state 'of not being *nr amsya*' refers to the absence of vile, cruel and selfish nature of being in one's conduct with other beings. The concept of *nr amsya* is related to positive connotations

like “good-will, a fellow feeling, a deep sense of the other” (Lath 115). Mukund Lath has noted that *nr amsya* is often associated with *anukrosa* which literally means “to cry with another, to feel another's pain” (115). These two terms are connected and may be studied together to understand the inherent ambiguity in *ahimsa* as the *parama dharma* while espousing just *himsa* or proportionate violence upheld in the *Mahabharata*.

The epic celebrates *Ahimsa* or non-violence, however, does not overlook the possibility of violence while serving the path of *dharma*. The inevitability of violence in the Kurukshetra war for the preservation of *dharma* is centrally located in the epic. The war and its violence have been justified by Krishna, Pandava brothers and Draupadi in number of occasions as the Kshatriyahood and upholding of righteousness. The association of Kshatriyahood with war and the role of violence in the service of *dharma* have been questioned by Yudhishthira as he desires to renounce the world after being disgusted with the futility of the war. Moreover, violence or *himsa* is perpetrated not only by humans against other beings but “The whole creation... is full of animals, sustaining itself with fruits derived from living organisms”(Ganguly 431-32). In the *Aranyakaparvan*, a righteous Fowler tells the sage Kaushika “The commandment that people should not do harm to any creature, was ordained of old by men, who were ignorant of the true facts of the case... there is not a man on the face of the earth, who is free from the sin of doing injury to animal life” (Ganguly 432). If *himsa* is inevitable in worldly deeds, it is paradoxical to celebrate and practice *ahimsa* in life. To negotiate the tension between violence, non-violence and *justified* violence in life, Mbh propagates the principles of *nr amsya* and *anukrosa* to guide human action. Mukund Lath identifies *nr amsya* with *pravrittimarga* or path of action, opposed to the idea of *nivrittimarga*, i.e. path of renunciation (82-89), which celebrates *ahimsa*. Therefore, certain violence is inevitable in life while following the path of action; but action must be performed with *nr amsya* and *anukrosaa*, i.e. with consideration for others and with a sense of empathy and kindness. In the words of Sibaji Bandyopadhyaya, “the notion of *nr amsya* functions as a stand in for *ahimsa*. It maintains a critical distance from both components of the *himsa - ahimsa* or 'violence – non-violence' binary without dissolving either of the two. It opens up a discursive space within which excessive or motivated violence is condemned and the practice of unqualified non-violence in worldly deeds is held unviable. Positioned as the golden mean between two extremes, *nr amsya* gestures towards the apparently contradictory prescript of 'violence without violation' (273).

Illustration of *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa* through stories from the *Mahabharata*

If we consider the examples or illustrations associated with *nr amsya* and *Anukrosa* dharma, it must be noted that the sense of empathy, kindness and consideration is to be practiced in both intra and inter-species relationship. The initial reference of these two concepts can be found as an advice to the author of the epic, Vyasa, who was to perform *niyoga* to the widowed Kuru wives Ambika and Ambalika, on the request of his mother Satyawati. But it seems Vyasa failed to practice it as he felt offended by the repulsiveness, these two women exhibited in the *niyoga* process for his ugly appearance. As a result, both Pandu and Dhritrashtra were born with weaknesses (Ganguly, Book I, CVI). However, it is

Yudhistir, the eldest Pandava who seems to be the one practicing it throughout his life and also in the afterlife, as the foremost champion of *nṛ aśya* dharma. In the *Aranyakaparvan*, he answered to Yaksha's question that *nṛ aśya* is the supreme dharma for people living in the world and requests Yaksha to revive the life of his step brother Nakula as a kind of unselfish consideration and empathy for the deceased step mother Madri (Ganguly, Book III, CCCXI) while knowing very well that the Kurukshetra war and the Hastinapore kingdom cannot be won without his stronger brothers like Bhima and Arjuna. In the *Mahaprasthanika Parva*, Yudhistir refuses to enter heaven without the stray dog that follows him in his entire journey to heaven (Ganguly, Book 18, XVII) and also after having entered heaven, when he gets to know that his brothers and wife are in hell, he immediately renounces the blissfulness of heaven to be with his own people. Yudhistir's heart equally cries for the dead mother Madri and the stray dog without making any discrimination, and his action is in tune with *nṛ aśya* dharma. Once the battle of Kurukshetra is over, Yudhistir practices the *nṛ aśya* dharma by showing consideration and empathy for the dead warriors, their widows, the poor and helpless and also for the blind king Dhritrashtra who along with his sons was responsible for all the turmoil in his life. Hiltebeitel observes that these two concepts play crucial roles in the process of "the education of the Dharma-king" and establish him as a hero whose caring approach in all his actions towards others establishes him as the Dharmaraja who could negotiate the tension between *raja* (*pravrittimarga*) and *rishi* (*nivrittimarga*) in his life.

Interestingly, such examples of practicing care, consideration and empathy in action can be seen in non-human species as well. An example of *nṛ aśya* and *Anukrosa* is found in the story of a parrot which was narrated by Bhishma to Yudhistir in the *Anushasana Parva* while explaining the true nature of non-cruelty. A parrot used to live in a big tree which was poisoned by a hunter's arrow. Soon, the tree starts dying shedding its fruits and leaves off. The parrot instead of flying away to other nearby trees, decides to renounce its life and happiness along with the host tree (Ganguly, Book 13, XIII). On being enquired by Indra, the king of gods, the parrot responded, "I was born in this tree and have lived here all my life. This tree has camouflaged me from hunters and has nourished me with its fruit. I cannot leave it now... why are you trying to weaken my bond with the tree by sympathizing with me?" (Vyasa XIII.5) Despite rational interjections from Dharma and Indra respectively, the caregivers (Yudhistir and the parrot) do not face the dilemma of a rational choice as they are to choose between their path of dharma (entry to heaven/ standing with the dog/ consideration for the dead mother Madri for Yudhistir) and their selfish interest in life or life itself (for the parrot). Vrinda Dalmiya concedes that moral reciprocation for the other is neither an 'objective' response nor 'rule bound', it depends on the emotionality of the situation: "Loyalty emerges as having categorical force for Yudhistir when he looks at the trembling dog and is filled with compassion for it. For the parrot this happens . . . because it has constructed a historical narrative - "I was born in this tree . . . this tree has nurtured me" (2001, 296). It must also be indicated that if Yudhistir had abandoned the dog or if the parrot had flown to another tree, the acts would still have been considered as acts following the principle of *nṛ aśya*. But what is followed here is *Anukrosa* or "to cry with another, to feel another's pain (Lath 115). It signifies that caregivers are not just mimicking the others' emotional response (the dog's fear of abandonment or the tree's fear of death), rather they become one with the cared-for in order

to feel their pain and evoke compassion and sympathy within. In other words, the self becomes the other in the process of caring. However, instead of absorbing the other into self, the self distances itself from it in order to act upon the situation and follow their path of dharma because genuine care is not just about feeling empathy and sympathy, it must be followed by action (see Nel Noddings' *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 1984). Yudhistir and the parrot reflected their caring approach in their act; they were willing to renounce the ultimate goal of life (heaven for Yudhistir) and life itself (for the parrot), and ultimately they were rewarded for their acts of compassion and empathy. The act of care as discussed in the action of Yudhistir for the deceased mother (Ganguly, Book III, CCCXI) or the dog (Ganguly, Book 18, XVII), and the parrot's selfless decision of self-sacrifice for the tree (Ganguly, Book 13, XIII), involves a series of choices, i.e. renouncing the selfish interest of the self, feeling united with the interest of the other, and finally resolving its dilemma to take up action in favor of the other, while accepting full responsibility for the choice.

Caring for other is the base of leading a moral life. We generally care for those beings or needs who/which matter to us. For those things or needs we are indifferent to, we hardly care. Dalmiya writes, "care is deeply intertwined with knowing, at least, at two levels: knowing the cared-for and knowing the roots of our caring for the cared-for" (2014, 116). 'Knowing' involves willing to know about the object to be cared for, and more importantly, it involves acknowledging ignorance or lack of knowledge in the self (Dalmiya 2001, 2007, 2014), opening up the possibility of self-improvement and self-control through alternative voices as "caring also must involve a reflective exploration of connections that make us who we are" (Dalmiya, 2014, 118). The caring perspective gets reinforced as the alternative voices of Yaksha and Indra have not been overlooked; rather the opposing voices have been engaged and responded to by the care givers through dialogue and intellectual engagement. Letting others' voices criticize one's act of care becomes true nature of caring for the act of care; in the present context, the voices of Dharma/Yaksha and Indra, trying to be instrumental in changing the caring selves of Yudhistir and the parrot, reinforce the act of care.

Both *n? a? sya* and *Anukrosa* offer a viable space for alternative engagements and views. Like any other concepts in the *Mahabharata*, these are not absolute concepts and always subject to reinterpretation, reexamination and criticism as we see how Yudhistir's actions are severely criticized by his wife, mother and brothers. There is no dearth of debates, doubts, dilemmas and open-ended dialogues in the discussion of dharma in the *Mahabharata* and this is what is required to create a sustainable world in which every human action must be rooted to a sense of non-cruelty, consideration and empathy for other beings. The concept of *nr amsya* destroys the dichotomy between violence and non-violence (Bandyopadhyay 2010) and acts as a concept with multiple possibilities of non-cruelty in an individual's action which is open to debate and discussions. *Anukrosa* goes beyond it and focuses on the aspect of caring and being responsible for the other. The above discussion on self and its innate dependence on the other will help us understand that no binaries can be independent and self sufficient on its own. Caring exists on the basis of self's 'relationality' with the other. 'Relationality' focuses on coexistence and encourages inclusion and 'befriending' the other through an open system of communication and dialogue.

To conclude, the similarity between the principles of *nṛ aśya* and *Anukrośa* and the care ethics lies in the relation of self (Yudhistir and the parrot) for the other (dog and tree) on the basis of their experience and emotional bond they developed. Although the relational tie between them was just coincidental and non-planned, yet both caregivers find them tied emotionally and in a relational bond with the dog and the tree, and feel responsible for them. If they had abandoned the dog and the tree respectively, as suggested by Indra in both the cases, their acts would still have been considered non-cruel. Therefore, caring is not just an act or a decision, it also refers to the 'manner' in which the decision is taken. Indra's rational argument and the ensuing dialogue make them aware of alternative choices, and yet they choose to stand with their relational ties with the dog and the tree after deliberation and get appreciated for their compassion.

We should practice non-violence and non-aggression in our action but the impracticality of such homogenous expectation will not bear fruit. Unlike a homogenous idea of non violence, *nṛ aśya* offers a viable alternative to every being for being responsible for his action and to the others. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on the crisis of human civilization, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prescribed by United Nations General Assembly are efforts to find direction for a more livable and caring society without being unmindful towards exploitation of others. Therefore, it is essential that while accepting some necessary violence in life, we nurture the principle of care, empathy and consideration in our actions and thoughts toward all beings, creatures and environment through our actions and thoughts as reflected in the caring self of Yudhistir, who while following the principles of dharma, accepted the necessity of war/violence. The question, however, still remains if caring or non cruelty in action can be practiced independently outside the domain of socio-psychological relationships. The answer is yet "hidden in the cave."

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Ecofeminism and Vegetarianism: An Extensive Reading of Amish Tripathi's *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta*

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Abstract

*Ecocriticism as an earth-centered study aims at investigating human behaviour towards nature and environmental issues. It has amalgamated the feministic notions to form the term 'Ecofeminism.' Understanding and discussing the mortification of 'Women' and 'Nature' by the male-dominated society is the substratum of the theory called 'Ecofeminism'; in simple words, the amalgamation of 'Feminism' and Ecocritical entities. As an emerging theory, it extends its voice against all oppressions and subjugations. Voice for animal rights integrating 'vegan' thoughts is the recent ideology inculcated in its discussion, where it asserts that all forms of oppression are intertwined and must be abolished, with a special focus on the marginality of animals which according to them approximates to the oppression of women. Amish Tripathi is a coeval celebrated Indian mythical writer, known for his inventiveness in recreating myths. The present research paper endeavours to examine the concept of Ecofeminism and vegetarianism in Amish Tripathi's *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta* and concludes by suggesting that the frame of sovereignty kills the humanness whereas equality makes a person virtuous.*

Keywords: *Meat-eating, Predator and Prey, Women and Nature, Feminism and Vegetarianism.*

Introduction

Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta (2019) is the third book of Amish Tripathi's *Ram Chandra Series*. Currently Director of Nehru Centre in London, Amish is a successful Indian author of contemporaneity as evident in *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series*. The Indian Epics - *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are the pedestal of his writings. The protagonist 'Raavan' in *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta* is an Anti-hero and chief antagonist in *Ramayana* who has abducted Devi Sita, spouse of Ram (incarnation of Lord Vishnu), and was killed by Ram in the final battle. Amish's Raavan is a common man reflecting the demon characteristics of the mythical Raavan. Amish projects him as a good brother, a fierce ruler, and a smuggler. Though Amish fictions are mythical in content and adventurous in style, the objective of this research is to examine the elements of vegetarianism and ecofeminism through extensive reading of the character Raavan and his actions towards women and non-human creatures in *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta*.

The Profound Persona of Raavan

The fiction *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta* starts with the description of Raavan as

“Iraiva” meaning 'Lord.' “The one she called *Iraiva*- Raavan, the king of Lanka.” (2). Raavan is still worshipped as a lord in many places and was a brave king of Srilanka. Dashanan temple in Uttar Pradesh, Kakinada Ravana temple in Andhra Pradesh, and Baijanath Temple in Himachal Pradesh are the notable temples of Raavan. 'Dashara' or 'Dussehra' is a major religious festival of Bhutan, Nepal and is also celebrated in some parts of India as a day Lord Ram extinguished the demon king Raavan. "Was Raavan history's greatest villain?" (Press Trust of India. “Amish Tripathi's 'Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta' Hits Stands.”). 'Dash' means 'Ten,' Raavan is projected as a demon with ten heads from a religious point of view, which in-depth means the person whose intelligence is equivalent to ten brains, 'Deshmukh Raavan,' “The king of Lanka was sometimes addressed as *Dashanan* by his subjects, for they said that he had the knowledge and power of *ten heads*” (356). Raavan is multi-talented as borne out by his younger brother Kumbhakarna: “But seriously, Dada, you can play music, you sing, you write poetry, you are warrior, you are wealthy, you are well-read, you are super-intelligent. There's no one like you in the whole wide world!" (93). The writer's comments about Raavan at the time of the release of the book are worth quoting: "A man who will love without reward and kill without remorse. He suffers greatly, and he usually reacts to that suffering with anger and hatred. The fact that he was supremely talented, made the impact of his rage that much more spine-chilling. This is probably the darkest book I have ever written... I hope that the readers like the book." (Press Trust of India).

Ecofeminism and Vegetarianism

As Lynda Birke, the pioneer of feministic and animal welfare programs states: “One of the strengths of feminist thought is that it is never 'just' about women: it is a critical discourse that tends to ask uncomfortable questions about everything” (Gaard 117). In fact, 'Ecofeminism' is the amalgamation of 'Feminism' and Ecocritical entities. It finds its germination in the west and the term 'Ecofeminism' was first coined by French Feminist Francoise d' Eaubonne in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* in 1974. With the two main branches radical and cultural, ecofeminism is still an emerging theory expanding with the sub-branches like materialistic ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, and vegetarian ecofeminism. Vegetarianism in ecofeminism defines the habits like meat-eating, as the outcome of domination imposed by patriarchy, similar to the domination of men over women. “Meat-eating is a form of patriarchal domination... that suggests a link between male violence and a meat-beat diet” (Zein 3). According to Vegetarian ecofeminists, if 'flesh' is the only relationship between human and animal, the endangering lives of the animals cannot be sympathised with, for it also encourages other entities like speciesism, racism, classism, and sexism with the frame of the man as a tyrant over other species. “Food is transformed into a key political weapon to dismantle patriarchalism, capitalism and their oppression over women, animals and nature” (Barbosa 1).

Earth is affectionately represented as 'Mother Earth' and Rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati are baptized with the names of women. Mothering, nurturing and preserving are the words that progressively bring forth the traits of women and it is crucial to note that it is also the feature of 'Nature' in protecting all creatures on the planet. This interconnection

between women and nature is not limited; dually they are dominated and degraded by a single potentate called 'Man.' Most of the historical and societal pieces of evidence prove that compared to men, women are close to 'Nature' and friendlier with non-human creatures, and both are suppressed and oppressed, which creates the base of ecofeminism. In the fiction *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta*, it is visible when the hare was not safe in the hands of Raavan whereas it is felt friendlier in the hands of Kanyakumari, a girl who saved it from Raavan. "The Kanyakumari stepped forward without a word, her expression unchanged. She bent down and picked up the knife. With quick, efficient movements, she cut the restraints on the wretched hare. She then picked it up and gently kissed it on the head. The hare was quiet in her hands, its panic forgotten. The voiceless animal seemed to know that it was safe again." (18). The calmness of the hare in the hands of Kanyakumari and the phrase 'it was safe again' denotes the relationship of women and nature. For another instance in the fiction, when Sita was abducted by Raavan, it was Jatayu; a bird cum human rushed to save her life unperturbed about his safety. Similarly Sita comes forward and surrenders herself to the enemies' clutches to save the life of Jatayu, who was tortured by the crew of Raavan and struggling for life. "Sita stepped forward and lowered the bow, an arrow still nocked on it. 'I am surrendering. Let Captain Jatayu go'" (362).

The injustice toward animals are the same as the injustice done to women, is the ideology of vegetarian ecofeminists. "The application of ecofeminism to animal rights has established vegetarian ecofeminism" (Zein 3). To Raavan killing animals is a thirst and amusement. Amish's Raavan is a non-vegan. He kills animals not to satisfy his hunger rather he enjoys killing animals and is fascinated to see their pain when it is half dead.

"Raavan had dissected another hare the previous day, studied its muscles, ligaments and bones in detail, while it was still breathing. He had been keen to reach the beating heart. But the hare, having suffered enough already, died before he could cut through the sternal ribs. Its heart had stopped by the time Raavan got to it. Today, he intended to go straight for the animal's heart. (16)." Raavan usually has his special blade to kill the creatures which is sharp and strong. He enjoys not killing only the creature 'hare', he also torments ants, dogs, and even humans at a point. "He was staring at the ground, a magnifying glass in his hand. With great care, he focused the rays of the sun into a powerful band of light, burning the little ants that scurried about." (24). As 'old habits die hard' Raavan's mind wavered filled with bloodthirst. "... His mind wandered to the dog he had killed a few months back. The one that had kept following him around." (94). This shows the attitude of considering the life of an animal as a menial comparing the life of a human. Gred Gaard, an activist states it with the term 'battering.' She states that "behaviors that are commonly shared among batterers include hunting, owning of guns, threatening, harming, or killing a pet" (Gaard 138).

Most of the research in psychology and criminology highlights that murderers are first the killer of animals. A New South Wales newspaper of Australia divulged a police study by reporting that "100 percent of sexual homicide offenders examined had a history of animal cruelty." (PETA. "Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime"). In addition to that Robert K. Ressler, the one who devises profiles for serial killers in the Federal Bureau of Investigation states that "Murderers very often start out by killing and torturing animals as kids" (PETA). Here in the fiction, the collaboration of vegetarianism with ecofeminism is

understood when Raavan treated women like animals. Amish's Raavan never stopped with the amusement of the slow death of the hares, ants, and dogs, his thought hastens to see it even in a woman called Dadimikali, described as the most costly courtesan in the Gokarna's most opulent pleasure mansion. "Raavan was gripped by desire. The desire to know what it would feel like to peel the beautiful skin off Dadimikali's face and see the pink flesh underneath. To slice through it. Hacking at the tissue and arteries. Reaching the bone. Sawing through the bone. He felt his breath quicken with excitement. The animal inside him was roaring now" (95). The article, "Food, Gender and Oppression in a Feminist Brazilian Perspective" by Livia Barbosa gives the view of feminist and animal rights advocate Carol Adams, "...the oppression of non-human animals is at the root of all other types of oppression. She argues that social inequalities among humans are structurally similar to the treatment imposed on animals, and as we see non-human animals as inferior and subordinated to us, unequal treatment of people is acceptable in the eyes of society. This attributed inferiority has been used to justify slavery, genocide, discrimination and many other forms of brutality and injustice" (Barbosa 2).

Raavan's view of considering himself an autocrat over women and animals is seen when he expresses his view on women "Bullshit. I can tell you from personal experience, four women don't add up to the worth of one man. In fact, even four hundred women do not add up to the worth of one man" (301). His male supremacy and the idea of considering women as well as animals as the properties he can use and throw, is exposed when he says, "... Women were created for one purpose alone. And you would deny them that purpose by turning celibate?" (300). To him hares, dogs, and women are lower beings than him, this gradually reflects the ecofeminists' notion of patriarchal domination. "The power of vegetarian ecofeminism is based not on judgment of other humans, but on sympathy for other animals" (Gaard 121).

Vegetarianism is the opposite of non-vegan ideology. Is 'meat-eating' a great sin? asks the oppositionists. But vegetarians argue that 'meat-eating' is not an issue but rather the domination behind that. The most celebrated Tamil poet and philosopher Thiruvalluvar, among his 133 chapters of *Thirukkural* allocated one separate chapter to 'vegetarianism'- the 26th chapter titled 'spurning meat.' "How can someone possess kindness, if one eats meat from another body to grow one's own body?" (Kannan). "One, who doesn't value money can't be wealthy; one who eats meat, can't be compassionate" (Kannan). This proves the ideology of vegetarianism and its importance started many millennia ago. Marti Kheel, a vegan ecofeminist, activist, and the author of several works on deep ecology and ecofeminism in the chapter 'vegetarianism and Ecofeminism' of her book *Vegetarianism and Ecofeminism- Toppling Patriarchy with a Fork* explains the nuances of vegetarian ecofeminism. She expresses that 'Meat-eating' is the rule imposed by patriarchy, as no meat-eaters are asked the reason for their meat-eating but vegans are questioned for skipping meat. She also explains meat as a costly food and it is a symbol of aristocracy. She gives the idea of 'hunting' as an entertaining game and victory in it by killing animals gives men power and superiority in society. Here, 'meat' is just flesh and not a 'Life.' "Meat eating is a biological activity, but it is also a practice that is steeped in culture and encoded with symbolic meanings" (Kheel 329). The same approach is implicit in taking women for granted; like a commodity is seen through

another character who is father of a girl in *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta*, where the girl is sold by her father for money by enforcing her into involuntary prostitution. The father's conversation with the customer will make the idea clear. "The man cut in. 'One gold coin per hour. You can use a room in my house. If you want to do something different, like with her mouth or backside, the rates go up. However, if you want to tie her up, or beat her, we will have to negotiate. Because if you break any bones, she will not be able to earn anything for a few months at least'" (135). Both the characters Raavan and the father have taken women for granted and treated as mere objects in whatever way possible. The behaviour and notion of the characters may vary but their action of sexual objectification of women is the same.

The term 'predator' and 'prey' are associated with animals, where one hunts and the other is hunted. However, it should be noted when the term 'sexual predators' arose. Here Feminism demonstrates that 'predators' are men and the 'prey' represents women. For them, it is the term associated with sexual harassment, which proves the dual dominative ideology put forth by vegetarian ecofeminists. Prey and Predator are the common metaphors used many years back for women and men is explained in detail through metaphor theory as enunciated in the article "On the prowl: Examining the impact of men-as-predators and women-as-prey on attitudes that perpetuate Sexual violence" by Jarrod Bock and Melissa Burkley. "In this metaphor, the woman is typically likened to the prey (e.g., chick) whereas the man is likened to the predator (e.g., wolf). Although a great deal of research has examined how women are animalized more than men are..." (Bock 264). The vegetarian ecofeminists' claim of comparing animals with women is not merely their friendly relationship but rather the consideration of them as a secondary being objectified, used, and thrown together. "The appeal of vegetarian foods flows at once from an urge to resist patriarchal forms of dominance and control, and from positive feelings of empathy and care for the other animals with whom we share the earth. It is an invitation that many cannot refuse" (Kheel 338).

Conclusion

Ecofeminism as an amalgamation of feminism and ecocritical notion aims at bringing out the holistic connection between women and nature and also the ways both are binarily subjugated by the patriarchy. Its bifurcation by inculcating the concept of vegetarianism in its discussion is the extension of its leadership in representing the injustices towards animals too. The research paper demonstrates the elements of Ecofeminism and Vegetarianism through the heinous character 'Raavan' in the text under study. Raavan as a symbol of patriarchy considers both women and animals as menials and ill-treats them through his activities, as is explained through the metaphor of man as 'predator' and woman as 'prey.' Having analysed these aspects, the research attempts to exemplify the idea of vegetarianism in ecofeminism that claims an inextricable relationship between women and nature through the fiction, *Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta*. Only when the man/woman adheres to high moral standards; he/she will be labeled as a virtuous human. Hence, Equality is the only weapon that stands as the greatest virtue where it beats the thought of sovereignty through humanity.

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Bridal Mysticism: From Sublimation to Humanization in Andal's *Natchiyar Thirumozhi*

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Abstract

*Bridal Mysticism captivates the union and love relation established between the mystics and the divine. When it is scripted, the textually articulated body is deciphered to expose the literal and metaphorical usage of body. The politics behind the usage and its textual representation is critiqued with the theoretical gloss of Freudian Unconscious and the French Feminists' *écriture féminine*. Chiseling body to disclose its desire in a bridal mystical text invites and evokes wonder. But the mystic divulges one's body through a divine medium. The divine body employed in the text to cling on is dissected and deconstructed to highlight the subtext at the deep level. The text chosen for study is Andal's *Natchiyar Thirumozhi*. Andal has been placed in the milieu of *Bhakti* tradition by also hinting at the spiritual marriage in practice, in various other regions. In unraveling the 'structure' of divine body deferred in the text, Derrida's critique on the 'Structurality of structure' limiting the 'Freeplay' has been assimilated.*

Keywords: *Bhakti; Bridal Mysticism; Deep structure; Defence Mechanism; Divine body; *écriture féminine*; Freeplay; Infinitude; Patriarchal discourse; Sign; Surface structure; Unconscious.*

The inquisition into the literal and metaphorical usage of the body, in other words, the denoted and connoted body in the textual representation of a mystic, critiques the divine body infused in the text. The divine partner assimilated in expressing the love and the bodily desire of the mystic compels decoding the underlying subtext. The Body is an intimate material everyone possesses but the situation in which it lives, sanctions acceptance and non-acceptance for certain acts of it. The text speaking the body conveys how it is represented and its 'structure' adhering to socio-cultural norms. This stimulates the quest for the politics involved in the representation of the body and the politicized state of the body. The French feminists who find the body as the source for their discourse to free the female from the laws of patriarchal discourse and Freud's findings about the instincts of the body getting pushed into and stored in the Unconscious, are integrated into the analysis of the chosen text, *Natchiyar Thirumozhi* by Andal. It is a bridal mystical text drafting Andal's love towards her lord Narayan.

The mystics, longing to be united with the divine, have chosen various ways to reach god. They submit themselves to the divine by cultivating different relationships with the celestial. As pointed out by Radhakrishnan in his "Modes of *Bhakti* in Tamil Devotional Literature," such relationships are termed in Sanskrit as, assuming oneself as a friend of the divine – 'sakhya bhava'; as a servant and slave – 'dhaas bhava'; mother-child relation – 'vatsalya bhava' and lover-beloved relation – 'madhurya bhava'. The mystics have also written texts discussing and establishing their affinity and association with the divine. Madhurya bhakti (Bridal Mysticism) deliberated in *Natchiyar Thirumozhi* would be elaborated on and critiqued.

According to Chambers' dictionary, 'bridal' is an old English word with the synonym "something relating to the bride" and 'mysticism' is of Latin origin and it stands for "mysterious and mystics communion with god." The mystics irrespective of their gender presume themselves as the bride of the divine and such mysterious love relation between the mystic and the divine is known as Bridal Mysticism.

Medieval Indian religious poetry encompasses the works of many mystics in various Indian languages. Sunitikumar Chatterji claims that though chant and songs constitute the part of the Indian way of worship, dance is adopted from Sufism. The intense meditation of the mystics is followed by their dance. The mystic's explicitness in disowning the world, their confinement in meditation, and their song and dance are comprehended as madness. Sisir Kumar Das has focused on the eccentricity expressed and experienced by the mystics in the article titled "Mad Lover." Similarly Euripides' *The Bacchae* picturizes such madness and Plato finds this madness as a gateway to be blessed in *Phaedrus*.

A few well known mystics of the religious tradition of India include Rabia Basra, Jeya Deva, Tantrists, Meera bhai, Akkamahadevi, and Andal. Rabia's contribution to the Sufi movement and her works spreading divine love is remarkable. The emphasis on, and the celebration of divine love and union is exemplified through her songs- for instance, "the striving after union with Thee has healed my soul" (Rabia). In the same period i.e. during the 13 and 14th centuries the Sufi and Bhakti movements flourished in the northern and southern parts of India. The *Bhakti* movement is at its peak when the works of 'Alwars' and 'Saivasindhanta' flourished in the south. Bridal Mysticism can also be traced to the ecclesiastical tradition of Christianity. The spiritual marriage with the divine savior is discussed and expressed by the Greek scholar Origen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Teresa of Avila, St. John of Cross, and Bernard of Clairvaux. The spiritual marriage is traced back to Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and even further behind in Hosea's metaphor of Israel as the wife of god in *Song of Songs*. Hellenistic Judaism is often ignored in terms of spiritual marriage though it precedes Christian individual Bridal Mysticism. *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo's treatises are the literary manifestations of spiritual marriage. Sophia is the means of salvation, the lord of all loves her and through knowledge, Sophia experienced union with god.

Hildegard Keller has worked on the relationship between the sacred and the erotic in her work *My Secret is Mine*. Here the main focus is to track the movement of the metaphor 'sponsa' (bride) from supra-sexual to gendered and sexualized state. She has also discussed the marital, erotic elements in love, amorous aggression in women, and the patriarchal Christian marriage. The bridal relation is polygamous, as the bride confines herself to one divine partner and the divine respond to all. For instance, when Mechthild Von Magdeburg is curious about the dwelling place of the lord, she is answered that "there is no other lord dwells in all his castles at the same time but him alone" (Keller 59).

Therefore, the focus would be on the conjugal relation established by Andal, one of the female Alwars of the *Bhakti* movement towards her lord Narayan in the work *Natchiyar Thirumozhi*. It is written in Tamil, comprises a series of songs in fourteen segments. Each segment and comprises ten to eleven songs. Since her childhood, Andal focuses only on lord Narayan. She imagines herself as the partner of the lord and discloses her love and longing for

him. Hence the fourteen segments capture her love; desperation to be united; inability to live during separation; her union with god; her bodily desire, and her complete submission.

The first segment carries her prayers and offerings to god of love to attain lord Narayan. In the second segment, Narayan appears and towards the end of the segment he departs. The third segment is devoted to describe his mischief with 'gopikas' (cowherd women) and after he disappears again, prayers get chanted in the fourth segment. In the fifth segment, a small blackbird (kuyil) is sent as a messenger to convey her intention. The sixth segment elaborates on the wedding proceedings. The seventh segment details the union. As he leaves after the union the eighth segment is filled with the helpless, destitute and pitiful state of her in his absence. Her desperation and hope to be reunited are established from segments nine to eleven. Then she decides to meet him by reaching his place instead of waiting for his appearance, in the twelfth segment. In the thirteenth segment, she records her persistence to be at least touched by Narayan's cloth or any of his accessories to retain her breath. She achieves her destiny of being one with her lord after numerous struggles in the last segment.

The mystic's body and its desires and instincts get translated in the text while transmitting her dedication and *bhakti* towards the divine. When the body is available in a text the details of it, the intention behind voicing the body and what it tries to establish, need to be taken into account. The physical aspects of the body of the divine that attract the bride are described in detail. The bride's desire to be ruled by and glued to the divine body is explicit. She has not left even the dust under his feet. She has expressed in one of the songs that such powder and dust under his feet should be applied throughout her body:

... minute particles and dust trodden;

Such particles crushed to powder under his feet

Bring that dust to be smeared on my body... (Andal song 632)

The description of the corporal aspects of the divine includes the colour and fragrance of his lips; hair and the heaviness and power of the entire body. She has often referred to his lips as the reddened mouth with an alluring fragrance and because of the red colour, it is qualified as coral. She even wonders whether his mouth would smell camphor or lotus.

It smells like camphor or lotus

His coral red lips; would they be sweeter

my lords' lips smell and taste how?

Out of love, I am asking, you white conch! Answer me. (Andal song 567)

His skin colour is analogous to black clouds. His vigorous, muscular look is compared to an ox. His palm is given the adjective reddened palm. His beautiful hair and muscular shoulders are detailed in the last segment of the series. When she refers to his hair and shoulders, she prefixes them with 'thiru' as 'Thiruthol' (shoulders) and 'Thirukuzhal' (hair). 'Thiru' is a sign of reverence.

When it comes to the bride's body, it is more about the desire to be united; the helpless and restless state in his absence, and the longing to be touched by the lord to redeem her. She has voiced her breasts in many episodes to communicate her instincts. She has said that her fertile breasts are for the lord and if it is not touched by him and if it is for somebody she would

breathe her last.

I pray! My lords'
reverend hands should play on me.
due to that my waist, breasts
would be blessed... (Andal Song 508)

She wishes to taste his reddened lips and conveys that lust torments her body and devours her in his absence. Her breasts to be held or tightly pressed against his body or his clothes spread all over her body can alone extricate her from the frustrated state.

My lord is ignorant of his woman's longing
Bring and spread his colourful
clothing and with it
placate the dryness residing on me. (Andal song 627)

As she could not bear the heaviness of the untouched breasts, she prefers to nip and throw it on him. The frustrated and the repressed body find an outlet violently. Breasts become the mouthpiece for the entire body. In many episodes she has discussed the needs of her breasts. And she conveys that it would be a proud moment when her lord's hands touch her breasts and she also imagines that the whole world would celebrate her for that

... Let Thiruvikraman's reverend hands lay on me
So that the waist and my breasts
be celebrated in highest degree in this world
Let me be granted with that. (Andal song 510)

Apart from discussing her body, she has also sent across certain traits like, her only aim and role is to hold his feet forever. The dependency on, glorification, and deification of the male partner are reiterated as a female duty. For instance,

The path towards adding glory to femininity-
Kesava Nambi's feet should be held
And I should be blessed for that. (Andal song 511)

By being engrossed in showing love and respect for her lord, she has reduced herself intensely and magnifies every aspect of his body. She celebrates and finds the water droplets between his hair and his saliva as the elixir of her life

...dew drops residing in between his tresses
be applied to cool down my face...
Let the liquid drenching his precious mouth
be brought to relieve me from tiredness. (Andal song 631, 630)

Andal has practiced *écriture féminine* partially without being a threat to the patriarchal order, centuries before the term is propounded. She has taken her body and its desire as the subject matter of discussion within the periphery of the ruling male body. Luce Irigaray has pointed out that, models set through myths and legends grant injustice to a woman's body. She exemplifies her stand by citing Aeschyles' *Orestes* for celebrating and promoting virgin-mother. A mother is killed in *Orestes* as "she does not conform to that image of the virgin-mother which has been promoted as our ideal for centuries... Womb is never thought of as the primal place..." (Irigaray 243) Cixous has even illustrated the influence of mythical and philosophical discourses in constructing a woman's subjectivity through a story.

Sleeping beauty is given a negative subjectivity and she needs to be redeemed by the kiss of a man to earn existence. The image of a woman is often confined to the marriage bed, childbirth, and death bed and she is modeled as a non-political, innocent, and dependent social being by many phallogocentric discourses. Even works written by many female writers reflect such discourses. Andal has also discussed body restraining to the parameters of patriarchal discourses. Reinstating the lack in one reassures the superiority of the other. Though Andal has overtly discussed her body she affirms that it is nothing without the touch of her male partner.

Conveying bodily desires overtly is not socially acceptable in certain place and time. Andal prevents her text from getting branded as erotic and carnal by employing a divine image. The private, repressed bodily needs are safely channeled towards the divine image. She claims in the initial segment that except for her lord she cannot think of any other male partner. By disowning and scorning the external world she glorifies the sublimated, celestial being. But in the course of sublimation, she has humanized the divine. In the first place divine is gendered male and she has associated all attributes of the male body with the divine. She applies all the rituals performed by humans to the divine. She makes him the bridegroom, his sister to bring the wedding saree, he ties the knot and makes her wear the toe ring. Every detail of the marriage ceremony present in the Tamil culture is applied to her divine partner.

The main aim of plotting bridal mysticism is to experience union with god. But the textual evidence makes the reader take a conscious effort to incorporate divine presence. The claimed presence of the divine in the text is deferred. It unravels the hidden human desire for another human through the divine medium. The claimed human-divine relation gets dissolved in human-human relation. The language as the substitute gratification employed to convey her desires betrays her. The sexual drives repressed in the 'Unconscious' are released through writing and it encodes the body of the mystic in a hidden manner under the divine shield.

A text is understood via the socio-cultural-historical account of the author in the traditional method of interpretation. Such an account helps in knowing the author as well as the author's mental energy, which drives the textual engine. Hence there comes the shift in the attitude towards unraveling the text written. The shift is from the external factors surrounding the author to the internal- mind of the author. The mental energy facilitates the author to reshape and fantasize against the existing reality and produces the needed reality through textual articulation. Sigmund Freud associates the content articulated in the text with the body of the author. In his work, *Creative Writers and Day-dreaming* he discusses the Unconscious (the part of the mind where the bodily instincts are repressed) acting as the source of the text and in turn, the text provides space for the wish-fulfillment of the author's body. According to him the biological drives stored in the Unconscious escape into the text unintentionally. Through the unintended, one can understand the intention hidden by the author. The unfulfilled desires which are socially unacceptable result in 'adult-fantasy.' It is an intimate possession of an individual and it is more about what the adult wanted to and wished to do in the real world. The imaginary backdrop provided in the text makes the author forget the pressures of the real world and offers the liberty to translate the Unconscious into action stealthily. The defense mechanisms propounded by Freud to interpret the Unconscious

conveyed in the text covertly include: Repression- hiding and storing unacceptable conflicts and desires; Sublimation- sublimating sexual desires as noble, divine, and intense religious experience; Denial- refusing the desire consciously; Displacement- directing the desire to a substitute object; Projection- disowning the desire by projecting it on others and Dream work- conveying the desire through dream images. The desire becomes the motivating force and it is fundamentally sexual. Hence through various means it gains aesthetic prominence in a text.

The artist is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then in phantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts, he moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus, by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favorite he desired to be, without the circuitous path of creating real alterations in the outer world. (Freud 224).

Therefore, Andal wishes to sublimate her desire by directing it towards a sublimated being. The divine is the sublimated being employed in the text. The 'structure' of the divine stands for divinity. With reference to Jacques Derrida, the 'structurality of the structure' of the divine gives a unified, coherent, and limited play of the signification of divinity alone. The disruption of such play invites infinitude and release from the confinement. In Derrida's words:

... disruption was repetition in all of the senses of this word. From then on it became necessary to think the law which governed, as it were, the desire for the center in the constitution of structure and the process of signification prescribing its displacements and its substitution for this law of the central presence – but a central presence which was never itself, which has always already been transported outside itself in its surrogate. (Derrida 297)

Andal has used the divine as the signifier to signify her partner. When we analyse the text, the usage of divine opens up the possibility of substituting it with 'the gendered divine'. The 'freeplay' showcases the interplay of presence and absence of the divine. The gendered divine further signifies male and female. The gender categories signify the attributes of females and males. The attributed male and female represent humans. In the text taken for study the gendered divine is male. The relationship claimed between the human and divine, in *Bridal Mysticism* is deciphered as,

Human	Divine (surface level)
Human	Gendered Divine (He/ She = pronouns of male and female)
Human	Humanized Divine
Human	Human (Deep level).

Thus, the love relation maintained between the mystic and her divine partner has been elaborated in the text chosen. The critique of the text lists various levels of interpretation. The divine shield over the partner is tested and shattered to reveal the human inside. It does not stop with that, why such armor is incorporated; what compels the mystic to rely on the masquerade, and the byproduct of the intimate relation celebrated are also probed. Body as the matter of discussion is scanty in the literary production of the earlier periods. Even if it is

included it is not given prime focus, rather it is sidelined. In this milieu, Andal discussing her bodily needs and desire inclines safely on the divine body by mounting her desire and contemplation on the divine partner. This has been dissected and the hidden human under the divine film is revealed by deconstructing bridal mysticism. Why she has to do so invites attention toward male laws of sexuality. The politicized body is not accredited as the subject matter of discussion. Overtly discussing the pleasure aspect of the body is branded as erotic and obscene. The ideological notions privatize the body by prohibiting the public zone from revealing one's bodily desire. Freud has been included for reinforcing the idea of seeking gratification through scripting the body (Unconscious) in creative writings. When the female mystic discloses her body, she could not completely move away from the patriarchal order. Though her body is elaborated it is showcased as utterly dependent on the male partner. As she feels the emptiness and impossibility of existence without her male partner, she has silently reassured the magnificence assigned to the male. Helena Cixous' main concern in framing the psychosexual specificity of woman excluding the masculinist ideologies propagated in her work, "The Laugh of the Medusa," has been integrated. Hence the politics involved in the representation of the body in the text and the politicized body which further endeavors to define femininity are problematized

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**Dr. J.S. Anand's *The Ultronic Age: The Celestial Region* and
Thomas More's *Utopia*: A Critique**

Dr. Tamali Neogi*

Abstract

*The spectacle of human misery, pain and suffering in Kalyuga besieges Dr. Anand to escape to the imaginary world of Ultronia in *The Ultronic Age: The Celestial Region* (2022). The poet imagines that mankind's complete immersion in sin provokes Rudra, the God of Destruction, to destroy more than half the population towards the end of *Dominion of Netherworld* (Anand 2022), Kalyuga comes to end. In the third and final book of *The Mahaakal Trilogy*, with the advent of the "Era of Millenium," the poet visualizes humankind's return to an alternative/ideal world of living under the reign of *Queen Ultronia*. In other words it is envisioned as mankind's return to 'Satyuga.' The quest of the author is to perceive the quality of living of the denizens of Ultronia, taking into consideration the similarities and differences they have with Golden Age people and the inhabitants of Utopian society. The query stimulates the author to explore Dr. Anand's philosophy that permeates *The Ultronic Age*, and understand both the perspectives through a comparative study of *The Ultronic Age* with *Thomas More's Utopia*. In view of the unique distinctive features of the Ultronian society in contrast with Golden Age society and Utopian society, the author, taking cognizance of the poet's conviction of mankind's immense potential for good action and philosophy of 'cosmism,' concludes that what is initially understood as mankind's emergence to 'Satyuga' (the Golden Age) is actually the 'ultra' civilization of 'Neo-Satya Yuga,' and Dr. Anand's *The Ultronic Age* emerges as a precursor to new trend of Ultronian literature.*

Keywords: *the Golden Age, Utopia, 'Neo-Satya Yuga'*

Introduction

The third and final book of "The Mahaakal Trilogy" is *The Ultronic Age: The Celestial Region* (Anand August 2022). The past, present and future are wonderfully interwoven in the poetic construct of the trilogy, with Anand maintaining a perfect poise of emotion and intellect far and wide. Mankind's deliberate surrender to the evil enchantment of Lustus mature into our present denoting human civilization in complete grasp of the demonic superpower of Lustus and his son Mayan, in Kalyuga, infamous for its absolute loss of 'vision, light and virtue on the part of men' a world 'ripe for the apocalypse' (Anand July 2022: 27). It is the same human world awaiting the apocalypse in "Sailing to Byzantium" (Yeats 1995), the only difference is contemporary human beings' deep and complete immersion in sin. Towards the end of *Dominion of Netherworld* (Anand July 2022), Rudra destroys half the population of the world to free the universe from the irresistible and hypnotic spell of evil and in *The Ultronic Age*, Dr. Anand visualises mankind's emergence in a new world, the 'New Aden' whose inhabitants are neither in a state of ignorance nor the pre-knowledge state. They are in the state of true innocence in conformity with one of William Blake's axioms. This is actually the post-technology scenario in which "all humans have been placed all over again, to start new experiment in humanity" (Anand 2022:18-19). As per

Hindu philosophy mankind will again emerge to 'Satya Yuga' after Kalyuga comes to its end. Anand imagines Kalyuga to be followed by the era of Millenium with the advent of which, "Heaven on this earth"(Anand August 2022: 27) is speculated to be established and thus in this post-apocalyptic narrative of Dr. Anand, the time circle of past, present and future come to its full. The poet speaks of this new era there in "The Prologue:"

Let us enter today the world
Which has left behind Lustus
And the realms of Darkness,
Which has suffered through the Netherworld
To now see this Ultronic Age
Which brings into being the long lost Satyuga.
Aden is the beginning of another experiment
(Anand August 2022: 24-25)

To the poet this new world is akin to 'Satyuga' that in turn is close to the concepts of Golden Age and Utopia. The author of the present paper attempts to identify the quality of living as envisioned by Dr. J.S. Anand in *The Ultronic Age*, keeping in mind the similarities and differences between the Golden Age society and the Utopian society as revealed in existing literature. The next proposition of the author is to analyse the Ultronic society in an effort to understand Anand's philosophy through a comparative study with Thomas More's *Utopia*.

The Golden Age

The qualities of Golden Age are set forth in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (Hesiod 1978). In Virgil and Ovid we find reflections of Hesiod's concept of Golden Age, intertwined with the Christian myth of pre-lapsarian paradise. In Ovid's *Metamorphosis* we learn that the Golden Age, is of "it selfe maintaine/The truth and right of everything unfort and unconstrained..." (Nims, 1965: 16). The critic observes: "The absence of work, the free provision of life's necessities, the absence of restraints of any kind, and joy and happiness are but a few of the traits which always appear in various descriptions of the Golden Age . . . the idea of the Golden Age was that men could live without the knowledge or need of academic pursuits . . . This of course, implies that the Golden Age is a mythological one, and flourishes only in the minds of men. ...All of the requisites for the attainment of this epicurean state were provided by the earth or the gods" (Ferguson 1969:30-31). Erasmus in *The Praise of Folly* says that the Golden Age people were simple and lived lives according to their nature and instinct (Erasmus, 1952: 71). The ethos of Golden Age again receive attention in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and *Aminta*. Shakespearean conception of Golden Age gets revealed in two passages respectively in *Coriolanus* and *Troilus and Cressida*. In *Tempest* Gonzalo describes his commonwealth in recognizable Golden Age terminology. The Prologue of Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, unveils Spenser's nostalgia pertaining to Golden Age. in such terms : "Peace universall rayn'd mongst men and beasts,/And all things freely grew out of the ground" (Smith, 1909: 160-61).

Utopian Society in contrast with the Golden Age

On the other hand, the extension of Utopian literature spans across centuries, for instance Plato's *Republic*, Cicero's *De Republica*, St. Augustine's *De Civitate Des*, More's

Utopia, Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* travel literature like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gullivers Travels*, *The City of the Sun* by Solis Tomasso, *Campamella Christianopoeis* by Johann Andreae, Etienne Cabet's *Voyage to Icaria*, Robert Owen's *New View of Society*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, *When the Sleeper Awakes*, *A Modern Utopia* etc. Thus, the Utopian vogue flourishes in the centuries following More's *Utopia*. However, the differences between the Utopian and the Golden Age people are generally overlooked for the apparent similarities (like freedom, harmony, blissful existence, communism etc.) shared by them. A close scrutiny of Utopian literature, particularly More's *Utopia* (2006), lays bare the differences between the Utopians and the Golden Age people. The Utopians unlike the Golden Age people have to work to produce the superabundance of all the necessities. Unlike Golden Age people, the Utopians are governed by some laws. Ferguson argues: "Most of the institutions and practices of Utopia are created only for the regulation of human pride. This alone removes any kinship to the Golden Age. For the Golden Age . . . was a time of perfect harmony. This harmony was initiated and maintained not through man's ordinances but by the gods" (Ferguson 1969: 41). Unlike Utopian society, the Golden Age people had no need of any development as they were endowed with all knowledge either automatically or by Gods. Moreover, economic intercourse in any form seemed to be non-existent in Golden Age whereas it is not so in Utopian world. Furthermore, there are some fundamental differences between Golden Age people and the Utopians. Quite unlike the Golden Age people, Utopians are guided and restrained by reason and they are in need of restraint. Hexter analyzes these differences due to More's "strong and ineradicable streak of pessimism in that he realized the roots of evil lay too deep to be altered or removed by only a rearranging of the socio-economic organization of society" (Hexter 1950:72). It must be noted that various utopian societies have varied propositions relating to religion, family, law and punishment question of women, welfare agenda etc. that underscore the differences in moral and philosophical principles permeating such futuristic visions. For example, equality between men and women is proposed in Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia* with certain qualifications. There is allowance made in Plato's conception of ideal Republic for the practice of slavery as in More's. But from the aspects of class distinctions, religious beliefs and practices, in the treatment of 'family' there are sharp differences between the two. Cicero's concept of an ideal state is based on reason and justice and those who possess natural superiority rule over the inferiors. In *The Faerie Queene* the Utopian tradition is represented in the society governed by Gloriana and her laws are based upon right reason. In Utopian literature more variations occur in such issues like social rank of women, government, Head of the state, religious freedom, deliberation of justice, approach towards the advent of technology etc.

The Ultronic Age and Man's Homecoming

It is a natural disposition of the poets to conjure up imaginary Utopias where human dignity is by and large restored. Omar Khayyam says in *The Rubaiyat*: "Ah, love, could you and I with Him conspire/To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire/ Would we not shatter it to bits- and then/ Remold it near to the Heart's desire!" (<https://www.cliffsnotes.com>). Dr. Anand's *The Ultronic Age* is the most remarkable and latest addition to the series of such socialist dreams clothed in the attire of moral dignity. The eleven cantos represent Dr. Anand's vision of an ideal society under the reign of Queen Ultronia, thus triggering obvious comparison with Queen Gloriana's Utopian governance in *The Faerie Queene*. However,

Anand envisions it as homecoming of mankind to the “long lost Satyuga” (25). It is homecoming only in the sense that it is a vision of 'life divine' (21). *The Ultronic Age* aspires to create the impossible possibility of mankind's return to God, his abode. 'Satyuga’ is the Golden Age as per Hindu philosophy. Undoubtedly, a number of lines in Anand's book as "Man is safe, his interests are safe/All his supports are safe/Nature is safe, waters are safe,/Winds are clean and pure/And above all, /Man's mind is free from pollution/Free of Negative Thought,/Free from philosophies which set/Men and against men" (64) embody the reverberations of Golden Age literature. But how can Ultronia be the replica of “long lost Satyuga” or the Golden Age with the poet stressing lawfulness, gender equality, 'work culture' (106), 'stern duty' (45), development of mind and accumulation of 'original knowledge'(48) (press conference and seminar are held), tax payment, maintenance of 'common fund' (89) and with such institutions and agencies like 'skill universities (41)' schools, colleges, hospitals, parks (90), such economic intercourses like industries(133), “neo-democratic model/At the Governance level” (90)? One wonders how the non-existence of religion and its interpreters like sages and saints and finally with “scientific development” (148) and technology ensure highest modes of communication? These do not reflect the nature of living in 'Satyug' or in Golden Age. Now the question is can the Ultronian society be called a Utopian in true sense of the world? The author will try to pursue the query in the light of existing literature, specially Thomas More's *Utopia* to take a measure of Dr. Anand's philosophy.

Is Ultronia another Utopia?

Queen Ultronia's new model of Governance "aims at perfect decentralization of human resources and human welfare at the grass roots" (89) which means that "The villages will be treated as self-sufficient units/ The Head will have the powers of the King./ He will manage the resources of the village, / And monitor its needs.... All the expenses of the village unit will be met/From a Common Fund/And the villagers will be made to pay/ From their earnings towards this fund,/From which,/Schools, colleges, hospitals/And parks will be maintained" (89-90). To More pride seems to be the root of all evils while Dr. Anand thinks it is poverty: “which leads to perversion of mind" (88). Like More, Anand also speaks of decentralization of wealth: "No one will go unfed,/No one will remain starved./There will be no one who will have/More than he needs,/Surplus wealth leads to the fall of a society" (91). Elimination of private property is advocated so far as his dream is to establish equality: "... we don't want any poverty/Among the citizens of Ultronia,/There has to be complete equality/In one household,/Only one person will get government job./So that there is equality/ And the govt bounties reach every household" (94). Ultronian communism issues forth from such dreams as eradication of poverty and establishment of equality. In Ultronia "There are no landlords/There are no industrialists./There are no corporates./And hence, no concentration of wealth./Land has been equally distributed/ Among the residents./So that no one goes without food./All have equal opportunities now" (98). Majeske observes that More's treatment of 'equity' in *Utopia* "reveals “an appreciation for the more esoteric meaning of *epieikeia* addressed in Aristotle's *Politics* and Plato's *Laws*, a meaning which treats an issue of the utmost delicacy: how to translate into practice the theory of the ideal commonwealth”(Majeske <https://www.resrarchgate.net>). In the Prologue to *The Ultronic Age* the poet says: “Nature possessed the Essential knowledge/And man too,/ Was equipped with that Objective Capability,/To be, and enjoy the Joys of being" (26). In the post covid scenario the poet imagines mankind to emerge in a Brave New World, 'New Aden.' With Adam's and Eve's

consumption of the fruit of the forbidden tree, 'the tree of artificial intelligence' mankind's sense of 'equity' gets permanently lost. The poet grieves: "Tree of knowledge was, in fact/ The tree of artificial intelligence,.../The apple that they ate actually turned them/Into remote sensing robots,/Which then set out to denaturalize/Their surroundings,/In order to make themselves easy,/Artificial beings in an artificial environs/This has been the essence/ Of human civilization" (26-27). Ultronians are natural men. They are rational men and rationality is natural to mankind, in other words rationality is part of man's "characteristic activity" (Ahmadgoli and Gholamifard 2012:166). The poet prays for men "Let them live in the light of knowledge and wisdom" (27) and this knowledge is no artificial knowledge but "original knowledge" (47). Queen Ultronia proclaims to build an alternate society on this assurance that goodness has returned to the "natural reflexes of mankind" (36). Ministry of education is instructed to "produce high class human beings/Who believe in human relationships/And who have faith/In the benignity of Nature/And divinity of life of any denomination... " (39). Everything that is natural is encouraged. For instance love is upheld not marriage. Queen Ultronia believes that "Love is the first condition of happy living./We want all the Universe to regain its balance." As marriage often means "sanctioned physical bliss" and people rarely has any satisfaction in married relationships, Queen Ultronia wants mankind to return to "natural behaviour with regard to their carnal desires." The poet hopes "Once their balance is retrieved/The Neo-Aden will be a great experiment to build on" (49-50). For Queen Ultronia the most important thing is "putting love at the centre of Existence" (82). Marriage as an institution is abolished, and proclaiming: "Aden' is a replica of the original Eden/But with a difference... It is God's intent to start afresh with man./The Original Innocence will be restored to him. But he will also get original knowledge" (48). Ultronians empowered with original knowledge are not susceptible to doing harm to fellow beings - "knowledge will be used only for giving joy to mankind" (49). At the very outset Dr. Anand makes it clear that in Ultronia there must be equality and his sense of 'equity'; "In this land of plenty, where nobody robs/ Anyone of his honest labour./ Everyone gets his due./ And all live in a happy give and take./ Give comes first and take afterwards" (136).

More presented women as quite inferior to men. Crocker notes that More is certainly s "not challenging the social rank of women" ([https:// digital commons](https://digitalcommons)). In Ultronia there will be no discrimination between genders: "The new world will be a different world. /Looking not to the Netherworld,/But to the stars./A quasi-heaven on the world.... Birth will be celebrated/Boy or girl, irrespective of it (86). Ultronians will be free from the chains of religion, culture and heritage as these entrap men (103). Anand says: "It is this cultural trap which forces the girl child,/To behave like a woman./Wear a particular dress,/And fear a particular set of people...How can we think of a starry future for woman kind?/ If we keep returning to this old culture?/Religion and culture both were used/ To imprison woman inside the house./Can we go back to these times?/Won't it be injustice to women? They are fifty percent of the human folk./How can we contain them in the kitchen?/That is why, we have put a full stop to the idea of culture./And religion... for good" (105). In Ultronia, there is no distinction between men and women. As Nalini observes: "In Ultronia, there is no distinction/Between men and women...How bloody was the world of Lustus!/Henceforth, we make genetical changes./Women will replace men./Ultronia is women's world, ruled by women/And women will be the final arbiters of the Universe"(124). Feminine culture is upheld in place of masculine culture. In Lustonia, " Sons were hot property" (128) but in Ultronia " Ma Saraswati is worshipped./And every household must have a daughter "(127).

In *Utopia* More seems to leave the matter of religion an open question. In *Utopia* there

exists a monotheism that fosters Utopia's common faith. However, the guardians of Utopians' common faith are priests who preside over the rites and ceremonies. It moots the point that hereby the power of the priests is enhanced. In Ultronia there is the complete non-existence of religion. The poet says: "We do not recognize anything/ By the name of religion. /We are not moved by prayers./It is a human hallucination" (43). The insistence is on good action not on prayers; "Thought, speech and action/This is how divinity translates itself into life" (43). Religion or religious activism is alien to Ultronians. No saint or sage is required to keep the people on the right track as the poet says: "There is only single track/Of goodness./There is no other track/This is the land of Gods/Under the direct surveillance of the Divine" (100).

Moral philosophy permeates *Utopia*: "after this life rewards are appointed for our virtues and good deeds, punishment for our crimes" (Logan et. al. 2016: 217). To the Utopians "pleasure as the goal of our actions; and living according to her prescriptions is to be defined as virtue" (More 2006, 562). Furthermore, they relate their ethics and philosophy to their religion. However, the ultimate goal of the Ultronians is not pleasure but happiness as "All the provisions of the state/Are aimed at human welfare./At the centre of all activity is happiness (99) as "It is a unitary world/Where men have one shared passion./To lead a happy life"(147). Dr. Lookahead avers at the seminar organized by Post-History department, Ultronia University: "We discard everything that contaminated/ the flow of life, the flow of goodness/And the flow of joy" (149). Ultronia is a world "where freedom has no tabs/Where joy has no limits/Where happiness is writ large/On the forehead of the people" (152). This happiness is not connected with pleasure or religion. In Ultronia a big difference is perceived to exist between the two sorts of pleasure. Contemplative pleasure is allowed but sensual pleasure generating agencies like cinema (the house of spurious joy) houses are banned. In Ultronia "genetically engineered" people are naturally good and their actions therefore has the one goal 'happiness.' Thus, in the attempt to explore the differences between the Utopians and the Ultronians, one comes to have a quick look into Anand's philosophy that can be partially traced back to Aristotelian vein of thought.

In *Utopia* importance of family is one of the most crucial organizing principles. In a similar vein in Ultronia also family life is prioritised. Nalini, the University teacher says to Rava, the visitor from the Moon, that women like her work for two hours and are paid well. "The reason is: we have to take care of kids as well" (124). We hear that the foremost duty of men and women "is the family/The Household/The Kids" (132). As regards the question of labour, "In Utopia, however, honest labour of six hours is mandatory for all. To maintain public health Queen Ultronia orders Dr. Stella to put the doctors on "stern duty" (45) as the working hours vary from profession to profession. For University teachers it is two hours, for school and college teachers it is three hours to five hours, for workers it is eight hours as the primary focus is on "high rated working ethics." The 'ruling passion' behind all honest labour is "well-being of God's kind" (49). Queen Ultronia demands right conduct from all so that freedom is used to enhance their "agenda of wellness" (46) so that "The people remain healthy/It is the duty of the state" (44-45).

Anand's epic poem has its closest framework in normative ethics and not in virtue ethics as in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. In Canto II Queen Ultronia sets the norms following which children are to be brought up and educated in Ultronia: "Everyone cannot be pushed into/Job Oriented Courses.... Parental interference here/Will be considered/ n interference/ In the development of the child." Canto III, "Resetting the Disturbed Balance" is an account of right action in such a way as to become complete action guidance" (48-49).

The holistic approach to life is thus underlined: “Science will explore the natural phenomenon... Knowledge will be used only for giving Joy to mankind... No animals will be tortured and slaughtered/ For man's pleasure./ Forests will be considered sacred/And felling of trees answered with decapitation/No gender bias will be tolerated/... Anyone found molesting girls/ Will lose his head” (48-49). The basic theme of the press conference of Queen Ultronia is the new law which enjoins “There will be courts for adjudication/But we do not expect much litigation/Yet, there will be instant justice/Foul play or corruption at any stage/In any way, and or any extent/Will entail death” (89). In Ultronia jails are dismantled as no crime is expected. The Utopians too abide by a few laws. “...husbands chastise their wives, and parents discipline their children unless the offence is so monstrous that public punishment would serve public morality” (More 2010:94) and lead to punishment “by slavery” as it carries a moral stigma. To Ultronians happiness of all is the ultimate reward and if they deviate from the path of good conduct they are to receive instant justice. In matters of justice delivery there are differences between the worlds of *Utopia* and that of *Ultronia*. Dr. Anand imagines a world where “bombs and missiles will be stopped/All those systems which breed Evil/Power, and Competition, will go” (48). As observed by Avineri “More constructs a code of rational absolutist ethics which enables him to argue that a war which is being waged by the Utopians is by necessity a just war as Utopia is, by definition, the ideal state, living in splendid isolation among the other states which are relegated to the Valley of Darkness” (Avineri 1962: 273). More's point is Utopia can never be universal. Does More want Utopia to represent the ideal state of England heading the Commonwealth? The ambiguous nature of More's writing -- aspects of religious independence, issue of Christianity in Utopia, apparent support of warfare, colonialism, slavery – is too obvious. Dr. Anand is brutally candid in his concern for human civilization by envisioning envisioning humankind's return to 'Satyuga' in *The Ultronic Age* through the skilful usage of the techniques as 'Whisper,' 'Cut In', 'Video grabs,' and 'Flashbacks,' thereby lending an aura of structural and stylistical experimentation for the techno-savvy readers.

“Neo-Satya Yuga”: The Beginning of Ultronian Literature

Besieged by the grim spectacle of human misery, pain and suffering Dr. J.S. Anand swings on Frostian 'birches' to escape into the world of fantasy and enrich the contemporary literature with the publication of *The Ultronic Age* which is veritable eschatology. What else a poet can do other than creating alterity in the world of art, particularly when he refuses to look back to History before offering his alternative of a new world: “We do not look back to the history/We look forward to create a new history” (102). The criticism Marx makes of the utopians that a) “Utopian thinking tends to produce visions of the future that are unrealistically rigid and complete; b) There is no basis for determining if a vision constructed in this speculative manner is desirable, if it really is the “good” society; c) Equally, there is no clear way of determining if it is possible, that is whether people will ever be able to build such a society, and, if they do, whether it will function as expected; d) By taking up the space allotted to the future in our thinking, utopian visions undermine the possibility of making a dialectical analysis of the present as a temporal dimension in which the future already appears as a potential...” (Ollman 2005)- are pertinent to *The Ultronic Age*. In spite of such a criticism, mankind's eternal desire to visualize or to return to the imaginary/ideal state of being persists. What distinguishes Dr. Anand from other poets of Utopian impulses is his portrayal of neither Utopian nor Golden Age society in *The Ultronic Age*. The Ultronians are the inhabitants of

“Neo- Satyuga,” presaging Ultronian literature. The inhabitants of Ultronia do have, similarities as well as differences with the Utopians and Golden Age people yet Ultronians have distinctive unique features. The Ultronians are injected against jealousy, competition, revenge and massacre. Godot, “an impossible dream of man” could have only arrived at Ultronian society. Godot who bears God's image, has never wanted to come into the dark world of Lustus, the world that made God repentant of His creation. Godot was stopped by God from coming into Lustonia. The Ultronians are graced by his presence because their virtues are guarded. What builds hope about the sustainability of Ultronian society is the existence of “instant justice” as “Gods are around to punish the wrong/ The system of governance/Can never err” (142). Besides, the Ultronians are blessed with some superb skills. Erajū, the guide of the visitors from Moon, says: “We have no problem in communicating/With anybody/...It is soul to soul./Ideas travel./Feelings travel/Highly sophisticated/Soul Systems are at work./Ultronia is a wonderland of communication/There is no duplicity. No deceit./No husband can cheat./Nor no woman” (122). The Ultronians have emotions; they fall in love as that is the only way to survive. Once in love they are not prone to other temptations. Only one ism is in vogue and that is cosmism, going beyond Epicureanism. The Ultronians retain their earthiness in the post-technology era. Inside their rooms they accommodate cats, rats, even bats. Felling of a tree costs life in Ultronia. There is Temple of Elements and people worship the elements - the Earth, the Sky, Water, Fire, and the Spirit of Cosmos. Ecological balance is maintained. Human dignity is not ruffled. Besides, at every happy event the Ultronians plant a tree. The poet says: “Every day, millions of people go to the forest/And plant trees for one reason or the other./This is how we return to the earth/What we get from it” (127). Among Ultronians there is absolutely no gender gap. Interestingly “Women are very tall/And menfolk are small statured.” It is a strange world of wish fulfilment where “Women have been given a higher status/But men have not lost anything” (125). In this world the entire procreation is digital: “.men too can conceive/Nothing happens within the body” (125). Utopia is an unachievable relic of the past and Ultronia posits in itself hope and faith in humanity, hence an achievable state since “the impossible dream of man” though “away from him” but not “beyond realization” (60).

Conclusion

The poet in his characteristic and simplistic manner brings out the points of divergence between the Ultronians and Utopians and denizens of the Golden Age with a sharp focus on the moral and ethical principles as well as philosophical content that go into creation of the ideal world of Ultronia in *The Ultronic Age* as a precursor to new trend of Ultronian Literature. The way Dr. Anand demands resolves the irreconcilable dichotomy between immanence of power and agenda of welfare state in *The Ultronic Age*, is commendable. What makes the concepts of utopia and dystopia complement each other is the Utopian writers' overwhelming awareness of inherent evil in human nature, herein lies the fundamental difference between Ultronian Literature and Utopian Literature. It is not that Dr. Anand overlooks mankind's proclivity towards evil but in comparison his love of humanity and its penchant for good action and virtues seem to be greater what endow *The Ultronic Age* with its unique features. Imbued with the conviction that everything depends on human action, Ultronian literature raises hope that mankind may attain the alternate society of Ultronia in the near future. *The Ultronic Age* may be the new trend setter for futuristic literature. Apart from the comparative analysis of Anand's Ultronian society and More's Utopian society (alongside

brisk observations on Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*), the paper opens up scope for further explorations of other Utopian literary text/s against the backdrop of South Asian Utopian narratives of Pandita Ramabai, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein and Vandana Singh vis a vis the distinctiveness of *The Ultronic Age*.

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Love and Friendship amid Religious Intolerance: A Study of Ismat Chughtai's "Kafir" and Saadat Hasan Manto's "A Tale of 1947"

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Abstract

Communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims existed long before the subcontinent was partitioned. The pattern of communal violence, fear, and bloodletting shattered the hope for a peaceful co-existence, and thereby damaged the faithful intimacy, hope, and reliance the two communities used to share at some point in time. Through the fictionalised representation of Ismat Chughtai's "Kafir" and Saadat Hasan Manto's "A Tale of 1947," this article has tried to demonstrate that despite all the obstacles in the path of love and friendship amid inter-religious strife, both the narratives give a new dimension and a path-breaking twist where the protagonists win over their invaluable bond of companionship through trust and the deepest interpersonal affection called love. The purpose is to strive for an understanding of peace, love, and compassion in humanity with an attempt to eliminate bigotry by fostering inclusivity and tolerance among humankind.

Keywords: *Communal violence, partition, love, friendship, humanity*

Love is an important emotion to strengthen the relationship between different ethnic communities to function judiciously living in a diverse nation like India. It is only through humility and compassion the very spirit of tolerance can be cultivated and encouraged among others to improve the lives of millions of citizens residing within the nation and on the other sides of the border. The inexplicable outbreak of violence cropping up from the seeds of hatred ought to be curbed by spreading fraternal harmony, and fellow feeling within the communities to hold the nation together. Author bell hooks in *All About Love* writes, "Indeed, to speak of love is not 'preaching' . . . Faith enables us to move past fear. We can collectively regain our faith in the transformative power of love by cultivating courage, the strength to stand up for what we believe in, to be accountable both in word and deed" (92). As a result of the handiwork of colonial masters through their 'Divide and Rule' policy, the poison of religious sectarianism isolated and dissociated whatsoever ties that were shared between the communities of Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims before the subcontinental Partition of 1947. Yasmin Khan in *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* gives an account of A.S. Bakshi, a Sikh civil supplies officer of Jullunder who observed a drastic transformation in the relationship between the ethnic communities at the time of the Partition:

'we used to be together . . . for days and nights, all of a sudden they lost confidence in us . . . at that time there were only two things . . . Muslims, and non-Muslims'. These feelings run to dismay as well as bitterness: 'we have lost the best of our friends, the people whom we loved, the places . . . so much of us was embedded in every brick where we'd stayed for generations.' (18-19).

The survivors of the Partition still believe that the hasty resolution of slicing the country into two has degraded and crumbled the lives of so many people who were forced to separate from

their generations-old ancestral land as well as the social relationships that they had nurtured for a lifetime. The state of havoc commenced from the very moment the Partition plan was declared by Lord Mountbatten on 3 June 1947, which continued post-Partition with “new ferocity, intensity and callousness” (Khan 128). These political, cultural, and social ruptures were the consequences, and price of freedom conferred upon us by the Britishers. Mountbatten's actions are also condemned for “pushing up the date for Indian and Pakistan independence from June, 1948 to August 15, 1947, and failing to take necessary measures to preserve the peace that might have been possible had he been willing to stay the course longer” (Brass 15).

Massacres were everywhere and the country was in shambles. However, there are examples when people showed tremendous bravery and rescued the 'other' by risking their own lives amid tension. Many sacrificed themselves, sheltered the victims, made arrangements for all the necessities, assured their sincerest protection to both known and unknown without a slightest inch of betrayal in the name of honour at times of crisis. These were the people who restored faith in true love by supporting and embracing each other even when the entire subcontinent was drenched in violence and bloodshed. There is an abundance of recorded shreds of evidence collected through oral testimonies where individuals had lent their helping hand to the survivors of terror and atrocities and saved many generations from getting annihilated at the hands of the berserk goons. Yasmin Khan gives several instances of the humanitarian deeds by people with generous and kind hearts toward victims whose lives would have otherwise been extinguished amid fearful hostility and intolerance. Zakir Husain, the third President of India, having experienced the communal flames during the Partition riots, shared in a letter to his friend about how a Sikh captain and a Hindu railway employee rescued him from frenzied rioters at Ambala railway station. Dr. Khushdeva Singh, a humanitarian and doctor who worked for the government of Patiala in 1947, safely evacuated all the refugees, and hence for his righteous endeavour he “received 317 letters of gratitude from Muslims whose lives he had saved or from their family members” (139-40). At a time when the subcontinent was and still is swirling with hatred and revenge, such courageous actions by these unsung heroes deserve special acknowledgement and recognition in history with the intentions to generate, nurture and encourage in others sympathy, empathy, love, and respect among fellow human beings with diverse cultural identities.

Ismat Chughtai and Saadat Hasan Manto were outspoken, courageous and unapologetic writers of the Progressive Writers' Association who were charged for the obscene content in their fictional narratives as these had a controversial reception for exposing the hypocrisies and sordid realities of life. Born in the city of Badaun, Uttar Pradesh on 21 August 1915, the Urdu writer Ismat Chughtai wrote on diverse social issues and unconventional themes ranging from female sexuality, gender inequality, same-sex relationships, family problems, religious intolerance, and the Partition of the Indian subcontinent which she condemned. She fearlessly voiced her opinion on the strained Hindu-Muslim relationship and enmity that existed both in the pre-Partition and the post-Partition era. In 1975, the Government of India awarded the Padma Shri to Ismat Chughtai for her remarkable contribution to the twentieth century Urdu literature. On 24 October 1991, she succumbed to her illness at the age of seventy-six. On the other hand Saadat Hasan Manto, a

friend of the fellow writer Chughtai, took to pen down the extreme cruelty that he discovered among people during the religious divide of 1947. On 11 May 1912, Saadat Hasan Manto was born in Samrala, a city in the Indian state of Punjab. An Urdu writer of the twentieth century who wrote short stories, plays, and essays, though his forte is the genre of short story. Besides being a writer, he worked as a film and radio scriptwriter and a journalist. The political turmoil in British India and the extreme cruelty that he discovered among people during the Partition are projected in his Partition writings. Manto had to migrate to Pakistan leaving his favourite city Bombay against his discretion since the Hindu-Muslim enmity reached its peak after the impulsive announcement of the Partition Plan by the then political leaders of the country. Love for his country India shattered his mental peace as it tore him apart from the city and the friends which were dear to him amid the frenzy of communal violence. Consequently, excessive alcohol consumption caused serious health complications and he died in January 1955 in a mental asylum in Lahore.

Through the subject of communal indifferences, Chughtai and Manto portray the dysfunctional Indian society where two ethnic communities are incapable of maintaining a loving, unbiased and tolerant relationship in order to exist harmoniously. Ismat Chughtai in her short story “Kafir” “portrays the religious prejudices with a subtle touch of humour between two lovers Pushkar and Munni in their microcosmic world which is a reflection of the larger macrocosm where religion is all-encompassing and dominating part of life in Indian society. “Kafir” is a love story set at a time when the British ruled the Indian subcontinent. Pushkar, a Kashmiri pandit loves his childhood friend Munni, a girl from the Muslim community. In the entire narrative, both Pushkar and Munni during their entire childhood till the time they grew up to be responsible adults, addressed each other as “Kafir” and “Kafirni” / “Musalmanti” respectively. The term “Kafir” translates to ‘infidel’ in English, a derogatory remark for all those who do not believe in Islam. They tirelessly outdo each other in their own innovative and biased manner to prove their superiority over each other’s ethnic community by teasing. Whenever they fought, their religion was the foremost subject of bullying each other, from the perspective of children. Pushkar can be seen as the representative of the Hindu community whereas Munni, the Muslim community, and their ceaseless quarrels depict the horrific tussle of Hindus and Muslims across the subcontinent. Munni says to Pushkar: “Dear sir, all Muslims will go to paradise. We, too, will just saunter in. You’ll be left behind, just see for yourself” (Chughtai 3). To this Pushkar replies: “Left behind? I’ll go to a better place than yours. You’re a Musalmanti, you’ll go to hell and burn there!” (3).

Living in a troubled subcontinent that was occasioned by the legacy of frequent communal clashes at the termination of colonial rule, racism was at its peak among the masses. The constant fear that a particular community’s religion is in danger or their religion is in a vulnerable position, forced these bigoted opinions to influence people’s minds which successively got passed on from one generation to the next. The constant urge of claiming one’s faith as supreme brought about an unacceptance of the opposite faith’s culture, lifestyle, conduct, habit, behaviour, etc. Likewise, these prejudices are echoed with a childhood innocence in Pushkar and Munni’s squabbles, mirroring the constant conflicts and disagreements of Hindus and Muslims, inducing chaos and communal rioting in the broader scenario which offers no hope for reconciliation or mutual settlement, unlike these lovers. The

emotion of love that evokes goodwill and kindness is absent among the masses and hence needs to be rekindled and cultivated among the people.

On one such occasion when these two lovers indulged in their communal bickering, which they used to indulge in time and again, Pushkar's mother, 'Chachi' laughably labelled their playful scuffle as "Hindu-Muslim riots" (4). However, both of them as well as their families were fond of each other and invited each other during their religious festivals to join in for the celebrations. Munni eagerly waited for Diwali and loved participating in all the rituals wholeheartedly, whereas Pushkar tried not to include her and avoided her touch due to the difference in their religion. Thereafter on Eid, Munni took similar revenge against Pushkar by pushing him aside for being a Hindu. Again, on Holi, Pushkar played the trickster on Munni by refusing to apply colours when she wished it to be applied on her, and hence their quarrel went on incessantly until the time they became mature and perceptive independent adults who immaculately recognised and understood the profound significance of their respective religion. However much Pushkar and Munni fought and teased each other on these festivals, nonetheless, they reconciled and got together with utmost sincerity, love, and affection, momentarily forgot their religious boundaries, accepted each other's faith while expressing the desire to turn into the 'other' one's faith, and making promises to marry one day. Despite their differences, both the families shared mutual respect and love which was limited to an extent where both the communities recognised each other's culture and religious beliefs, yet had a difference if ever the question of familial ties through interreligious marriage arose. Hence, Pushkar and Munni were well aware of the consequences of loving each other, a shared experiences of Hindus and Muslims in India for crossing their boundaries, which is evident from Munni's remark, "Pushkar, you'll be thrashed with shoes. Abba will rip apart your tummy" (9). Communal tensions ran deep in their minds as society and families would never accept an interreligious marriage in a nation where honour was considered to be of tremendous significance in the Hindu-Muslim question. Yet for Pushkar and Munni their passionate love was extraordinary and fierce which is obvious when he states, "To hell with such religions. Are they meant to help us or make martyrs of us?" (9). Nevertheless, love knows no boundaries and the lovers eloped together against their parent's wishes to tie the knot leaving all the differences of religion and faith aside, and leaping across the gulf that was segregating them and hindering the path of true love. The lovers' joint admiration, respect, and love for each other and their remarkable ability to balance and remedy their frequent juvenile arguments since tender age eventually strengthened their bond of love. Pushkar and Munni flouted all the societal and familial norms and stopped being a slave of religious intolerance by embracing the only supreme religion, Love. Thus, Pushkar truly turned into a kafir by invalidating the tenets of religion for Munni's love.

Saadat Hasan Manto's "A Tale of 1947" is a narrative against the backdrop of Hindu Muslim intolerance which had reached its zenith as the communal violence gripped the entire subcontinent at the time of 1947 Partition. The vehement waves of communal intolerance triggered the exodus of Hindus and Muslims from their natural habitats in order to save themselves from getting brutally killed by the rioters. Manto in this Partition narrative gives a realistic detail of the destructive surroundings and the massacre executed by the rioters in a gory display of repetitive pattern of hatred, revenge and killing spree. In some parts of the

country with Sikh and Hindu minorities, harrowing anti-Hindu or anti-Sikh riots were carried out by the Muslim community. Likewise, in places with a Muslim minority, the Hindus and Sikh rioters attacked and wiped out the Muslim population from that area. "A Tale of 1947" revolves around Mumtaz and Jugal whose edifice of love is demolished by the force of religion. In the midst of mayhem the bonhomie that obtained between generations of two communities had degenerated into hostility as they clutched at each others' throats like maniacs.

The story is autobiographical in tone and tenor as Manto's friend Shyam, an actor in profession was deeply disturbed by the horrific attacks in his hometown Rawalpindi. Khalid Hasan in the introduction to *Bitter Fruit: The Very Best of Saadat Hasan Manto* documents this conversation between Manto and Shyam, where Manto asked whether Shyam felt like killing him since he was a Muslim. It was at that instant Shyam replied, "Not now,' . . . 'but while I was listening to them and they were telling me about the atrocities committed by the Muslims, I could have killed you." (xvii). Manto understood the psychological effect of Partition violence that did "turn the gentlest of souls into the most demonic monsters" (Jalal 24). Manto was forced to abandon his own country he loved dearly in the course of the rupture of the subcontinent as both bodies and minds were partitioned into two, thus resulting in meaningless cruelty and deaths of innocents.

Religion comes between the friendship of Mumtaz and Jugal owing to the severe political unrest between Hindus and Muslims in "A Tale of 1947." The narrative opens with Mumtaz who is leaving for Pakistan with a heavy heart, and hence three of his Hindu friends had come to bid their final goodbye to him. Before leaving, Mumtaz spoke to his friends and drank endlessly to suppress the overwhelming grief that consumed him from the moment his best friend Jugal had expressed his desire to kill him, if the bloody fratricidal war began in their place Mumbai. Jugal, in a state of anger and frenzy uttered these words to Mumtaz since his uncle had been slaughtered by the rioters back in Lahore. Jugal's remark, "Maybe I'll kill you" (Manto 216) ceaselessly rang in Mumtaz's ears and occurred to him as a terrible sense of betrayal for which he took the significant step of bidding adieu to his adored country and friends. Jugal was equally distressed as he was conscious that Mumtaz was leaving India on account of his hateful remark. During the Partition, intolerance and hatred weakened the foundation of trust between friends and altered the psychological state of ordinary people who destroyed and traumatized themselves by butchering each other in a widespread carnage, thereby forgetting all about the bosom friendship or relationship that they had once shared.

Mumtaz spoke philosophically to his friends before bidding them a final goodbye. He explained that the Hindu-Muslim killings across the subcontinent were futile and meaningless cruelty where human bonds were in fragments, thereby losing the meaning of love, devotion, and companionship under the guise of hatred and revenge. Mumtaz also conveyed that these killings ultimately yield in no individual entitlement or reward as is evident when he says, "those who died were killed like dogs and those who killed killed in vain" (218). This thoughtless move of people to exterminate a particular religion and forgetting about their friends and loved ones, thus viewing them solely as the 'other' during a heated communal frenzy is hollow and a sadistic attempt committed in a state of collective insanity where every victor looked vanquished. Mumtaz explains to Jugal that if he had killed

him then he “would have realized that it wasn't Mumtaz, a Muslim, a friend of yours, but a human being you had killed.” (218). Therefore, more than killing a Muslim friend or the Muslimness in Mumtaz, Jugal would have supposedly crushed and destroyed humanity by butchering a human being. Killing Mumtaz would also indicate a ruination of the definition of friendship for eliminating his innocent best friend living in Bombay in defence of the slaughter of an uncle that was executed in Lahore.

Mumtaz gives an instance of an honest man named Sehai who was a pimp by profession. What made him an exceptional human being was his humanity before anything for the sustenance of his prostitutes, who were no less than daughters for Sehai. Despite being a staunch Hindu, Sehai took the responsibility for the girls' expenses, earnings, individual lifestyle as well as their future, and treated everyone equally irrespective of their religious backgrounds. Unlike succumbing to any kind of fear in the middle of violence and intolerance, Sehai showed exceptional courage by caring for a girl named Sultana who belonged to the 'other' community. As communal riots afflicted the entire neighbourhood, Sehai thought of returning Sultana's money and ornaments from the safe custody, given the troubled times they have landed in. What was more remarkable in Sehai was, despite being stabbed by a Muslim rioter in the Muslim locality of Bhindi Bazaar, he did not lose his faith in humanity nor did he forget his responsibility towards his girl Sultana. Finding Sehai lying in a pool of blood, the impulse to run away from him crossed Mumtaz's mind for a moment since Sehai was a Hindu, and helping or standing by his opponent in such catastrophic and challenging times meant jeopardizing his own safety. Mumtaz's mind was filled with uncertainties amid the horrific sectarian violence that he was forced to think about himself first before helping the dying man, Sehai. However, Sehai called Mumtaz and said, “. . . these are bad times you know . . . I wanted her to have her money and the ornaments . . . Would you please give them to her . . . tell her she should leave for a safe place . . . but . . . please . . . look after yourself first!” (221). Thus, the compassion that Sehai showed at the end for both Sultana and Mumtaz regarding their safety, struck Mumtaz and restored his conviction in tolerance and love for humankind.

The unfailing kindness, commitment, love, and reliance that Sehai portrays during those tough and trying times typify an act of colossal benevolence and goodwill, “giving hope to mankind by their sacrifice and courage against religious chauvinism” (Tiwari 54). The indomitable spirit of Sehai changed Jugal's perception about the strength of faith and devotion towards another human being, which is evident when he says “I wish I were Sehai” (Manto 221), while he realised the depths to which human depravity can descend in the name of religion, however, it “can never succeed in killing all sense of humanity” (Jalal 24).

The strained relations between Hindus and Muslims about how both the ethnic communities are different and incompatible in every aspect were drilled in the minds of every individual right from the colonial rule for political opportunism and selfish ambitions of the colonizers. Consequently, the relationship started to break down severely towards the close of the imperialist regime owing to continual dissension enkindled by the power-hungry authorities of the country through their exclusionary politics. People lost their homeland, lost loved ones, their friends, and acquaintances from the opposite community. No one was prepared for the turbulence which dropped like a bomb during this period which is apparent “at the lack of legitimacy in the division, the wider feeling that good social relationships had

been ruptured by a settlement forcefully imposed from on high.” (Khan 19).

The narratives of Ismat Chughtai and Saadat Hasan Manto underline the value of humanitarianism through the invincible and powerful emotion of love. It is only through mutual acceptance of the 'other' that can connect and bind the two religious communities. The cessation of hostilities and emergence of religious tolerance, nurtured by love, companionship and brotherhood can pave the way for sustenance of human society. “Man liveth not alone but in his brother's face.” In a world battered by religious fanaticism and worst kind of racism, the ray of hope in far pavilions symbolises that the salvation of man lies in love camaraderie and peaceful co-existence. These are the hard lessons to be learnt through inclusivity and sanctity of faiths. The narratives under scrutiny are sharp pointers to the necessity of ushering in humanism, sans bigotry and fanaticism. The partition narratives provide an abject lesson in this regard.

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Representation of Parent-Child Relationship in Partition Fiction: A Study of the Novels by Khadija Mastur and Reena Nanda

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Abstract

The 1947 Partition of India was a painful event that led to the country's division and caused multitudes of tragedies. Hell broke loose upon all displaced—some by choice and others by force. Migration on a colossal scale accompanied by ethnic slaughtering, loot, kidnapping, and brutal rapes of women added to the gruesome trauma of the event. The worst affected were children who became helpless sufferers of the manifold traumatic impacts the chaotic violence inflicted on their minds.

Literary works which redefine different perspectives on Partition through children's minds also explore the fragile Parent-child bond that has become the focus of critical analysis in recent times. Patriarchal men ignoring the familial responsibilities in favour of nationalistic principles resulted in disrupted relations in their households, and children became victims of enduring and depressing reverberations of these fragile and unbalanced relations. This paper endeavors to study this parent-children plight due to bamboozle produced by Partition in the Indian households of different ethnic backgrounds.

Keywords: Patriarchal setup, Indian Literature, Pakistani Fiction, Trauma Studies, Religion

Introduction

No history of Partition that I have seen so far has had anything to say about children (Butalia 249)

The discourse on the Partition of India has always been a terrifying subject of our history. Other than the geographical Partition of India into two rival nations, namely, India (consisting of Hindus and Sikhs in the majority); and Pakistan (for Muslims), it caused inexplicable soreness in the hearts of its victims. Millions of people were displaced from their homelands without time to collect their belongings. The route from one side of the boundary to the other was not easy too. Many died on their way to another side and became victims of communal killings; others died due to thirst and hunger. The few who survived were exposed to the terrible experience of relocating themselves across the borders (Batra 9).

People filled with animosity unleashed a racial fury of loot and murder on people of rival faith, abducting and raping women and not sparing even children on the way. Torched houses and mutilated corpses were a common sight. Human viciousness reached heights with the witnessing of pregnant women being slaughtered. Due to the fear of cruel death, infants were abandoned in deserted places by their mothers. Men killed their women and children to save them from the hands of murderers and also because they could be a burden on them during the migration.

Amidst this fury, children became the feeble victims of human aggression and assault. Other than being left behind, forsaken, or killed, young and innocent children were subjected to society's bigotry (Pokhriyal). Most of the women who were abducted and raped ended up getting pregnant with the children of their molesters if left alive. They were forced to live with the same men as their mistresses, who ransacked their dignity. The children of such women were called illegitimate and impure. They were never given the life and living they deserve. They existed like cattle, left to survive in miserable conditions. In some cases, when the women returned to their homes pregnant with the men of enemy religion, they were either killed in the name of honor or brutally rejected by their families. Such women, according to society, become a shame to their families. By any chance, if they were accepted, it was only without their children. These children symbolized their impurity and were said to carry contaminated blood into their veins.

Another problem children were subjected to, amidst the current of Partition, was a household where the priorities of elders were at odds with each other. During the storms of Nationalism, slavery, and the Partition of India, the adults, particularly men, were always busy with their nationalistic ideals and were mesmerized by high-flying leaders and their efforts for freedom. But, in the wind of nationalism, such men could no longer recall their duties towards their families, who were solely dependent on them. This led to the distortion of balance in their familial and domestic bonds. While the men were always out as political activists, the women of the house, especially their wives, had no choice but to live claustrophobic lives with their children. These women were expected to accept the imprisoning influence of patriarchy, nourish the house and its habitants with the minimum of resources and support their husbands from inside the confines of the house. But if the women and children retaliated or echoed their disdain, they were deflected away from the limited alms of concern given by the men in their family.

It is pertinent to mention that the socio-cultural surroundings in which a child lives contribute to the growth and identity formation of the child and are responsible for developing a healthy relationship with their parents and society. A distressed household creates a traumatic effect on young minds. The tragedy deepens as time passes. Unable to express the pain, the child pounds deeper into the sludge of their own bamboozling. Because their very existence is fed with repulsion and hate, such children grow up with similar thoughts and ideas for others, mostly towards their parents. Anam Zakaria uses the phrase "Children of Animosity" (218) in her book *The Footprints of Partition* for children who become the involuntary carriers of this hateed in their generation and relations.

This hatred in men leaves a more profound imprint on the susceptible minds of young children. Its off-putting impact stays with them for a longer time or even forever. Children's brains are very much impressionable and malleable. James A. Baldwin, in his book *Nobody Knows My Name* writes that "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them" (73), appropriately explaining the vulnerability of a child's ability to withhold what he sees and experiences.

It is not difficult to understand the impact of the unfortunate phenomenon, like the Partition of India, on parent-child relations. Children were profoundly influenced by family conflicts in the house that became a miniature nation during the freedom struggle. They

absorbed what they witnessed, gradually impacting and defining their emotional and social maturity. The soreness of relations they saw among their parents was practiced by them when it came to their relations with their parents. They followed the same path of ignorance as their parents followed in favour of their pursuits.

It is essential to mention that Partition had not always been a testimony of broken relations and parents-children plight; it had also brought to the surface the hidden strength of this bond which helped the children find their identity and place in a world fragmented by Partition. With their resilience, they build up their shattered life once again. There are incidences in literature where the parent-child relations met all the expectations in the testing times of Partition. The parents prioritize their family and children above everything else, be it the orthodox mindset or passion for nation and freedom as manifest in Reena Nanda's novel, *From Quetta to Delhi: A Partition Story* as the children reciprocate the same emotion of love, care and importance. Other examples include *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani, where the 12-year-old female protagonist Nisha continues to believe in the possibility of pulling herself back together even after everything has been torn apart by the fury of Partition. With her father, brother and grandmother around, life seems hopeful to her. Likewise, *The Family Saga: A Novel Set in the Time of Partition* by Narendra Luther narrates the story that runs through four generations of the Ram Lal family as they negotiate the trauma of the Partition and rebuild their lives.

The present paper focuses on this predicament and the pre-eminence of parent-child relations throughout the time of Partition. For this purpose, the paper investigates two novels- *The Women's Courtyard* (1962), initially written in Urdu (as *Aangan*) by prominent Pakistani writer Khadija Mastur and later transcreated in English by Daisy Rockwell in 2018. The second novel is *From Quetta to Delhi: A Partition Story* (2018) by Reena Nanda. These exemplary literary texts with varying perspectives on the Partition through children's minds also explore the fragile parent-child bonds which have engaged the scholarship in recent times.

The Bitter Nuances of Relations in *The Women's Courtyard*

The Women's Courtyard is a different type of Partition novel. The author, Khadija Mastur, chooses to give subtler details of the violence during Partition to focus more on its multifaceted effects on a domestic household with children. The news of violence, riots, murders, dislocations, and other massive upheavals are not revealed directly but the characters are shown to have known about it through newspapers and some general talks among other people in the novel. There are some other gestural details like Alia, novel's female protagonist, and her mother's moving to Pakistan near the end of the novel, and living in a house abandoned by Hindu family signifying the migration of Hindus from Pakistan. Alia's volunteering at Lahore's Walton refugee camp indicates indirectly the number of homeless and resourceless migrants living in meagre conditions on the other side of the border.

While the men are barely at home due to their involvement in the national movements outside, the women and children are confined to the inner quarters of the house.

There is an open space for them on the patio or the courtyard, which is also surrounded by walls on three sides and rooms on the fourth side. When Alia is a child and starts going to school for the first time, her father, Abba, after coming back from work, takes no notice of the family and sees her from a distance. He directly goes to his room full of fellow nationalist friends and expresses his hatred for British rule in his loudest voice. It is a common patriarchal mindset that men are to work outside and women are to take children at home (Aoki 78). The burden of parenting lies on the mother only, and the father fails to perform the expected role.

Her mother, Amma, on the other hand, is a sharp-tongued woman who works frantically within the boundaries of the house to keep the family in place. She keeps sneering at her husband for shutting his eyes to family responsibilities and detaching himself from his children's education and future concern. "One day this household will come to a very bad end" (Mastur 49). "Oh, what a cursed day it was when I married! All is lost- and what little is left is bound to be lost as well" (51). When Amma comes to know about the arrest of one of Abbas's friends, she trembles and says, "You'll send us all begging. If anyone arrests you, what will happen to us? Amma whimpered and cried that night" (52). In such situations, Alia's father silently ignores the topic and goes to his room. On a few occasions, when he decides to talk and retaliate, he says

Those days are gone when people trembled at the mere mention of the English: even if I can't do anything about them, I can at least hate them! Forget these godawful businessmen, these rulers! I hate them all. If I were like my elder brother, I would do something, but my hands are tied. I'm forced to do my job (40).

Alia and her elder sister Tehmina's childhood is pulverized between the arguments of Abba and Amma. Ramirez, in her paper, adds, "When parental attachment decreases, the probability of adolescents committing delinquent acts increases. Including in delinquent acts is violent behaviour whether that is directed towards parents specifically or others in general" (4). The parents never realize that the fragmented household is feeding on the delicate youth of their children. Abba does not want to be disturbed and bothered about his household duties when he is with his nationalist group planning and discussing political events happening in the country. Amma on the other hand always finds chances to bluntly scold him for his ignorance towards his children and household matters. Both parents, in their own interests, overlook that their children need personal care and attention. When Tehmina is of marriageable age, the tension in the family grows nastiest. Abba is not interested in domestic matters anymore. Amma's open support to honour killing leaves Tehmina heartbroken. She forcibly suppresses her love for Safdar but remains silent and grows skinny and feeble as time passes. But Amma and Abba are blind to this change in their child.

Amma's attitude towards Safdar, Alia and Tehmina's cousin, is also one of the many reasons for the disputes in the house. She considers Safdar an impure child born out of the illegitimate alliance of Salma Aunty (Abba's sister) and a low-born farmer. On the other hand, Abba brings him to his house after Salma Aunty passes away. When Abba selects Safdar for Tehmina, Amma gets mad and threatens to swallow poison. But no one is aware that this poison has already got hold of Tehmina, who goes to a sound sleep forever, the night before her marriage. The situation aggravates to such an extent because Abba never really cared to sit and talk to his wife and children. He does not consider their needs and requirements above his

love for the country. He remains busy with his hostility toward English and he considers domestic matters petty.

After Abba goes to jail, Alia and her mother are taken to her uncle's home. Alia notices that the situation at Uncle's house is also not different from hers. Uncle, his son, and Chammi all stand for their own distinct ideological beliefs and argue over them. This creates a lot more tension in the house than in her own. Witnessing her Abba and Uncle being the "agents of the households' sorrows and ruination" (102), she believes that people like her father and uncle can love no one. They get married, have children, and then leave them in the hands of destiny. She starts to sink into her thoughts and pines, not for love but to educate herself and make the most out of her life. Tehmina's death makes her suspect the feeling of love. At the end of the novel, when it comes to her life decisions, she doesn't remain silent like her sister, and instead yells at her mother's constant poking- "I'm not mute like Tehmina, Amma" (367).

Apart from being known as a Partition novel, the story is centered on young Alia and her life around the skirmishes in her home. It deals with her journey from her formative years in a claustrophobic household with different familial troubles to her voyage into the world outside and her learning to survive on her terms. The novel is an example of a *female bildungsroman* (Brandstrom 13; Bernard 18), as its main feature is "... loss of self, efforts to gain control over their minds, to win their freedom without hindrance, and to further their self-development" (Labovitz 248). Alia too, overcomes the innermost disturbances of the house and finds her independence.

To attain this independence, Alia fights many battles between her emotions and intellect throughout the novel. She deals with the heart-rending suicides of the girl in her neighbourhood, Kusum, and that of her own elder sister Tehmina for the sake of the family's honour, the thoughtless ignorance of the male members of the family (her father and uncle) towards familial responsibilities for the sake of their political agendas, the toxic nature of her mother and other women in the house, rejecting the love advances of Jameel, her cousin, to avoid a similar fate like her mother's after marriage, her determination to continue her studies and later on working as a teacher till the end.

Although Alia is able to get freedom from the confinements of patriarchal ménage, she never finds emotional contentment in relationships throughout her life. Not from Jameel, who manipulates Chammi for financial benefits, not from the doctor at the refugee camp who asks her to marry him because she does not want to marry for material benefits, which she already has, and also not from Safdar, whom she likes in the beginning, but who at the end lets go of all his political beliefs just to marry her. Her parents cannot see her wounds, which remain integral to her identity.

Relations Acting as Anchors in *From Quetta to Delhi*

Reena Nanda's novel is another take on Partition and its impact on the parent-child relationship. The work is filled with optimistic ideas about the importance of familial support in times of adversity. The bonds between children and parents in the novel provide stability and a sense of belonging to all in the family. The feeling of connectedness is the most powerful

armor that protects them from outer disturbances.

The story is about the time when the Hindus and Punjabis have to flee from Pakistan to India due to Partition. The setting shifts from Jhang to Quetta and finally to Delhi. It merges the personal account of a Punjabi household with the national fervor at the time of Partition. The author records the story of her grandparents and parents and their journey from a well-settled Punjabi family in Jhang and Quetta to migrants in Delhi. But throughout this misery, the family remains intact and works as a support system for each other.

The story is a fascinating blend of history, culture, pre-partition households and neighborhoods, traditions, and co-existing orthodox beliefs with angelical ideas, tragedy, and migration. The novel begins with the events happening on 14th August 1947, when Pakistan was born. The female protagonist Shakunt's family is forced to leave Quetta and migrate to Delhi (where she's married), while her father, Sawan Mal Malik, decides to stay back. He is confident that the violence will end one day, and he will call his family back to him. Shakunt "realised with a sudden shock that he was not coming with them. She felt a gut-wrenching pain, as though a limb had been severed from her body" (15).

Shakunt was born in Quetta. It was a year that was politically tumultuous. It was the year of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. Gandhiji was also on Satyagrah against the Rowlatt Act. But Sawan Mal is devoid of all outer concerns as he was engrossed in the joy of his daughter's birth. Shakunt's mother (Maanji) follows Sikh religious practices and is full of superstitious beliefs. Her father (Daddyji) has no faith in any religion. Superstitions govern Maanji's life, while Daddyji is entirely rational and brings modern ways into the household. Still, they " . . . were very indulgent parents who took pains to fulfil the needs and wants of all their children, buying them their favorite foods, preferred clothes, and frequent gifts and presents" (40). Their differences, preferences, beliefs and the uproar in the world outside never come in the way of their parenting.

After her marriage, Shakunt and later her family have to leave for Delhi due to the Partition. Still, a part of her remains in Quetta, "The umbilical cord that bound her to Quetta could not be severed, nether by marriage nor by Partition" (127). The nostalgia over losing one's homeland is present throughout the novel. Quetta was not just a place for its inhabitants; its very culture and ethos lay there. Partition and migration hit a terrific blow on the faces of the family. Permanent departure from their homelands was a trauma they could never cope-up with. "We, the children of Partition, too young to remember or understand any of it, were its victims just as much as our grandparents and parents. We grew up surrounded by their sorrow, bitterness, and nostalgia. Partition made us the lost generation, with no past and no history. We became a generation of deracinated Punjabis" (Nanda 157).

After losing so much, Shakunt turns into an emotional wreck: "What was lost was not just physical space, but the ethos, language, and civilization it had embodied. The civilization was unique and irreplaceable" (145). But she seems to be content with one thing in life: her family, which remains connected throughout the tests of life. She is conscious of not to harbor negative thoughts among children, as it is essential for children to share an emotional link to the land which was once their own.

Papaji, Maanji, Lalaji, Nani, Shakunt, and her cousins all stand there for each other during hardship, no matter their viewpoints. Maanji, although orthodox, never fails to accept

and understand what is best for her family. Her opposition to certain things is more of her opinion about it, not her final determination to take things into her hands, like Amma in *The Women's Courtyard*.

The work is fundamental in understanding that the parent-child bond is one of the most meaningful bonds in the world. It is susceptible and vital, hence warrants careful and affectionate treatment.

Conclusion

Parent-Child Relationship is the most admired relation of all the other ties (Popov and Ilesanmi 253). It fosters the emotional and social growth of a child. Once it is fragmented, it will impact their relationship for a longer time, maybe forever. Giundice and Belskey asserts:

... early experiences influence the child's future psychological and behavioral development. As a result, not only is there extensive research on how mothers, fathers, siblings, peers, child care, schooling, and even neighborhoods shape children's functioning over the short and long term, but also on the psychological, physiological, and neurological mechanisms that mediate such effects of experience on development (70).

An event like Partition has also tested many such relations where familial and even social bonds have been put at stake. Both the selected novels illustrate how external vigor in the world penetrates the internal tranquility of a family. Such disturbance leads to either disintegration of the delicate familial bonds, especially that of parents and children, like in *The Women's Courtyard*, or ties them more firmly together, as shown in *From Quetta to Delhi*. The paper advocates the need for extensive research on the psychological impacts of Partition on children and their relations. The Playwrights and writers have long been drawn to the study of the many-layered traumas of Partition, but there are still many facets of this discourse that need to be explored.

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Partition of India (1947) and the Resultant Trauma: A Study of Intizar Husain's *Basti*

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Abstract

*The Partition of India (1947) resulted in displacement of millions across the newly carved borders of India and Pakistan and a barbarous civil war and countless people were killed, mutilated, torched for no fault as they belonged to a different religion. The refugees' identity was marooned and altered. Time might have healed the physical wounds though the psychological sufferings remained persisted for decades as the trauma trickled down to the following generations as well. Numerous studies validate the presence of transgenerational trauma in families of Partition victims. Intizar Husain's *Basti* highlights the pain and suffering of one such displaced family which shifted to Pakistan during the Partition. As the war breaks between East and West Pakistan in 1971, the horrors and anxiety resurface among the members of the family suffered from Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The present paper will study the Kafkaesque portrayal of the protagonist Zakir who constantly struggles to lead a normal life in the face of a major existential crisis. By broadly discussing the concepts, symptoms and behavioural patterns of trauma and PTSD in relation to the characters in the novel, the paper will focus on how boundaries and borders have a larger impact than one can see at the surface level. These borders of the outer world are but intrusions in the inner worlds of millions.*

Keywords- *Partition of India, Refugees, Trauma, PTSD, Basti, Borders.*

'Nothing is happening outside. Everything is happening inside me.
Everything that has already happened.' (Husain 190)

About twelve million people got displaced and around a million died (some estimates assert that the count is about two million) (Godbole 2011), when the Partition of India took place in 1947. The exchange of the Hindu and Muslim populations across the newly formed borders turned into a civil war and riots broke out all over the country making the whole event exceedingly hideous and devastating. People were killed, mutilated, burnt, raped, and robbed off all their material wealth and identity on the pretext of Religion. The increasing communal hatred among the masses had even resulted in a vengeful exchange of trains filled with dead bodies of innocent migrants who never reached their destinations. Private armies and *jathas* (groups) were formed by volunteers to take revenge and commit atrocities on a large scale (Singh 1966). Evidently common people suffered the most in this mayhem. They lost their houses, their ancestral land, their homeland, their loved ones and their sense of identity.

Several literary works have been written since then to sketch the plight of these victims however, the novel *Basti*, written originally in Urdu, by Intizar Husain exclusively discusses the mental and emotional state of the victims of Partition asserting the fact that these

migrants suffered severe trauma and PTSD for years and even passed it on to subsequent generations. Ayza Yazdani in her article confirms the fact that 'trauma did hit the first generation of Pakistan as they endured the direct pain of losing their loved ones and faced expulsion from their homes and ancestral lands. Though they focused on rebuilding their lives and raised another generation but horrors of Partition and later of 1971 war were still engraved in their hearts.' (1)

The main protagonist in the novel, Zakir is also shown hiding his depression and anxiety at numerous places in the novel. Once, when he found himself alone enveloped by all his dreadful emotions, he exclaims, 'No, Irfan is right. Defeat can be endured, sentimentality cannot be. But then another wave (of emotions) came and swept him away with it. Any public show of tearfulness is vulgar. To release one's emotions in solitude is the proper human thing to do.'(158) It is shocking indeed to learn that none of his family members knows the actual mental hardships he is going through.

Bewilderment, anxiety, helplessness and even madness are some disturbing reactions which were commonly observed in victims of Partition 1947. Prajna Parasher in her article *A Long Walk Out of Partition* shares how after Partition her grandmother started mumbling and babbling incomprehensible words. In Parasher's view 'what she was hearing and not comprehending was a sort of madness and bewilderment on the part of an aging person trying and failing to make sense of nations and borders.' (2) Literature written in the backdrop of Partition also has discussed some really jolted characters that were driven to the brink of madness due to the horrific atrocities they witnessed during Partition. These people took years to make peace with the act of Partition and dealt with acute stress, anxiety for years before they started attaining near social normalcy.

Basti is the story of one such family. The protagonist Zakir shifts to West Pakistan with his family leaving behind in India his estranged cousin and love of his life Sabirah. The story revolves around the monotonous life the family leads with captivating and repeated recollection of their Homeland, Rupnagar especially in the case of Zakir. The new normal for Zakir was to sit on the benches of Shiraz café with his new migrant friends and share their melancholy with a cup of tea. The trauma resurfaces when the war escalates and the meaninglessness and existential crisis become the constant mood of the novel and its characters.

What causes Trauma in refugees?

According to Mariam George, broadly, the political, social and historical context of home country and the host country and the traumatic events which took place in both the former and the latter equally contribute to the psychological distress of the migrants. (385) In the case of Partition, the nature of refugees' movements were either Anticipatory movement i.e., when people anticipate danger or Acute movement i.e., where people are forced to leave. Being forced out of their own country, the migrants were not fully accepted in the host country either: especially the Muslims from Punjab who are referred to as *Muhajirs* (migrants) by people of West Pakistan. Jasbir Jain in her article mentions the term *muhajirs* which is typically used for the Muslim migrants especially from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.' Despite being part of the same religion *Muhajirs* were seen as a distinct ethnic group. (21)

The plight of the *mohajirs*, their victimhood and nostalgia, is aptly shown in the short story *Ek Bin-likhi Razmiya* written by Intizar Husain. The character Pichwa migrates to Pakistan because he sees it as the Promised Land which will offer livelihood. After migrating he kept searching for work but is always told that there is no place for *mohajirs* in Pakistan. Such lack of acceptance on the part of the host country is also a reason which forces the migrants to live in nostalgia and suffer existential crisis.

What is Trauma?

According to Judith Herman, Trauma is a state of utter shock and surprise caused by an extra-ordinary event which overwhelms the 'coping mechanism of an individual.' These traumatic events include 'threat to bodily integrity or a close encounter with death or violence' or even being a witness to it. The Comprehensive textbook of Psychiatry defines Trauma as 'a feeling of intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and threat of annihilation.' Trauma is caused when in an event 'neither resistance nor escape is possible, the human system of self-defence becomes overwhelmed and disorganized.' (24) On the other hand Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD is a condition which follows such traumatic events in distinctive cases. A person is categorized as suffering from PTSD if he or she is suffering from 'anxiety disorders with symptoms that last over a month. Kaplan and Sadock's *Synopsis of Psychiatry* defines PTSD and acute stress disorder as essentially 'marked by increased stress and anxiety following exposure to a traumatic or stressful event. The person reacts to the experience with fear and helplessness' (437) and flashbacks and nightmares are persistent.

Flashbacks are an important part of the novel *Basti*, as it is observed that Zakir is often lost in the memory lanes of Rupnagar and seen busy remembering his childhood. He is often abruptly brought back from this 'thicket' (44) of memories which are shown as a companion of his loneliness and solitude. This tendency of reliving the past by the Diaspora has been observed by Rushdie in his book *Imaginary Homelands*. He points to the fact that the Diaspora population carries an 'idea' of Home (1) with itself and it eventually might constitute as a notion of a safe place for the migrants; a place where they might feel they belong. In the case of Zakir an escapist tendency can be noticed where he absolutely loses his self, and is living a day-dream than just recollecting casually. It is as if he no longer wants to be part of the disturbing and demeaning reality but chooses to remain lost in those happy times in which he felt safe.

Karen Frater-Mathieson also, in her article *Refugee trauma, loss and grief*, confirms the fact that sudden uprooting can traumatize the refugees and 'interferes with their psychological development' because 'they lack necessary foundation of safety and security to achieve emotional, cognitive and behavioural competence'(12). Further reiterating that a person develops a sense of belonging to a particular place due to three psychological processes- attachment with the people and place, familiarity with the environment, and identity i.e., 'a sense of self which develops out of one's intimate and immediate environment.'(13)

There are various characters in the novel which are shown fondly remembering their homeland. For example, Afzal's grandmother keeps on asking at regular intervals when she may be able to go back 'home.' Afzal's family always made a false excuse and answered; when

the flood goes down they will take her back. She waited and waited for years but the answer never changed and the flood never receded and eventually she died waiting. (158) Similarly, the protagonist Zakir fondly remembers the greenish *neem* trees which took up a larger part of the landscape of Rupnagar. He even tries to search for similar *neem* trees in Pakistan as well but fails in his quest. (77) The country was beautiful but not similar to his homeland. Even Zakir's mother gets emotional and tears roll down her eyes when one evening she hears a cuckoo singing in a melodious voice nearby. She recollects how the singing of the cuckoo was quite frequent during the same season in Rupnagar. (78)

The family still holds dearly the keys of their old house in Rupnagar with a fading belief that they will revisit the place again. Zakir's mother was alarmed when she couldn't find these keys once. Zakir's father gave these keys to Zakir while dying, signifying the importance of these keys as inheritance, and the emotions they represent. He says, 'Son... these keys are a trust. Guard this trust, and remember the kindness shown by the earth we left, and this will be your greatest act of dutiful behaviour.' (179)

The keys given to Zakir by his father are symbolic and a stimulus of all the memories they had of their homeland Rupnagar. As discussed by Alcock while commenting on Refugee Trauma, Object Memory or Material Memory is a very important concept to understand the belongingness and attachment of the migrants with their respective home. (302) In Zakir's case the keys hold that sentimental value which he once attached to his homeland Rupnagar. Alcock defines Object memory as an 'object impregnated with meaning, a symbol of place and people from the past, representation of internalized objects of which the real object is a meaning.' A recent work by Aanchal Malhotra, *Remnants of a Separation*, discusses similar such objects brought during Partition and were imbued with meaning and had the spiritual ability to act as a 'stimulus for recollection.' (4) Towards the end of the novel Zakir, holding the keys, reflects 'the keys of that house, and of that land. The keys of Rupnagar. The keys are here with me, and there a whole time is locked up, a time that has passed. When those who lived in them go away, the time lives on in the houses.' (188) It lives on for eternity like the friezes of Keat's *Grecian Urn*.

The sudden displacement can easily demean the self worth of the migrants. The bodily systems fail to adjust to the new environment. The identity itself comes into question for them as it is formed by one's ecosystem whose cultural experiences are absorbed since childhood. Thus, losing the country and its culture can even feel like losing a part of self. This rupture of selfhood can result into a persistent feeling of depletion and emptiness. Zakir is also feeling this meaningless and identity loss. The dis-ease and disruption in the surroundings during the 1971 war bring back the horrors of Partition 1947. This is a symptom of PTSD where the trauma and fears of the person resurface automatically. One can observe that Zakir keeps talking to himself rather than contributing much to conversations going on around him. Moreover, he is often seen questioning his own existence. One can observe Zakir asking bizarre questions throughout the text such as, 'Where am I walking? On what earth my footsteps are falling?' (106) His baffled state of mind and disoriented position can be pictured from the following excerpts.

'He didn't want to understand anything. The truth was his mind was empty, empty.. Since morning he'd had the most intense need to think, feel. The more he tried to feel,

the more he was overpowered by numbness. He hadn't yet comprehended how one goes about feeling a great disaster. (151)

Lifting his eyes from the walls, he began to watch the people passing nearby. All their faces, drained and collapsed, looked the same, devoid of feelings. Only the slightest trace of fear quivered in them... Seeing that the scooter cab was empty, he absent mindedly began to climb into it, when a thought struck him: where do I want to go? Nowhere at all.' (152)

This numbness of emotions has been categorized as one of the three major symptoms of PTSD by Kaplan and Sadock in their book *Synopsis of Psychiatry* (437)

Zakir's sleepless nights and his responsive alertness to every sound he hears during the war, signals his hyper aroused state of mind. The nightmares Zakir discusses in his diary entries during the war days, give a deeper view of his state of being. One can notice that more often Zakir is usually lost in a forest in his nightmares. This forest starkly resembles the forest near the peripheries of Rupnagar, where he once got lost when he was a little kid. His experience was really terrifying when he went there with his friend so much so that he ran all the way home and swore never to go back. Intrusion of dark and terrifying memories from the past traumatic experiences always constitute an important symptom of PTSD.

Judith Butler and Kaplan have given much importance to Intrusion i.e., consuming return of memories, while discussing trauma and PTSD respectively. These tragic memories which so easily emerge from the sub-conscious or unconscious are called intrusive because the victim feels helpless and fails to stop this overpowering intrusion. The philosopher Suzanne Langer, in her book *Philosophy in a New Key*, has coined a term 'presentational thought' for abstract analogies which are usually developed by bodily and emotional experience. She argues that kinaesthesia works by creating analogic structures from one experience to other i.e., automatic registration of identical feelings. In a similar fashion age old fears, trauma related to a previously experienced events resurfaces when a victim is going through a similar stressful and devastating situation.

In his nightmares, Zakir enters towns which were entirely abandoned or where people were dying under the rule of their tyrant kings. He often encountered a monk or a *sadhu* in these dreams and couldn't help but always pose unending vague questions to these wise sages; a habit which he developed in his childhood when he and his friends would roam around in Rupnagar posing endless questions before their elders.

"Maulana, when will Doomsday come?" "When those who can speak fall silent, and shoelaces speak." "When will those who can speak fall silent, and when will shoelaces speak?" "When the rulers grow cruel, and the people lick the dust." (7)

At the end of the novel when Zakir is sitting next to his father's grave, shaken up and bewildered witnessing the atrocities, the killings and the anger in people, he finally concludes 'shoelaces are speaking' (198). For him the Doomsday was near.

Zakir's visit his father's grave clearly displays his hyper arousal (a major symptom of trauma) and his failure in judging the severity of the situation. Quoting Abram Kardiner, Herman remarks 'when a person is overwhelmed by terror and helplessness, the whole apparatus for concerted, coordinated and purposeful activity is smashed. (25) Later he becomes overwhelmed by terror and helplessness. The faces in the mob seemed deformed and

elongated to him. Though the notes in the novel indicate that it is the face of the sinners which grow deformed but there is a fitting possibility that he grew delusional due to the mental frenzy he was arrested in as he witnessed the disorder and rampage around.

Zakir is not the only character who is going through such mental anguish. Afzal is yet another important character in the novel who is going through his own share of trauma. He too experiences sleeplessness and hears voices which makes him terrified, hyper vigilant and excessively alarmed, both symptoms of PTSD (3). He once visits Zakir's place in a state of total hysteria and asks whether he could sleep there. He feels exhausted and when Zakir offers him a cot he exclaims, 'I'll sleep for seven hundred years.' (183). Afzal stands as the perfect example of the people who believed in the idea of 'Pakistan,' a dream which came true after much hustle. But when they saw it turning it to a nightmare they were shaken to the core. As the circumstances deteriorated, Zakir's father was also bewildered to such an extent that he declared that it's his time to die. (173) Afzal, who wanted to fill his country with 'beds of roses,' (174) was jolted as he witnessed violence in his war torn land. One can see him requesting Irfan and Zakir to help him restore peace and beauty in Pakistan, a naive belief which shattered eventually. The mental anguish is also conspicuous in Irfan and the stranger who usually sat across Zakir's table in the cafe. The latter would jump into their group conversations uninvited and could be seen losing his calm at several instances in the novel.

While other characters find it difficult to move on, Zakir takes his first step towards healing in the end of the novel. However, Herman (*Trauma and Recovery*, 152) rightly states that one can never say a person is fully recovered because recovery is always in pursuit. The process is totally subjective in nature and it is undeniable that the trauma can resurface even after years of being clinically treated. It is the scars of these traumatic memories which always remain, sometimes on the surface and sometimes beneath it. They become a feature of an individual's identity.

An identity has various different facets but the event of Partition took place on the foundation of a single facet i.e., Religion. It ignored the other important aspects of identity like culture, surroundings, personal and social experiences, lifestyles, etc. which are a crucial part of a being. After Partition, when people of similar religions started living together they still felt displaced because they missed their homes, their villages, their homelands, its architectures, its landscapes, its people and its unique culture. Texts like *The Sea Lies Ahead* by Intizar Husain and *Sleepwalkers* by Joginder Paul delicately portray how these migrants feed on the memory of their homeland and try to recreate it on a daily basis. Some are busy remembering the snacks and delicacies of Lucknow and some are busy searching for Malihabadi mangoes in Karachi. The politically provoked formation of these superfluous borders breached and destroyed the homes of millions. The profound sense of loss which the displaced carried is beyond the comprehension of the political and extremist religious fanatics. They fail to recognise how Partition has altered the lives of these migrants at so many levels. It is an incident which became an eminent part of their family history and the trauma of these migrants has trickled down to their subsequent generations as well. Much of this embedded stress continues to affect the lives of these victims in bold as well as subtle ways as seen in Intizar Hussain's *Basti*.

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Voiceless Victims : Representation of Women in Partition Narratives

Dr. Uttam Kumar Jena*

Abstract

In the orgy of the Indo-Pak partition violence, women were the worst sufferers , being considered as the honour of the community, nation and their male counterparts. Women being the symbol of honour of the 'other' community, assume the dimension of national honour, hence a 'territory' to be captured. To defile a woman's body was considered equivalent to the defilement of the community or the nation. The pathetic loss and pain, torture and trauma that women had to suffer, thus elided by the grand historiographic narratives, has been given a true representation in the literary narratives on the theme of partition. Literary narratives foreground the reality that partition was, its bestiality, savagery and its inhumanity, and present the trauma and anguish of millions of common ordinary men and women who were caught in the midst of the conundrum for no fault of theirs.

Keywords : *Partition, Community, Trauma, History, Fictional Narrative, Representation, Women*

The partition of British-India in 1947 into India and Pakistan is certainly the most horrible and cataclysmic event in the history of the sub-continent. With the partition, the sub-continent turned into a diabolical region in August 1947 and in its wake brought extreme forms of violence : arson, rioting, killing and a massive dislocation of the population across the newly carved frontier. Partition is etched as an unforgettable event not only for its political significance in the birth of two new nation-states but for its lasting impression of horrible emotional distress. History, that provides the enormity of the event in statistical data, fails to register the emotional crisis, the pain and trauma of the partition. Urvashi Butalia asks “Why had these stories remained hidden? Was there no place for them in history?” (42). In the orgy of violence that resulted in gruesome killing, looting, arson, abduction and rape, women were the worst sufferers. “The history of Partition,” Urvashi Butalia writes, “was a history of deep violation, physical and mental for women” (131). As a result of the mayhem “a million people were left dead and abandoned” (Kabir 179) on both sides of the border. Women, being considered the honour of the community, nation and their male counter parts, became object of target by the other community. According to Ananya Jahanara Kabir “Women were raped and mutilated during the mayhem of partition because their female bodies provided a space over which the competitive games of men were played out, whereby Hindu, Sikh and Muslim men sought to humiliate and annihilate the 'other' while imprinting their own identity on the bearer of future generations” (179).

Woman being the symbol of honour of the 'other' community, ultimately assumes the dimension of national honour and is thus treated as a 'territory' to be captured. To defile a woman's body was considered equivalent to the defilement of the community or the nation. The woman's body was geo-politicized and the abduction, molestation and rape of women were the weapons to humiliate the men of their community and at large their nation. The

woman's body was taken to be the site by the 'other' community upon which communal politics was meticulously played out. Women, according to Manju Jaidka, served as “symbols of the community to be subjugated, their bodies became sites of contested power” (48). The abducted and abused women still had to tolerate further trauma when they were sold in the market places for Rupees 10 or 20 a piece or sent as a gift to friends or were forcibly converted to the other religion and forcibly kept or married to a man belonging to the other community. The very mode of violence against women became a means of feminization of women's male counterparts who proved incapable of protecting their women and to that matter their community or nation. According to Paola Bacchetta :

... female bodies were equated with notions of home, their respective religious communities, nations, and national territories. Thus geo-politicized, women were dualistically positioned as either “ours” or “theirs”, and, accordingly, encoded as sites for masculinist protection or desecration.” (571)

The way women were subjected to macabre treatment by the men of the “other” community makes the point quite clear that women became the plunderer's paradise, a site to dismantle the edifice of a nation by the desecration of the body. The new concept of territory that Partition created acquired a male signification which was tried to be acquired by feminizing the males of the 'other' community through sexual violence on the others' women. In the fracas of partition that characterized massive calamity, women were singled out as victims of physical torment, abduction and rape. According to Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin :

... the material, symbolic and political significance of the abduction of women was not lost on either the women themselves and their families, or communities, or on leaders and governments. As a retaliatory measure, it was simultaneously an assertion of identity and a humiliation of the rival community through the appropriation of its women. (3)

Menon and Bhasin cite that though the official number of abducted women is found to be about one lakh, the real figure goes much higher than that. 'History' is concerned with the 'cause' of the event and engages itself with its investigation. It has kept violence outside its domain. But literature deals with the event itself in its present context to excavate the saga of pain and trauma of its victims. A historical narrative, according to Dipesh Chakraborty, “would lead up to the events, explaining why it happened and why it happened at a time it did” (2143). Consequently, the grand narratives of historiography that they formulate remain centred around the major actors and their respective political ideologies. For the nationalist Indian historians partition is the unfortunate outcome of sectarian and separatist politics”, “a tragic accompaniment to the exhilaration and promise of a freedom fought for with courage and valour” (Gilmartin 1068). In the same way “partition occupies an uncertain place in historical narrative even for the historians of Pakistan” (Gilmartin 1068). Concerned only with the drama of 'high politics' that resulted in the catastrophic partition, what has been elided in these modes of narrative is the voice of the subaltern, the voice of women and children, the “history from the below” (Menon and Bhasin 10). History, according to Mushirul Hasan, :

...does not reveal how the momentous happening in August-September 1947 affected millions, uprooted from home and field and driven by sheer fear of death to seek safety across a line they had neither drawn nor desired. (270)

And in the anarchy and chaos that was created during the gory days of partition, the worst affected were women. But the gruesome experience of such victims of inhuman sexual abuse have been pushed to the footnotes, out of the main discourse by the grand historiographic narratives. On the other hand, literary narratives have come out as more authentic documents to describe the horrendous impact of partition on the common man and woman. The bewilderment, confusion, chaos, pain and trauma, that cannot be explained by the historical discourse, have become the concern of the literary narratives.

At a time when Nehru in Delhi was delivering his “Tryst with Destiny” speech and when Jinnah vociferously was proclaiming the birth of Pakistan as the Renaissance of Islamic culture and ideals, thousands of Hindu / Sikh and Muslims were brutally killed, numerous women abducted and violated. Such brutal experiences in their localized form and as traumatic day-to-day experience have been faithfully recorded in the literary narratives. In *Train to Pakistan*, the first English novel written on partition, Khushwant Singh has given a horrible account of the inter-communal violence in which a newly married girl, Sundari was raped on the road by the mob of the other community and was gifted with the cut penis of her groom. Singh writes:

The mob made love to her. She did not have to take off any of her bangles. They were all smashed as she lay in the road being taken by one man and another and another. (171)

Similarly, in *Azadi*, Chaman Nahal tells the story of millions of people uprooted from their homes for no fault of their own. Taking the family of Lala Kanshi Ram as the central trope, the novelist recounts the agony and pathetic experience of the people who suddenly become homeless in their own land and start moving towards an unknown destination. The horrible experience of women has been given a true account through the rape of Sunanda and the abduction of Chandni. But the grim state of women caught in the frenzy of partition has been graphically described through the procession of Hindu / Sikh women which Arun and Suraj Prakash saw in Norwal :

The Procession arrived. Arun counted them. There were forty women, marching abreast. Their ages varied from sixteen to thirty ... there were two women... who must have been over sixty. They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their pubic regions... Only the breasts and hips gave away the age... Their faces were formed into grimaces and they were sobbing... The bruises on their bodies showed they had been beaten and manhandled... As soon as the women came near, that section of the crowd became hysterical. 'Rape them'. 'Put it inside of them'... And the moment the women had passed ahead, the eyes were settled on the bruised buttocks... (212)

The victimization of women and the woman's body as the site of national identity has been powerfully evoked through the character of the Hindu Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man*. To take revenge on Hindus and as such on Hindustan, Ice-Candy-Man abducts Ayah and she is defiled. Because Ice-Candy-Man cannot forget about the sacks of cut breasts sent by train from India, he is determined to take revenge. By disdaining a Hindu woman's body, the identity of Pakistan is ensured, as nationality is constructed by the assertion of community identity. The Ayah's highly sexualized body ultimately outweighs its value as a sexual object,

rather becomes a commodity, an ethnic signifier and a procreational object of masculine assertion. Afterwards Ayah crosses over to India with an uncertain future because she knows that she will not be accepted by her relatives. Ayah is only the symbolic representation of thousands of women who were turned down by their own families and relatives as they were taken to be unholy after being abused by the other community. They became the victims for no fault of theirs. The chauvinistic male-world did not find fault with itself for not being able to protect its own women but made women the victims of a prejudice, 'victims of double-displacement', as Urvashi Butalia has termed it. So women became the victims of physical abuse by the other community and the victims of psychological abuse by their own community. Not only women were maltreated by their own family or community after being physically violated by the other community, but they were even killed by the male members of their own family or clan before being abducted, for the sake of family or community honour. Sometimes, women were also encouraged to kill themselves to keep their honour. Bhisham Sahni has vividly presented it in his novel *Tamas* when Sardar Teja Singh kills his own daughters, wife and even mother to protect their honour from the marauders. Both the communities are "proud of being the inhabitants of Sayedpur" (287) but with the communal tension gradually intensifying, the village falls apart. Now the harmony is replaced by enmity and hatred. The scene of the village in the morning is horrible after the previous night's attack on the Sikhs by the marauding Turks. Both Sikhs and Muslims are killed but the loss of life of the Sikhs is much more than the Muslims. All the streets of the village are filled with mutilated dead bodies lying scattered. The village has virtually turned into a battle field and both the communities are raged against each other. When all the Sikh men and women have assembled in the guarded Gurudwara, the Sheikh's house is guarded by some outside mujahids. And the rigor of cruelty and bestiality on the part of man is given its barbaric account in the rape of a Hindu girl by the mujahids. The playful way in which they discuss the incident marks the absolute moral fall of man. During the harrowing days of Partition women were the worst victims of exploitation and barbarity. To defile a woman's body and to put it to torture was thought to be the defilement and torture of the other community. Raping a woman was attached with much larger connotations. It meant raping of the other religion. What was important was not the body of the woman but the religion of the woman. The female-body became an ethnic signifier, a site for asserting religious, national and masculine identity. Sahni has very deftly presented the bewildered state of the women folk of Sayedpur who are caught in the conundrum of the orgy of partition. The women folk realize that with such little ammunitions their dignity cannot be protected by their men. They know it well that the marauders will kill their men-folk but will abduct them to be humiliated and raped. So they decide to end their own lives before being abducted and brutally raped by the Turks. For those Sikh women if self-immolation is the only means to escape the Muslims violence, it is heartily welcomed as an act of valour. They want to live with honour till they are alive and so in that moon-lit night when the drum beats and slogans of the approaching marauders are heard, one by one they jump into the well to say 'no' to dishonour and defeat. The scene is horrible and pathetic. This incident reveals quite clearly the very sense of fear and horror that prevailed among the women during the tumultuous partition days when all human values are lost and all virtues seem to have been buried deep under the debris of hellish bestiality. In this regard

Stephen Alter comments:

A number of South Asian writers have set their stories and novels during the period of partition. These include some of Manto's contemporaries such as Ismat Chughtai, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Intizar Hussain, Bhisham Sahni and Khushwant Singh. Each of these authors draws on the same material that Manto uses in his stories – the violence, the sense of dislocation, loss of identity, and the explosive hatreds of religious intolerance. Bhisham Sahni in particular explores the theme of madness. The title of the novel, *Tamas*, implies the dark forces of human nature, the negative and irrational aspects of mankind, which surfaces at the time of partition. (99)

The same sense of the pathetic trauma of women as the helpless victims of partition has also been sordidly evoked in the short stories of Manto in his “Khol Do,” “Thanda Ghost” etc. The pathetic plight of Sakina in “Khol Do” tells vividly of the trauma women suffered during the partition. That women fell victim not only to the other community but also to the members of her own community who took unholy advantage of the chaotic situation to violate the body is given its ample expression as Sakina is kept captive by the volunteers of her own community and raped pathetically for days together. The volunteers themselves abandon her 'unconscious near the rail tracks'(Manto 45). She is taken to the hospital by her father Sirajuddin and as the doctor asks –“The window, open it” (Manto 45), the feeble half-conscious hands of Sakina “at the sound of the words, Sakina's corpse moved. Her dead hands undid her salwar and lowered it” (Manto 45). In this regard Urvashi Butalia comments: “Women faced violence both from their own families and their own communities.” To excavate the unheard stories of such victims of partition, Urvashi Butalia took oral history of the sufferer-survivors where she has given voice to the untold stories of many a miserable women who were abducted, forcibly converted, kept and abused by the people of the enemy community or even by the members of their own community. The long-suppressed silences of the women like Prakashvanti, Damyanti and Maya Rani have been given a voice in her *The Other Side of Silence* that tells the saga of cries and wails, pain and trauma which women were subjected to in their daily existence.

The pathetic loss and pain, torture, and trauma that women had to suffer, thus elided by History, has been given a true representation in the literary narratives on the theme of partition. Such narratives exemplify how women's bodies, reduced to the status of banal metaphor, trope or paradigm, become the primary targets of gruesome violence during the tumultuous partition days. Reduced to the insignificance of mute token, they were treated as ethnic signifiers, commodities and sites for taking revenge on the male counterpart of the 'other' community as well as to assert the national, religious and masculine identity, on either side of the border. The propensity of gendered violence during the partition was due to the fact that women were equated with honour, purity and prestige of the community and the nation. Symbolic messages of victory were sent to the men of the opposite group by dishonouring and corrupting the body of women which also served as the metaphor for 'Motherland.' Caught in the frenzy of the assertion of masculinity, women became its pathetic victims who had to suffer silently physical violence, psychological trauma, dislocation, abduction and religious conversions. Literature has given voice to the silences of such victims by depicting their trauma and pain. It tries to feel the unfathomable plight of the women and to give voice to the

voiceless victims of the Partition. Though much has been told, much more remains still buried in the debris of history.

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**Discovering the True Self: An Exploration of Origin & Identity in
M.G.Vassanji's *The Assassin's Song***

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Abstract

*Identity can be measured as the cumulative outcome of an individual's efforts to be recognized as a member of a nation, ethnicity, religion, race, sex, and gender. This identity becomes intricate in the case of displaced individuals who move across geographical boundaries and interact with varied cultures and customs. The paper intends to describe the configuration of such convoluted identities in M.G. Vassanji's acclaimed work *The Assassin's Song*. The identity crisis of the protagonist Karsan Dargahwalla stands in consonance with the double hyphenated identity of the author Vassanji, an Indo-Afro-Canadian writer. Karsan becomes the agent of Vassanji's hybrid persona as he struggles to construct an identity outside the walls of his ancestral heritage and embarks on a journey first to America and then subsequently to Canada, only to return to his origins and roots. The research paper explores the novel's major characters torn between traditional ideologies and developmental prospects, coming together to give rise to an intense and intricate plot.*

Keywords: *Identity, Return to homeland, Hyphenation, Migration, Post-colonialism, Diaspora*

In the post-colonial era, factors like globalization and cosmopolitanism have made the world a smaller space which has spurred translocation of individuals leading to an increase in cross-cultural interactions. These socio-cultural relations and collaborations across frontiers are governed by the worldwide economy, which is primarily capitalist. This discrepancy has instigated the social and cultural consciousness among the post-colonial multi-ethnic minds who have recently freed themselves from the dreadful clutches of colonial rule and started to remould their life as a new-contrived identity. The in-betweenness of two distinct eras and the psychological turmoil while seeking validity of freshly formed autonomous identity impacts the national and cultural identities of individuals. The gap in the ethno-social status of the individuals, which is created due to the hierarchic socio-economic consciousness, resulted in marginalization and exclusion of certain cultural sets by specific others. This further led to community and individual identity crises among the marginalized as well as the displaced populace. The migration and movement of colonized population to the colonizer's country before and after independence resulted in the fabrication of hybrid identities. The mixed identity is an outcome of cultural, ethnic, and social interactions between communities across geographical and physical boundaries. These issues and subjects of identity, aboriginals, in-betweenness, multiculturalism, and transnationality are targeted by several post-colonial diasporic writers. The diasporic authors have constructed intricate plots around their tortuous characters to bring out the nuances of the itinerant and rootless life of migrants. The various sections of diasporas have their individual history,

experiences, and aspirations but the pathos and orientation remain same across diversity (Karmakar 79). The paper focuses on one of the most renowned works of M.G. Vassanji, who has targeted these themes through his diasporic and migrant narratives, which depict the cultural and political scenarios of decolonized nations like India, Kenya, Tanzania, etc. An author of interspersed inheritance and a multi-ethnocultural identity, Vassanji weaves his tri-continental and multi-national experiences in his fictional and non-fictional accounts. The diasporic writer, who is himself a deportee, dwells deep into the pages of history and acquaints the readers with the journey of expatriates from dislocation to relocation, creating literary prodigies. Vassanji, with his multi-layered narratives, has investigated and explored the diasporic individuality in the framework of belongingness, identity crisis, homelessness, expulsion, and a final return to the native land. Vassanji, despite settling abroad in the new land, recurrently takes a plunge into his past aided by his memories and crafts intriguing plots around his characters who crave their identity.

“Who am I?”- a rejoinder to this query unravels the complex issues of identity and existential crisis that an individual deliberates upon at different stages of life. The concept of identity in post-colonial works emphasizes the struggle and experience of individuals to locate their identification between the past heritage offered by their traditional culture and potential prospects posed by the dominant and alluring western culture (Sharma 86). The third-world or the post-colonial writers face decisive demands regarding the affiliations that substantiate their psychological, cultural, traditional, and political manifestations. These authors generate literary marvels using their diverse ethnic experiences and dynamically incorporate the intersecting grey areas between the binaries of old and new, eastern, and western through a bricolage formed out of various cultural interactions among their characters. This inquisitiveness of Vassanji's identity finds a reflection in his work “The Assassin's Song” as he consciously struggles with his feelings of exile, alienation, and disorientation to bring forth the predicament of his protagonist Karsan, who constantly endeavors to understand what lies beyond the dark speckled blanket of the sky which covers his head. These experiences help Karsan measure the vastness as well as narrowness of his identity. The primary motto that governs the novel is recognition, realization, and validation of one's origin, identity, and roots. The narrative portrays the journey that Karsan undertakes as he struggles to create his identity in diaspora across time and space.

An individual's identity can be defined as a summation of all the ethnic, cultural, social, and interpersonal attributes that he acquires in due course of his existence. Over time, he undergoes numerous experiences which mould his personality and shape his identity. An immigrant acquires a dual identity as he tries to get accustomed to new cultures without losing connections with his origin, thereby leading to a constant tussle between his past and present self. The frequent discrimination and unacceptance in the foreign land never let the person develop or retain a sense of belongingness, and therefore, the migrant gets trapped in an indeterminate state of hyphenation and in-betweenness. This uncertainty and fear of losing one's identity haunt Vassanji as well as his characters. He confessed about this angst in an interview with Shane Rhodes where he stated- “there was always a mystery and a fear that when you went away, you would not return the same person.”

The Assassin's Song orbits around the theme of religious identity in the form of a

metafictional miscellany of interconnected stories drawn out from unforeseen places and times converging at the central figure who strives to find the roots of his ancestry and his own original identity amongst the multiple identities that he acquired over a period. An immigrant becomes a storehouse of multiple identities, creating instability and insecurity, leading him to a quest that guides him to his real self. The novel traces back the routes and roots of the cultural identity, under nostalgic tension as the protagonist voluntarily migrates to his dreamland America. It narrates the story of a fictitious historical character Nur Fazal who migrated to pre-colonial India and assumes the identity of Pir Bawa in the new ethnocultural environment. Amongst his numerous followers, Arjun Dev was his most trusted one and the novel prominently enraptures the journey of Arjun's eventual successor Karsan Dargahwalla. Karsan breaks the socio-cultural and religious shackles and escapes to the US in search of a different identity and freedom. On not being able to fulfil his dreams, he moves to India and assumes familial duties and obligations. "Vassanji is poignant in placing Karsan on a threshold from where he sees the blurred images of his past in India and future in America" (Satyan 105). The protagonist's relationship with his family members undergoes several changes in due course, which impacts and questions his identity multiple times. In the opening pages of the novel, the protagonist comments on his real identity - "I knew for certain that I was the *gaadi-varas*, the successor and avatar to come at Pirbaag after my father" (Vassanji 2). Despite this realization – that he has been chosen – which has been with him since his childhood days, he struggles as all that he wants is to be "ordinary, like that of many another boy" (2).

Identity is fundamentally how an individual defines, describes, and locates himself and is guided by the social and cultural surroundings in which one is raised. Karsan is the firstborn son of a Saheb of Pirbaag, and thus the successor or the *gaadi varas*. As he observes his father Tejpal, who has devoted himself as a Saheb and has become God for the visitors of the shrine, he contemplates about his individuality and remarks – "I would come to believe that my grandfather had an idea of his identity, and my Bapu-ji too, and that in due course when I took on the mantle I too would learn the secret of sufi" (Vassanji 3). Karsan, during his childhood, always admires yet fears the "God-like" presence of his father, Tejpal; however, he is never comfortable with the fact that he is the successor – the *gaadi varas* – of their ancestral Pirbaag shrine. Karsan seldom feels fatherly love from Tejpal as the father was always in his divine, non-human, and godly state, solving the problems of the visitors of the shrine by his blessings. The emotional degradation of Tejpal and his indifference to earthly relations aroused fear and repulsiveness in Karsan against their familial occupation. Karsan always confides in his mother and shares his unwillingness to become the inheritor with her, but his mother is too weak to affirm her son's desires.

Karsan embarks on a quest for identity and integrity from the instant he begins obtaining distinct consideration and admiration as the "saint-to-be". He remains unsure about his impending future, develops a special fondness for cricket, and constantly displays his disinterest in accepting the position of the forthcoming Saheb. Karsan is detached from his ancestral heritage and tries to explore knowledge that awaits outside via his connection with Raja Singh of Bhatinda, Punjab, who opens up windows to the world beyond the walls of Pirbaag through his gifted piles of newspapers and radio commentary. For Karsan, the

newspapers are a window to the real world- a world where science, politics, and technology blossom-a world different from the unreal and superstitious realm that his family believes in. Karsan frequently contemplates his individuality as he aspires to be “ordinary” but, the purity, piousness, and genuineness of his ethnic heritage keep reminding him of his primary obligations. Ethnic identity denotes the tag that an individual employs to signify one's connection and identification with a group of associates sharing a geographical space or cultural heritage (Vaghela and Ueno 835). His faith and conviction receive an inordinate shudder as he witnessed “Ma pouring ghee from the urn in her hands into a larger vessel that stood solid behind the mausoleum... Realisation hit me, and I stared, the image clear in my mind, the oil traveling from the urn through an underground channel to feed the eternal lamp of Nur Fazal.” (Vassanji 172-173) This instance led Karsan to suspect the entire pattern that guided him since his childhood, and he keeps on drowning in the black space – “It is a lie, isn't it, Bapu-ji? Jhoothoo chhe.” (174) Instead of receiving paternal love, Karsan lives in a constant terror of being sacrificed by his Bapu-ji in the service of his God, just like Isaac, who Abraham sacrificed in the Old Testament. Karsan's anguish is evident as he remarks – “Isaac didn't matter, I wrote in the back of my Bible, and underlined it firmly. Son didn't matter to father” (102).

In the zest for exploring more knowledge and building a different identity, Karsan covertly sends an application for advanced studies to an American university, which gets accepted to his surprise. Edward Said's concept of identity construction incorporated the aptitude to discard the colonial mindset and reconstruct oneself as a post-imperialistic and anti-colonial personality. This reformation of personality establishes freedom from the colonial chains and helps the individual to overcome the fear of repressive discourse. Karsan's second phase of life begins as he lands in America and feels free from the burden of responsibilities and inheritance. Karsan fervently commences his life with the resolution to create a neoteric identity. Karsan, who has grown up surrounded by 'ginan' or philosophical Sufi songs, compares them with the Holy Sonnets of John Donne; he discovers corollaries among the romantic poet Keats and his childhood prayer songs. After a while, Karsan feels alienated in the foreign land as no one comprehends anything regarding his background resulting in exclusion from fellow mates. He is persistently haunted by the ever-contradictory question of self and identity and is troubled by the clash of his desire with that of his father. America has given space to Karsan to think about himself. Despite staying miles away from his family, he is frequented by the thoughts of his being “special” and enquires about the relevance of these thoughts through letters he writes to his father. The displaced identities of Vassanji's novels ultimately preserve their original self but often remain unsuccessful in realizing the value of indigenous culture. Karsan struggles as he wishes to acquire knowledge in literature, read various philosophers, but his father's calling “your destiny is at Pirbaag, never forget that” constantly torments him. Karsan's change in place and his social group results in his inquisitiveness about his familial beliefs and he finds himself caught between two different lines of thoughts, one telling him to believe in Pir Bawa as the path provider and the other telling him to read the works of wise men and be knowledgeable.

Vassanji's style echoes Homi Bhabha, who stated that the diasporic writer inhabits a 'third space' of expatriation and cultural seclusion, which is a hybrid spot of hostility, continual

tension, and gravid chaos (Satchidanandan 52). As Bhabha stated “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha 129). The diasporas are in a constant state of multicultural ambivalence where they try to get accustomed to the new culture but are forever forlorn. Karsan's father wants Karsan never to forget his true identity- the identity of “to-be Saheb”- and reminds him of his mission and status. This quandary of an ambivalent identity can be observed in one of the '*ginans*' quoted by Tejpal-

Saffron Lion forgot his true self

Living with goats, he became a goat. (Vassanji 216)

The cultural interactions that diasporas have in the foreign land make them realize the cultural difference that they share with the people of new land as Bhabha states that the compromise of cultural identity involves the continual interface and interchange of cultural operations that in sequence produce a shared and mutable acknowledgment of cultural difference (Satchidanandan 52). Karsan finds himself exhibiting intellectualism, open-mindedness, and an exuberant personality. He realizes that he had to travel across boundaries to explore his identity and knowledge, which exists in abundance. This development in his personality ignites the fear in his father that Karsan would see himself from an 'outside' viewpoint- an extraneous persona from the 'other end of telescope'. While Karsan struggles to define his “self”, he is reminded of his roots by the followers of Pir Bawa in America. He feels suffocated as 'his people' want him to answer the calling of the shrine.

The moment a diaspora encounters the alien culture, he tends to forget his childhood ties, legacy, and veneration for his ancestry. Rendering to Bhabha, the impact of various ethnicities creates in their psyche a conflict concerning their state of inertia, and the requirement for its transformation and mimicry grants negotiation to the conflict. Ashcroft alludes to Said as he argues that mimicry of the centre arises “from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed. It caused those from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become 'more English than the English’” (Ashcroft et al 4). Residing in foreign spaces, the Indians have a propensity to ignore the Indian tradition and inheritance. In pursuit of his new identity, Karsan loses all his connections with his family and origin and forgets the sacred bol passed to him by his father, which tied him to his heritage. Karsan falls in love with a Canadian girl Marge, marries her, and fathers a child named Julian. Karsan Dargadwalla changes his identity to Krishna Faizal and settles in Canada- 'a condition which suited his new existence very well'- with his newfound family. He does not inform his father about any of these recent developments and constantly maintains an emotional distance from him. Karsan's contented and jovial life shatters the instant his son Julian dies, and his wife Marge treads out, leaving him distressed and desolate. Karsan fabricated an identity for himself in the new land- an identity that satisfied his aspirations and yearnings- which eventually got shattered when the harsh tragedy clobbered hard. He realizes that all the happiness and contentment that he was boasting about was all an illusion. His despair is reflected in his soliloquy where he yields -

“I had been punished for my arrogance; ...How flimsy a construct this happiness, how vain; how easily it tumbled down. Hadn't I always been taught all is illusion, all will come to naught? ... In my desperation to escape my father I had become my

father” (Vassanji 294-295)

Karsan's guilt conscience permeates him, and he is tormented at the thought of being disobedient to his parents. He, who escaped to America, deserting all the socio-ethnic and familial duties, seeks harbour in his homeland when all is squandered in the embraced land. After receiving the news of his father's death in the Gujrat riots from Mansoor, he decides to return to his origin and re-establish the shrine which the rioters destroyed. Pirbaag, which stood strong and united during the adverse circumstances-Indo-China war, the partition of India- could not prove its inviolability in the riots. The shrine and the Saheb known to have guided and sheltered both Hindus and Muslims alike are now given a tag and are vehemently destroyed. Karsan, who has always been taught about the middle path, ends up witnessing the destruction of his entire faith and belief in the “neither-nor” as Vijay Mishra remarks on the discord and division at homeland:

“The homelands of diasporas are themselves contaminated; they carry racial enclaves, unassimilative minorities and other discrepant communities within their body and are not pure, unified spaces in the first place.” (Mishra 150)

Throughout the novel, Karsan is seemed to have been caught in the trap of in-betweenness. He is caught between two identities-worldly-the identity of an ordinary individual which he craves for throughout his life- and spiritual, the one which he has inherited from his ancestors, his real identity, his destiny. Karsan could once again recall the sacred *bol* that his father passed down to him. The encased identity of Pir Bawa is also exposed in the final pages by Professor Ivanow, who was passionate about “the medieval, controversial Muslim sect of the Assassin's” and had visited Pirbaag during the govern of Karsan's *Dada*. In his book, he makes a striking revelation that Nur Fazal was among the assassins or the Ismailis who found refuge in Vishal Dev's kingdom. After reading the article, Karsan could decode the unrevealed sacred *bol*, which has been passed down to his ancestral line through ages, and the identity of the assassin is revealed. The return of diaspora is usually linked to their failure in surpassing the alienation and marginalization witnessed in the host country or to the realization of staying away from their heritage, history, and true existence. The theorist R. Radhakrishnan advocates that return is not controlled by any of the epistemological or ontological notions; instead, “it is a matter of political choice by a people on behalf of their own authenticity, and there is nothing regressive or atavistic about people revisiting the past with the intention of reclaiming it” (Radhakrishnan 758).

In the novel *The Assassin's Song*, the identity of the assassin is not just restricted to the character of Nur Fazal, instead it encompasses all the major characters in some way or the other. Mansoor's suspected involvement in the Gujrat riots makes him an assassin in the literal sense. The successors of Arjun Dev, including Tejpal continued to 'kill' the dreams of their children down the ages and have become murderers in the symbolic sense. Karsan himself becomes an assassin as he crushes his father's desires and expectations and, in a way, is a cause of his mother's death. Vassanji brilliantly crafts this novel and puts forth that no human remains untouched by the identity of an assassin, and every individual subsists with this identity, sometimes in a literal sense and sometimes in a figurative sense. The author further addresses the issue of overall identity conflict among diasporas and presents a solution that guides them to their roots and origins, unravelling the real self. The narrative delves into

Karsan's expedition of his belongingness rendering to the idea that the cycle of a migrant's life remains inchoate without a conscientious exploration of self.

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Neoliberal Assertions in South-Asian Literature: Interpreting three Contemporary Entrepreneurial Novels

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Debajit Goswami**

Abstract

As South Asia ushered into an era of post-liberalization, the hitherto celebratory ideas of national sovereignty became outdated, witnessing repeated subversion of democratic institutions and the political and economic transformation of most of the South Asian countries into a neoliberal State. It marked the predominance of the cult of entrepreneurship that has been imported to South Asia as one of the prime ideological apparatuses of Neoliberal governance. This radical import of entrepreneurial culture has gradually generated a process of individuation and entrepreneurial energy. The subsequent cultural myth of the ascension of the entrepreneur in 'Rising Asia' served for the legitimization and ideological domination of neoliberal capitalism, attributing meritocracy to cases of individual wealth accumulation and conveying an idea of a society in which government has gotten out of the way and let the most creative and innovative thrive.

*The present paper engages with three Anglophone novels of postmillennial Asia- Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Moshin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Asia*, and Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*, demonstrating how the protagonists' development in the neoliberal world order and their assimilation into a transitioning society, is ruffled by the deceitful forces of the capitalist economy and neo-liberal state.*

Keywords: *Neoliberalism, Hegemony, Entrepreneurship, Capitalism, Rising Asia*

Introduction

Marx had acknowledged that economic exploitation might not be the only factor driving capitalism; the capitalist framework was also bolstered by the governing class's dominance of values and ideas, which Engels referred to as 'false consciousness' that would prevent the proletarian classes from realizing and refuting their domination (Heywood 128). The ideas of the ruling classes' dominance over social norms, values and ideals, and the imposition of a false consciousness was furthered by Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who put forth the concepts of hegemony and the manufacture of consent. The capitalist state, according to Gramsci, is comprised of two intersecting domains: a "political society" (which dominates by means of coercion) and a "civil society" (where domination is subtle, through the manufacture of the consent) (Heywood 100-101). Civil society, in the Gramscian understanding, then reflects a public sphere wherein workers unions, political groups, social factions arrive at a compromise with the bourgeois state, and this also serves as the domain of formation of cultural values, social ideals, even the formation of political

consent, and where bourgeois 'hegemony' is reproduced in cultural life to 'manufacture consent' and legitimacy through the notion of ideological apparatus (Heywood 81 and Gramsci 84).

Reiterating a similar concern, Rohit Chopra remarked in his essay that “Ideological justification of neoliberalism in third world countries neoliberalism continues to hold sway in South Asia because it is propped up not just by the repressive apparatuses of the region's states, but through an array of ideological reinforcements as well” (Chopra). One of the most potent of all the ideological apparatuses is the myth of the entrepreneur. As Roland Barthes observes in his *Mythologies*, daily life is conceptually structured through a network of cultural myths that serve to naturalize a given social order (Barthes10). In this manner the myth of the entrepreneur, disseminated through a series of stock narratives of entrepreneurship, legitimizes neoliberal capitalism by attributing meritocracy to cases of individual wealth accumulation and conveying a sense of a society in which government has gotten out of the way and let the most creative and innovative thrive. It does this by telling particularly ideologically slanted narratives of individual entrepreneurs. The image of the entrepreneurial self indicates the position of the exploitative, expansionist yet elusive and ingenious Neoliberal state.

The configuration of the State intervention and the Individual entrepreneurial self in a neoliberal state has been well captured in a dialectically intellectual transaction between Ralph Miliband and Poulantzas. English sociologist Ralph Miliband in his book *The State in Capitalist Society*, established what came to be known as the 'instrumentalist' view of the state –explaining how the state works in order to promote the interests of the capitalist class, which is mainly due to the government members' social origins which are mostly reflective of a bourgeois background and personal links and influence between government members and ruling-class elites (Miliband 23). Poulantzas wrote a review of Miliband's book for the New Left Review, in which he lays forth the relative autonomy of the state and the structural approach. Poulantzas argues, heavily inspired by Althusser, that the state is inherently capitalist in character- that is, the state can serve no function other than the preservation of the existing capitalist mode of production. Of course, later Miliband goes on to critique Poulantzas' structural position for not allowing space for human agency and free will (Poulantzas and Miliband).

This brought forth the idea of “self-centered individualism, selective self-serving investment, and what conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter terms “creative destruction” – (Herbert and Link). It features a dismantling the existing configuration of profit distribution in order to replace them with a mechanism of greater profit. Michel Foucault in his exploratory examination of how individuals become subjects has called it as “technologies of the self”. (Foucault). It gradually escorts the readers towards the realization of the resultant disillusionment with it problematizing the seemingly uncontested proliferation of the entrepreneurial ideals and finally resulting in the bold exposure of the neoliberal politics that works in order to perpetuate their interests suggesting methods to neutralize its damaging effects.

The White Tiger: Eulogization of the Entrepreneurial Self

To begin with, Adiga's novel marked a very fresh approach towards the projection of politics operating beneath the neoliberal economic design. Though sarcastic in its presentation of the capitalist turn that the century took Adiga's narrative validated and eulogized the capitalist takeover of the hegemonic feudal design. But Adiga meticulously asserted the fact that the hegemony continued only the beneficiaries are replaced.

The White Tiger thus presents the tale of Balram Halwai whose autonomy, responsibility, entrepreneurship, positivity, and self-confidence mobilized his rise from a position of a driver to that of an entrepreneur in the given neoliberal economic design that New India was getting acclimatized to. Born in what Adiga referred as the Dark alleys of India in a village in Bihar, Balram could not accomplish his academic goals and so the prescribed format of financial success or social accession has already been denied to him when he had to drop out of school. But an opportunity to work as a servant in a tea shop in Delhi redeemed him from the feudal slavery that he has been subjected to in his village. After Balram had escaped the feudalistic configuration of the rural outskirts of Bihar, he looked upon the current State forces and bureaucratic powers for ensuring not only his survival but his economic advancement. It was his job as the driver for the reputed family in New Delhi that Balram has been introduced to the private corners of the capitalist model of the economy and owing to his entrepreneurial brilliance he could easily acknowledge the channels that it contains for his financial ascension.

This governmental and bureaucratic withdrawal in terms of its functions in the public sphere which neoliberalists and capitalists have championed in practice fostered a situation of manufactured precarity where the individual crippled between autocratic feudalism and elusive communism has to subscribe to extralegal means in order to survive in the predominantly prevalent form of Capitalism.

What truly shocks the readers is Balram's bold promotion of the amoral, extra-legal willingness pragmatically to commit grievous and heinous crimes if it can promise social and economic advancement. On account of the flexibility of his political and moral principles he remarked that according to him, an entrepreneur needs to have no fixed theological or political allegiance, to be fluid in his or her beliefs and ways of being: "the Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, at the same time" (Adiga 6). He labels murder an act of entrepreneurship. Gary Becker in his article 'Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach' in this regard has claimed that: 'Entry into illegal activities can be explained by the same model of choice that economists use to explain entry into legal activities' (207).

Aligning to this argument he justifies his murdering of his not so corrupt master Mr. Ashok who had just made a good amount of progression in adapting himself to the coded dynamics of the neoliberal network where the bureaucratic machinery works invisibly for facilitating illegal practices. Poulantz would have argued demonstrates a relative autonomy of the state under the capitalist system, where the capitalist social formations are such that Balram's financial ascension does not rebel against this exploitative mode but rather legitimize and reproduce the capitalist mode of production and class relations. The protagonist's rise to wealth from abject poverty may make him such an endearing figure that

the legality or the justifiability of the method that he adopts is problematized. Moreover, this legacy of the coalition of the bureaucracy and the elites to promote the capitalist design is continued in the novel. As Ralph Miliband proclaims in his book *The State in Capitalist Society* 'The state in these class societies is primarily and inevitably the guardian and protector of the economic interests which are dominant in them its 'real' purpose is to ensure their continued predominance, not to prevent it' (Miliband 10).

At the outset, one may assume that Adiga does sympathize with and celebrate the neoliberal design but a deeper investigation might reveal the political strategies which maneuver the process of the formation of the neoliberal entrepreneurial subjectivity that Balram in this particular novel entails.

Hamid's Disillusionment with the Neoliberal and Entrepreneurial Subjectivity

Though Hamid's novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Asia* does not engage with loads of optimism it did make an impression in concretizing the need for critiquing the entrepreneurial self and the justification of the method of the constitution of the self. This probably can be evidenced through the dismantling of the neoliberal subjectivity where the protagonists are physiologically, financially, and psychologically devastated.

The protagonists of Hamid's novel in the first half of the novel assumed the path that Balram did. And he too swiftly and spontaneously adopted the fraudulent path to make money. As he recognized the loops and gaps in the present economic configuration he employed them for his own interest. He started his own water selling business where he began selling the impurified water in sealed bottles. Though his business amplified his wealth in huge proportions that only for a brief period of time. It is soon surfaced that business rivalry, dealing with goons, mafia, and the underworld is an integral part of the procedure of becoming a successful entrepreneur in Rising Asia. Hamid has been very subtle here in his depiction of his idea of freedom and liberty that the discourse of neoliberalism boasted of. The realization is surfaced that the figure of the entrepreneur that the neoliberal frame of economy eulogizes is only the marketing paraphernalia that it can employ so that this economic design can proliferate and moneyed class could maintain their status quo. The prominence of individuality that the neoliberal design emphasizes is a rare case that could never be a democratic and universal possibility for each and every individual in the country.

In fact, as Michael K. Walonen argues in the essay entitled "Debunking the Myth of the Entrepreneur through Narrative in the Contemporary South Asian Novel", Hamid in his novel articulates that it is the State that implicitly controls and manipulates the rise and fall of the entrepreneurs (9). English sociologist Ralph Miliband in his book *The State in Capitalist Society*, established what came to be known as the 'instrumentalist' view of the state –explaining how the state works in order to promote the interests of the capitalist class, which is mainly due to the government members' social origins which are mostly reflective of a bourgeois background and personal links and influence between government members and ruling-class elites.(Miliband 69-145)

The present discussion thus ushers us towards a reexamination of the prime principle of freedom that comprises the core of the Neoliberal capitalist design. Does the capitalist

design liberate the entrepreneur from all sort of slavery? The chaff of the social cannot pose any legitimate objections to neoliberalism, since it cannot be represented as a variable in the equation. Where Balram swiftly adapts to this absence of familial and humane love and the process of emotional automation and objectivity that he undergoes, Hamid's protagonist perhaps addressed the emotional vacuum that intensified with his extravagant shares of profit that he reaps from the illegal business of water selling. This vacuum he fulfills later by uniting with his long-lost love. It is by replenishing the emotional and the human domain that the protagonist in Hamid's novel endeavored to redeem himself.

Thus, the argument here endeavors to project Hamid's indecision regarding neo liberalization as a whole and the entrepreneurial culture in particular that it claims to promote.

Bhagat's Alternative to the Entrepreneurial Nexus

Chetan Bhagat's protagonist Gopal and his foil Raghav in the novel *Revolution 2020* poised an antithetical equation of the rising prominence of Capitalism and the fading influence of communism in most of the Asian countries. The novel carefully depicts the dubious means through which the protagonist Gopal amasses his fortune which provides a bleak depiction of Asian societies, and more generally of a globalized world mostly controlled by rampant capitalism. The novel introduces the readers to the private corners of the country's technical education system which has turned out as a space of conflict between the fading Governmental authorization and the frequently proliferating privatized corporations.

Gopal too like Balram quite early in his life recognized that the explicitly prescribed format of ascending the social ladder could not be cracked by him. Gopal too like Balram quite early in his life recognized that the explicitly prescribed format of ascending the social ladder could not be cracked by him. In the initial quarter of the novel, Gopal pronounces his ambition to become "A rich man" (Bhagat 16). And as he met with his repeated failures of cracking India's most reputed entrance examination IIT JEE sucked the limited financial resource of his family leading to his emotional and familial breakdown, he realized that he need to decode an alternative way to survive. Most of the entrepreneurial subjects repudiate a formal education which problematizes the significance of education in the individual as the collective growth of the economy. Neoliberal state which on one hand creates an illusion of a just society where merit and hard work leads to success and accumulation, on the other hand, through its cultural mechanisms of domination reproduces the sentiment of blaming one's own fate and acceptance of the same, for being left out of the opportunities of accumulation and capital expansion.

The novel exposes how the entire bureaucratic design and the legal paraphernalia facilitate Gopal's seemingly mysterious ascension to wealth. A whole new vocabulary was coined for the post-colonial state: 'relative autonomy'; 'intermediate classes'; the 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie'; the 'Political- Administrative class', 'state capitalism' to describe and explain the overwhelming power of the state and its functionaries (Chandoke 63-89). To add to this, the corporate orientation, advocacy for private property rights, independent functioning of the market, and free trade under the Neoliberal state promotes a justification for unrestricted

accumulation for some while the gap between the core and periphery widens within the same postcolonial societies which embraced it in the first place. Gopal's growing fortune is built both on his individual entrepreneurial faculties administered by the bureaucratic corruption, often obscured by the promotion of the neoliberal ideology of reduced governmental involvement.

This facade of the entrepreneurial promotion of Gopal implicitly facilitating the illegal operation of local politicians is disclosed when Raghav who, ironically, has become a journalist and not an engineer publishes an article with the results of his investigation entitled "MLA makes money by making holy river filthy" (Bhagat 234), whose readers learn that their political representative's greed is the reason why the sewage systems around Varanasi have so completely collapsed that illness is quickly spreading and causing the death of hundreds of children and elderly people. Raghav embodies the principles of communism and attempts to impede the prevailing influence of corruption inherent in the capitalist mode by exposing them through his self-sponsored newspaper *Revolution 2020*. Raghav envisages a collective rebellion against the proliferation of the capitalist forces that intensifies corruption in the society in the name of promoting individual entrepreneurs like Gopal. In his endeavor of debunking the egalitarian sociopolitical configuration, Raghav had to stand against his childhood friend Gopal. The novel does not end with the conflict reaching a definite end but the two youths somehow continue to affiliate themselves with the two polar political ideologies.

Conclusion

This paper endeavors to scale the multi-faceted manifestation of the entrepreneurial self and how do the characters conform to or retaliate to this process of individuation. Where Adiga's articulation of the neoliberal forces finds its due legitimization in Balram's appropriation and internalization of corrupted mechanisms to thrive in the capitalist economy, Hamid's novel presents the partial disillusionment with the capitalist culture of self-help. The present discussion thus ushers us towards a reexamination of the prime principle of freedom that comprises the core of the Neoliberal capitalist design. Does the capitalist design liberate the entrepreneur from all forms of slavery? A serious investigation may result in the realization that the façade of entrepreneurs as the embodiment of freedom or liberation is deliberately and discursively construed in order to propagate the neoliberal economic design, especially in the South Asian Nations that could obscure the phenomenon of smuggling of global capitalism into the third world countries.

For Hamid, the redemption from this nexus lies in the revival of the human warmth manifested in social relations. Quite diplomatically Hamid exposes the politics behind discarding the social, psychological, and emotional dimensions as dysfunctional in the economic sphere, an essential criterion for constituting the subjective self. The analytical survey of the neoliberal dynamics culminates in Bhagat's novel which anticipates a liberation from the corrupted network, somehow endeavoring to revive conventional Marxist lines through Raghav's newspaper *Revolution 2020*. Though the viability of the project is still questionable in the contemporary scenario of unchecked expansion of the neoliberal

economy, at least it asserts the urgent requirement for contemplation and revision of the exponential proliferation of the entrepreneurial cult and the politics that drives its rhetoric.

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Alienation and Negotiation of Identity of South Asian Diasporic Women in Shauna Singh Baldwin's *English Lessons and Short Stories*

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Abstract

The concept of diaspora is broadly associated with migrations from a homeland to a hostland. Such displacements, whether willful or forced, are followed by a feeling of alienation, lack of belongingness, cultural shock, nostalgia for home and roots in the diasporic communities. Writer Shauna Singh Baldwin presents these concerns of diaspora with special focus on women, hence addressing the quagmire of gender in addition to other issues. Her text, English Lessons and Short Stories employs the perspective of female characters to explore the experiences of the Indian immigrants to Canada during later half of 20th century. The paper aims to analyse the varied strands of alienation showcased through the women characters in her stories as they negotiate with the foreignness, reclaim their identity and wade through the material and psychological challenges so as to occupy an 'interstitial space' or as Bhabha calls it a 'third space' in terms of identity and agency.

Keywords: *South Asian diasporic women, alienation, negotiation of identity*

Introduction

Diaspora is a timeless human phenomenon and is inexorably intertwined with the issues of alienation, exile, rootlessness and identity. As a result of global movements in current times, the stance of diaspora has been re-assessed and re-invented by scholars and critics of diaspora studies in order to understand its modified meaning and relevance. Regarding the metamorphosis of this concept James Clifford asserts: “Jewish (and Greek and Armenian) diasporas can be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions” (306).

Clifford's statement about the diaspora is concurrent with the claims of postmodernity, globalization and trans-nationalism that presses on the new dimensions of hybridity, conviviality and multi-culturalism brought about by the putative diasporic population. However, this contemporaneous turn of the concept does not efface the age-old concerns related to identity, belonging and other imbued aspects. Diasporic literature testifies to the permeation and persistence of these issues in the displaced communities whether primitive or contemporary.

Narrowing down the diaspora to the Punjabi and particularly the Sikh community, in proportion to the large numbers who have migrated or made lives abroad, there has been much work done to showcase their vicissitudes. Punjabi writers and authors, especially female voices have persistently voiced the first, second and even third generation concerns of Punjabi migrants. Cases in point being novels such as Iqbal Ramoowalia's *The Death of a Passport* and *The Midair Frown*. While the former narrates the painful experiences of the protagonist Seema who endures an excruciating odyssey in the foreign land, the latter

showcases how the disdained youth is pulled in by the terrorist torque that nudges the emigrants into committing heinous crimes against humanity. In this novel, the protagonist Jasbir, pushed by his past issues and the current state of affairs in India and Canada, becomes a religious fanatic and an accomplice in the worst aviation disasters of the history by blowing up Air India planes mid-air. While Ramoowalia etches out the aching concerns of the first generation migrants in his novels, contemporary poets like Rupī Kaur and Mohineet Kaur Boparai subtly delineate the issues of identity, trauma, and loss faced by the South Asian diaspora through their poems.

An engagement with the changing diaspora opens up a window into its multi-faceted nature and it also necessitates scholars to recognize and situate the category of woman within the bigger category of diaspora. Paul Gilroy in his essay 'Diaspora' discerned a masculine element which he expositis through some of the contemporary approaches. Referring to Stefan Helmreich's identification of diaspora's etymology engraved with masculinity, he questions: "Could that suggestive linkage complicate the notion that diaspora is inscribed as a masculinist trope, that it cannot therefore be liberated from the quagmire of androcentrism where it has been lodged by modern nationalisms and religious conceptions of ethnic particularity that co-exist with them?" (209-10).

The linkage of the diaspora with gender specificity demands an enquiry into the unique predicament faced by the women. They are not just the subaltern in their homeland, as Spivak asserts in terms of agency of third world women, but experience a double marginalization in a foreign land. The South-Asian diasporic women hail from a cultural space where being subjugated by patriarchy is much celebrated and desired gendered quality. Their uprooting from this gendered niche into a culturally, materially and physically foreign space fragments their core identity.

When she is faced by a culture that does not espouse gender specific roles, and debunks the stereotypical values that she is entrenched in, she is on unfamiliar ground-literally. This clash of cultures becomes a double jeopardy that involves a re-construction of the homeland through the microcosm of home while they are also expected to be acculturated into the Western lifestyle.

On one hand the cultural clash alienates them, fragments and often tears down the identity of diasporic women. Conversely, it also offers a blind spot, a unique window of enunciation wherein these women ingeniously employ the aforementioned tools of hybridity, third-space, interstices and ambivalence of a hyphenated identity. Through these modes they reveal the deeper layers of a diasporic community and simultaneously subvert the strict boundaries of race, nation, home and gender.

Shauna Singh Baldwin is a Canadian-American novelist of Indian descent, writes from a unique vantage position. In an article published in 'Globe Mail,' Shauna Singh Baldwin confessed: "I never fit in anywhere. I've been a minority in three different countries, so I'm quite comfortable with the idea of being uncomfortable." Kral calls it "double subjectivity of the immigrant" that is "not an imaginary category but an existential one which is both a blessing and a curse – a curse in the sense that the diasporic writer is doomed to a life of in-betweenness, but a blessing in the sense that s/he enjoys a double outlook..." (Kral 15). Baldwin's *oeuvre* embodies the deeply moving and harrowing experiences of the characters in

the quest of finding a center in an ever evolving world. In her fiction, women are the focus and they employ either silence or shrill verbosity to tell their story. Her novel *What the Body Remembers* narrates Roop's travails while *We Are Not in Pakistan* brings together ten stories that unravel the complexities of humans in a world that is wracked with displacements, departures, arrivals and the spaces in between the two points.

English Lessons and Other Stories, the text under consideration in this paper, explores the dimensions of lived-experiences of women who come to inhabit the intersectional space presented by diaspora. Female characters herein range from a ten year old girl in 'Family Ties' to a sixty-five year old 'Jassie'. They are either silently asserting their power like the old servant in 'Dropadi Ma' or are bereft of any voice like the eponymous young girl in 'Simran' whose pursuit of foreign education is crushed by her parents' skepticism. Some stories like 'Montreal 1962,' 'English Lessons,' 'Toronto 1984' and 'Devika' delve into the lives of women inhabiting foreign land while stories like 'Rawalpindi 1919' and 'Gayatri' zoom into the lives of women in the homeland who are virtually faced with the specter of diasporic web.

This putative specter of diaspora harks back to the metaphor of *Trishanku* that was popularized by Uma Parameswaran—an acclaimed writer and professor of Indian origin in Canada. The mythological figure of *Trishanku* hangs in limbo, between the earthly and celestial realm. Similarly, the diaspora is replete with interstices that boast of new horizons of conviviality and haunting specters of rootlessness and alienation. The diasporic women intrinsically represent this dichotomy embodied by *Trishanku*. They are caught up in a state of flux, out of their traditional niches, but outside the league of liberated western women, not totally unbound, neither old fashioned, nor yet new-age women.

Therefore, the burgeoning challenges of displacement, alienation and identity are scrupulously meted out through the narratives of different women in the text. Baldwin's first story 'Rawalpindi 1919' peeps into a home where a woman's role in shaping, conserving and balancing the value system in the wake of changing dynamics is etched out. While kneading dough, the matron is ruminating over the prospect of her younger son going abroad for education. The banality of kneading is infused with deeper meanings wherein she not only transforms the flour into a perfect *chapatti* but also arbitrates her mental tussle over her son's imminent associations with 'vilayat.'

The woman's perspective reveals the emotions she goes through with respect to family matters, and underpins the complexities of migration for those who stay behind. On the one hand she is apprehensive about western culture corrupting her son's Sikh value system and her own upbringing, while also being intuitive about the inevitability of this consequence. By the time her 'traditional' dough is skillfully made into a 'culturally' perfect chapatti, she navigates her own conflicts between the two cultures and finds mid ground. Her response is apparent when she serves the meal to her husband with the declaration that they must 'upgrade' their furniture and 'thalis' to match the son's westernized tastes "when he returns."

In another story titled 'Montreal 1962,' Baldwin's protagonist is a woman contemplating possible interactions and push and pull force with the foreign culture, as in 'Rawalpindi 1919,' but while herself being the emigrant. She questions the promise of progress, opportunity and freedom that the West boasts of. She exposes the lacuna of inclusiveness and conviviality in the western discourse. On being told by her husband that he

would only get a job if he relinquishes his turban and cuts off his hair, she embarks on a determined resistance against such demands of mitigating one's identity. Her defiance to such requisitions for assimilation into the host country is portrayed through an elaborate arrangement she makes to wash and then dry her husband's turban cloths, which are the cultural markers of his and concomitantly her identity.

The skirmish of another female character 'Kanwaljit' in 'English Lessons' involves coming to terms with the challenges of the Western space, while combating the ghosts of the past. Left behind with the in-laws after the wedding, Kanwaljit takes her vengeance for relentless emotional and physical abuse by trapping her brother-in-law in the flames when the house is aflame. This vengeance accosts her upon her arrival in the US, where she combats both her alienation and longing for acceptance by her husband. Forced to lie low being an illegal immigrant, she pines for her husband's understanding embrace: "Some nights I lie next to Tony, here in America where I live like a worm avoiding the sunlight, and I wonder if he knows".

Strands of Alienation in Diasporic Women

The study on Punjabi and Sikh migrants done by Darshan Singh Tatla, a significant theorist in this field, elucidates many reasons for these migrations in his seminal text *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood*. The reasons ranged from escaping post 1984 terror, gaining economically by harvesting dollars and pounds, impressing fellow villagers by investing in land, properties and factories to the urge for an alluring life abroad. The migration of the women was obligatory and she was often an unwilling accomplice to the lures that pulled the menfolk. The role of the women as facilitators, caretakers, and family begetters, is deftly brought out in the stories by Baldwin.

The dynamics of culture that diasporic women were tied to within the home-space plays out against the contradictory cultural requirements of the western world. Bhabha calls this foreign space as "unhomely space and time" (Bhabha 55). The so-called fashionable discourse of globalization and multiculturalism is surface deep only. Various texts bear testimony to xenophobic tendencies of host countries. Whether it is the protagonist of Mohsin Hamid's *Reluctant Fundamentalist* plagued by the after effects of 9/11 or protagonist of Chitra Banerjee Divakurni's "Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs" whose gender role in the western world is not liberated but further ossified, there occurs a marginalization of the displaced subject. Assimilation in the host culture seems almost impossible, except for the mode decoded by Baldwin's female protagonist in 'Montreal 1962' saying "You must be reborn white skinned—and clean shaven to show it—to survive."

The alienation in diasporic communities is inevitable as Mishra has espoused in *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. There is a loss of 'home' in both the physical sense, and a cultural sense. Avtar Brah underlines the fact that the desire for homing is "purely a desire that exists in nostalgic expressions and memories" (Bhat 2). In 'Montreal 1962', the female protagonist is humiliated and baffled when the white dry cleaning lady fails to recognize the cultural value of the turban and sari clothes and calls them 'dishrag', 'bedsheet' or 'curtain'. The protagonist reacts by washing the revered clothes herself

in an attempt to free them “of alien red-blue water”. The nostalgia of home, the desire to connect to the roots and an incessant attempt to hold onto one's cultural identity, makes her imagine the literal and metaphorical homecoming through her husband and his turban when she says: “somewhere on a street named in English where the workers speak joul I imagined your turban making its way in the crowds, bring you home to me.” Therefore, the idea of home, in diasporic community condenses into the markers of culture like the woman's wedding sari and her husband's turban.

Dilemma of Identity in the “fusion chambers” of hostland

The issue of alienation is a tug-of-war in which diasporic identity is embroiled. The question of identity becomes even more pressing in the 'liquid' modernity described by Zygmunt Bauman. The very core of identity is tied with roots, home, belonging, cultural moorings etc. Ease of movement in current times has blurred boundaries, but also precipitated the conundrum of identity with notions of 'world citizenship', cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism. Mishra questions the celebrative concept of multiculturalism saying: “in any multicultural nation there will always be a cultural imbalance between those (one or two communities) whose history is foundational to the nation and those who have come as equal citizen...” (135).

In case of a woman, the ties of identity through historical narratives are further imbued in the dialectics of “mother-as-nation and nation-as-mother” as posited by Suvadip Sinha in his paper “Return of the native: Swades and the re-thinking of diaspora”. The dual relationship of a woman's identity with homeland and the indoctrinated gendered hierarchies makes her stance beleaguered. Not only is she displaced from the 'center' in terms of space but also is on the margins of cultural assimilation.

This brings us to another story titled 'Devika.' The eponymous protagonist is a fictional representation of the dilemma that women in diasporic society go through. Within the value system of patriarchal paradigm, the women's identity is informed with the binary discourse of good woman-bad woman, docile-opinioned, submissive-assertive, and so on. This conditioning challenges the spatially and culturally displaced women. How do they negotiate the traditional/ past and the modern/present? How do they bridge the understanding of women's identity as instilled in their psyche and the one they encounter in the foreign land? Finally, how does she transcend *Trishanku's* 'neither here nor there' conundrum?

The eponymous female protagonist of 'Devika' is seemingly crushed by these dilemmas of representation. She is an embodiment of the good-girl instruction manual, epitomizing “what good wives do.”. The portrayal of Devika is a simulation of all the clichéd stereotypes of diaspora is guilty of. She puts on old Hindi songs that are a favorite of her husband Ratan, she cooks *matter paneer* for him. When asked by her husband which sister of his would she like to visit first, “she felt sure she was being tested” and she took the name of the elder sister to appease her husband because, “That was her specialty. To read others and to know what they expected” (142). However, this intuitive appeasement did not sustain in the land of liberated gender roles and she is sucked into the whirlpool of identity crisis. The turbo induced by the gender dynamics of the new land beseeched her to question the good girl-bad

girl dichotomy.

The threat of identity forces Devika to unconsciously assess the parameters of goodness, as the base of such a covenant no longer seems compatible in the Western society. This eventually pushes Devika to the verge of rediscovering her identity. Through an alter-ego of Asha, she explores the freedom that she has been deprived of. Therefore, Asha smokes, and wears 'high heeled black patent leather shoes and lingerie.' The binary of desires is exposed when Devika tells her husband how Asha's wishes are unbridled and therefore wayward, all the while projecting her own wishes through her.

“Asha wanted things Devika had never wanted. Asha wanted to take driving lessons.

Asha wanted to visit Niagara Falls. Asha wanted to take flying lessons at Brampton Airport, instead of going and visiting Vandana Di every Sunday. . .” (151).

The self-assertion of Asha is scary for Devika's deep rooted moral system. Devika becomes a liberal, self-assertive embodiment of a westernized woman only after a strife with the dogmas of the past. The *fusion* of women's identity must be preceded by a metaphorical *fission* that is showcased in Baldwin's story 'Devika.'

Conclusion

The marginalization that the women are subjected to in a gender hierarchy becomes not only contested in the crucible of western ethos but also leads to metamorphoses of the diasporic identities of women. In a celebratory vision of the diaspora given by Levi and Weingrod, the diasporic subject has come to occupy a vantage point as they are “enthusiastically embraced as arenas for the creative melding of cultures and the formation of new 'hybridic,' mixed identities” (45). This viewpoint of Levi and Weingrod also tows in with Bhabha's 'third space' or interstitial space and Mishra's hyphenated identities. The dual nature that a subject in a diasporic position comes to acquire creates a 'zone of contact'. In this zone, the identity of women come to terms with the lived space as we see in Devika, who through an alter ego of Asha transcends the hitherto ossified gender role into a woman who identifies herself anew. Similarly, the female protagonist in *Montreal 1962*, takes it upon herself the ordeal of preserving her cultural identity represented through her husband's turban, by venturing into the workspace in Canada as she proudly says:

One day our children will say, “My father came to this country with very little but this turban and my mother learned to work because no one will hire him. Then we will have taught Canadians what it takes to wear a turban” (16).

As an antithesis to the marginalization that the diasporic community is subjected to along with the colonial discourses hailing purity of race and cultures, the women in this domain have debunked the stifling binaries by occupying the space of a hybrid subject. Not only have the diasporic women reclaimed their voice, as shown through the imaginary presence of Asha in Devika's home, but also ushered in a paradigmatic shift in all the metanarratives built around the binaries of human race. The deconstructive impact of women's new found authority in the interstitial space of diaspora interrogates, and subsequently necessitates a reconfiguration of concepts like gender, home, nation and identity.

Not only the women in Baldwin's stories negotiate with the foreignness of the

physical place but also grapple with the tectonic clash of gender hierarchies of already established home culture with the so-called liberated hierarchies presented by the new space. Women's role in diasporic literature is tenacious and insightful in understanding the struggles of identities against the real or imaginary phantoms of displacement.

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**Troubled Times: Family, History and Self: A Reappraisal of
Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland***

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Abstract

*Troubled times refer to a state of sudden misfortune and loss in one's life. This sense of great loss jeopardizes the family relations, its historical context, and the individual self. The Naxalbari Uprising (1967) in West Bengal is one of such tragic events in the history of Postcolonial India which not only perturbed the entire Bengal socially, politically, and historically but also crashed the family relationships of the concerned people. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013), her diasporic subjects encounter tension caused by the memories of the tragic Naxalite activities and the suffering of ordinary people during the movement. Hence, the present article attempts a contextual study of troubled times in its protagonists' family relationships, which changed the dynamics of their relationship. The present essay expands on the premise that traumatic events play a decisive role in shaping the lives of the characters in the novel and that of a community. It also posits, how the dominant political forces inflict trauma in the lives of the involved community through the notion of remembering and forgetting memories.*

Keywords: *Naxalbari Uprising, Family Relationships, Tragic events, Jhumpa Lahiri, The Lowland*

Literature has always tried to capture stories of human struggle and survival in an absolute way. The narrative structure of any literary work is great in the story of survival (amid adverse circumstances). Such circumstances or what we may call troubled times are extensively recorded in the post-modern narratives. The contemporaneity of such narratives transcends their time and space to express various dimensions of socio-cultural, religious, and psychological prototypes for any culture and tradition. Their narratives present the inexpressible sufferings of pleasure and pain of mankind in the forms of various narratives. Similarly, diaspora narratives are a unique contribution to recording the hard times faced by its people and society in the 'home' country as well as the 'host' country. Writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, V.S. Naipaul, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, etc. have consciously reconstructed the past and the struggle for survival. These writers not only constructed the concretization of the native land but also approved displacement as “a traumatic experience and create either a myth of return to the homeland or the determination to make the host country one's own” (; ;). In this endeavor, writers of the Indian diaspora build the past out of the 'broken pots of antiquity.' Lahiri too builds the structure and theme of her story against the backdrop of the political struggle of the Naxalite movement in *The Lowland*. A Eldiasty argues that despite many physical changes, the main characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction feel a sense of nostalgia and trauma around their place of origin in his Spatio-temporal analysis. This is because it encapsulates their history and their

national identity (Eldiasty 9).

I

The Lowland draws the readers' attention to the fact that India witnessed the Naxalbari Uprisingⁱ (1967) in the northern tip of West Bengal in the late 20th century. The Naxalite-Maoist insurgency is the symbolic representation of social suffering with an understanding of intense fear of massive deaths and racial strife in Postcolonial India. A savage counter-insurgency of imprisoning, torturing, and murdering Naxalites is launched by the state apparatus to stop the armed insurrection accelerated by impoverished peasants. Many scholarly critics of the Maoist movement argue that “Naxalites have always been violent, savage, and ferocious. However, “sympathizers see the movement as the veracious voice of the most marginalized sections of Indian society” (Chandra 418). In the history of mankind, revolutions have persisted and are very closely allied to the future of their families. Hence, creative writers always pay heed to these tragic events in their writings so that the wider world can connect their characters in real life. As Aristotle has argued about the therapeutic release of negative emotions through the resolution in any dramatic performance, these tragic writings help to change the lives of their readers cathartically. We have enlisted some tragic narratives which are set against the backdrop of revolutionary ideologies and induced tensions in the closest space of their family relationship.

*Hazar Churashir Maa*ⁱⁱ (1974) by Mahasweta Devi is a well-known heart-wrenching Bengali fiction written at the time of early 1970s Naxalite Movement in Bengal. The revolutionary young man, Brati is brutally killed by the state for being a staunch follower of Naxalite ideologies. Brati's mother Sujata is shattered when she looks at the corpse no. 1084 of her son in the morgue and later tries to find out why does her son advocate the extreme leftist insurgency and die?

Nabaneeta Sen's Bengali novel *Ami Anupam*ⁱⁱⁱ (1976) is also based on the backdrop of the Naxalite Movement. It is a story of troubled times and disloyalty. The two-faced storyline focuses on a fictitious portrayal of its protagonist Anupam Roy, one of those bourgeoisie, who encourage the youth to fight for the revolutionary cause and put their lives at stake, while they remain protected in the movement.

Draupadi^{iv} (1978) by Mahasweta Devi is another grievous short narrative in this row which is written in Bengali in the context of the Naxalite Movement and Bangladesh Liberation War in the late twentieth century. Dopdi Mehjen, a Santhal tribe girl along with her husband Dulna and the other fugitive comrades' revolt against the affluent landowners for claiming wells in their village. The story moves further in the direction of how Draupadi is brutally assaulted physically. In the end, she uses her exploited body as the greatest weapon to bring forth fear in the eyes of armed men.

Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* (2014) is also set during the Calcutta unrest of the 1960s. The epistolary account of its protagonist, Supratik, is set against the extreme leftist agrarian movement and its political ideologies to bring reform to the world around him. Likewise, many stories in literature are based on the revolutionary Naxalite Movement. Fictions such as Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013), Snigdhendru Bhattacharya's *Lalgarh and the Legend of Kishanji: Tales from India's Maoist Movement* (2016), Asim

Mukhopadhyay's *Half Man* (2019), Smriti Zubin Irani's *Lal Salaam* (2021), etc. not only revolve around the Naxalite agitation in West Bengal but also portray the horrifying repression and the murder of young rebels across the areas of Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. The primary text for the discussion in this paper is the reappraisal of Lahiri's *The Lowland* through troubled times in its protagonists' family relationships, which changed the dynamics of the relationship in the novel completely

II

Jhumpa Lahiri, one of the pioneers of American female writers of short fictions, novels, and essays published in English and Italian, has won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her debut collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). Her first novel *The Namesake* (2003) was adapted into a popular film of the same name in 2006 directed by an Indian American filmmaker Mira Nair. Her second collection of stories *Unaccustomed Earth*^v (2008) won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, and a Commonwealth Writers Prize. *The Lowland* (2013), her second novel was a finalist for both the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Award for Fiction^{vi}. Lahiri's autobiographical debut series of short essays in Italian *In Altre Parole* (2014) describes her journey of learning a new language^{vii}. Originally published in Italian, Lahiri's debut novel, *Dove mi trovo*, was translated by her into English in 2021 as *Whereabouts*. In all her works she explores the complex relationship based on love and hope, joys and sorrows, past and present, family and married life, and loyalty and betrayal vis-à-vis the Indian immigrant in America.

The Lowland explores (Lahiri 50), the trauma of a family relationship of four generations whose lives continue to unfold in different ways in India and abroad. Simultaneously, Lahiri's narrative also deals with the strong relationship and camaraderie of two middle-class brothers Udayan and Subhash, who were born after the Second World War in Tollygunge, Calcutta. Both are inseparable and identical, often mistaken for the other in their neighborhood. On the contrary, they have separate future goals. Udayan is courageous and in favor of the Naxalite Uprising in Bengal and believes that the "agrarian economy based on feudalism is the problem of India's fractious politics and the country needs a more egalitarian structure and better land reforms"().

On the other hand, the older brother Subhash is dutiful and prudent. Since childhood, he was cautious and 'lived in his own world'. He isn't so much fascinated by Udayan's subversive escapades and his political ideologies. Therefore, he moves to Rhode Island, America 'to pursue his research on Chemistry and the environment' (36 up a sign (41) after the completion of his chemical engineering at Jadavpur, India. Being an obedient person, he is subjected to Jeremy Bentham's notion of the 'Panopticon' which was developed by Foucault as a hallmark of disciplinary power as it appears in *Discipline and Punish*. Therefore, Subhash knows the consequences of going against the government in the new land where, "he could get arrested in America for denouncing the government, perhaps even for holding up a sign"().

As the novel proceeds, in his first letter to Subhash in Rhode Island, America, Udayan mentions the developments of the red guard in his country and the sayings of Majumdar that their "generation is vanguard; the struggle of students is part of the armed peasant struggle"

(51). Furthermore, Udayan is unwilling to forgive his brother for not supporting a movement that will improve the lives of millions. He also quotes, “*War will bring the revolution; the revolution will stop the war*” (). Udayan's fervent political ideology disapproves of Subhash's apolitical belief.

A freelance journalist, Nina Martyris (2014) looks at Lahiri's novel as a Naxal novel and points out the poverty in the villages of Bengal as reasons behind Udayan's involvement in the movement. She compares Subhash's dullness and worthiness with an unknowing proponent of George Eliot's last line in *Middlemarch*: “for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts.” And Udayan's idealistic tragedy with “the Yeatsian inversion that marked the Naxal high noon: the best did not lack all conviction but were so full of passionate intensity that it blinded them to the extremism of the party line” (Martyris 38).

Huma Yaqub "" (2015) discusses two central tropes, 'violent phenomenon and displacement' as shaping a new future which is based on the repercussion of the Naxalbari Uprising. She looks at violence as an actual event not merely a moment of history, where Udayan is seeped into violence and vows to dedicate his life to this revolutionary moment for the injustice done to the innocent peasants (). Udayan's wife Gauri is a young and intelligent student of philosophy who falls in love with him and marries him without the blessings of her elders. She is introduced to Subhash by Udayan in his second letter. Both Gauri and her brother Manas are politically sensitive like Udayan and in sympathetic affiliation to Naxalbari Uprising. Udayan's sudden and violent death due to this revolution leads to the displacement of his wife Gauri to an alien land. As Udayan's parents blame her for his tragic death and are not willing to accept her. Subhash marries Gauri and saves his brother's pregnant wife from her fading future as a widow at the age of twenty-three.

Despite becoming a member of a new family, Gauri is haunted by the memories of the traumatic events in her life and fails to adjust meaningfully with others (especially her family). In America, the deadly encounter of Udayan's memories forms a hole in Gauri's vision. She loves Udayan so much that she cannot forget his good memories and his tragic death. As it is rightly said, what is stored in the memory once can't be wiped out easily and remembered again and again in a conscious way. She is stuck at the crossroads where she must deal with her dislocated self and fragmented identity, which leads her to take some hard steps. She repays Subhash's kindness most unexpectedly, by abandoning him and her eleven-year-old daughter Bela to pursue her study in philosophy. She tries to run away from her family and her disruptive past. Her resentment from her motherhood pulls her to take up an academic job in California after completing her doctorate. This kind of subversiveness and self-discovery in America returns to Gauri's earlier version of self in the novel where “she was the sole accuser, the sole guardian of her guilt. Protected by Udayan, overlooked by the investigator, taken away by Subhash” (312).

The idealism of Udayan pushes him to be a powerful dissident of Indian normative society and advocates Naxalism “to eradicate inequity and poverty” prevailing in the society in the 1970s. Like Udayan Gauri too protests the ambiguities of Indian society and “prefers to revolt against her conventional feminine role of cooking and raising children.” Moreover, she transcends the masculine sphere of society, renouncing her culinary and docile roles through teaching and research. Like an independent human being, she prefers to remain with her

books and the texts of the revolutionaries and thinkers that enable her to revolt against her role as a female (Shashikant and Bhawana 325).

It is Gauri's remorseful past that accompanies her along with the future that lay ahead. The ashes of the insolvent Maoist insurgency flickers one by one in Gauri's memories when she gives an interview to Dipankar Biswas for his book about "a history of students at the college when the Naxalite movement was at its height" (270). Gauri appraises Dipankar because he was her Bengali student and was the same as Bela's age. Further, Gauri is shaken to know from Dipankar that Udayan's ideal Kanu Sanyal's killed himself after his release from prison. She feels an unendurable pain and guilt after knowing all such details about her fragmented past. The echoes of her past and presence on her prevailing future plays hide and seek with her.

In addition to being involved in small missions, Gauri agrees to participate in Udayan's revolutionary activities. She delivers notes for him which contains a piece of information for revolutionaries. Gauri's accomplice in killing a policeman, Nirmal Dey, makes her distressed and angry with Udayan. She feels ashamed and guilty about her acts that she tries to commit suicide from the balcony when she visited Kolkata at the time of Durga Puja. She also visits Udayan's house after forty years where she vouches to grow old with him and "Bela might have been raised...She walked past the house, across the lane, and over towards the two ponds" (311). But both ponds are gone like Udayan and Subhash are separated now.

Bela's life is also transformed by the broken pieces of her shattered family. She is emotionally detached from her family (especially Subhash). She starts traveling and working on a farm as a laborer. Her carefree attitude slowly disconnects her from Subhash and her disappearing persona leaves him aching with her fond memories. Bela becomes pregnant and wants to raise her four-year-old daughter Meghna on her own. She hesitates to accept a farm owner Drew's proposal of marrying her and helps her to raise Meghna. She also refuses Drew by mentioning that she is created by two lovers and fostered by two people who never loved one another. Likewise, Subhash is dumbstruck by the coincidence of his past event where he is needed by 'a pregnant woman and a fatherless child' (258).

Bela's troublesome past stops her to be with one person and stays at one place. She is so much tormented by her unpleasant past that she is not ready to imagine the same kind of future for her daughter. When Gauri wants to hand over the already signed divorced documents to Subhash in person, she meets Bela. Bela is enraged to see her mother and introduces Gauri as an aunt to Meghna. She chides Gauri and blames her for taking advantage of Subhash's courtesy from the beginning. Even Subhash isn't ready to forgive Gauri for her unjust action towards Bela (278). Gauri as the better half of Udayan feels repelled down in both the female world as well as the segment of the society. Her outburst to the prevailing hiatus between the haves and have-nots, the gap or the chasm was so large that this was bound to happen in the consciousness of the movement of mankind and very well portrayed by Lahiri in her novel.

III

The novel presents the Naxalite Uprising movement where Udayan sacrifices his life

for the future of an unbiased society and for “a movement that had been misguided, that had caused only damage” (137) but the killing of Udayan changes the dynamics of relationships of his parents, Subhash, Gauri and even his daughter Bela. The tragic end of Udayan leaves an unforgettable scar for the rest of their lives. The involvement of Udayan in the revolution has not only affected him as an individual but also traces the personal and social wounds in his family. Although Udayan and Subhash both marry the same woman, their moral-self escort them to the detached relationship in the novel. Simultaneously, the humdrum life of Subhash and Gauri in America eventually becomes the main cause of their pessimistic and depressing relationship in the fiction. Later, Subhash marries Elise who is Bela's high school teacher. The consequences of her parents' relationship affect Bela. She grows up into an isolated self and her bohemian life leaves Subhash longing for her lively presence in his life. Bela's conscience doesn't want to repeat history in her daughter Meghna's life as she faced in her life. For her, Gauri is as dead as Udayan.

The fiction also explores personal history as a part and parcel of national history. It shows, how such democratic movements take the path of violence and are crushed by the state machinery? How the intellectual appeal of the Naxalite movement clad in the Marxist ideology of a classless society is crushed brutally? It had attracted the youth of Bengal so acutely that they bet their lives to bring the desired change from a government that was insensitive to the demands of penniless peasants. The repressive state machinery could only act as a machine for the people. Thus, human needs, emotions, desires, etc. are all immaterial to them. The official records would only provide raw data. Hence, it is the responsibility of the writer to write an alternate history to present their points of view, explore the problem, expose the traumas inflicted on the lives of such people through this personal narrative of characters. Lahiri has gone deeper to excavate the sufferings, which were often unnecessary, of multitudes. There may have been several stories of Udayans and Gauris, who are buried in the history of troubled times and need a change in the psychology of mankind towards a new era.

Notes

ⁱThe Naxalbari uprising resulted from a left-wing faction within the revolutionary Maoist Communist Party established in 1925. A clash between the tribal peasants and wealthy landowners lead to the formation of the new Marxist-Leninist party (CPI). CPI (M-L) ideologies emphasize an armed uprising against wealthy landlords, the government, and the police for oppressing penurious peasants and tribals. They are named 'Naxalites' after a village in the West Bengal. These Naxalites are inspired by the writings of a Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong. “By 1970, hundreds of young men and women from the country's most prestigious universities have joined the movement to fight for their peasant and proletarian comrades”(). The two prominent communists of CPI (Mao-Marxist), Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, advocated an alliance of laborers and peasants under their leadership. Peasant insurgencies in India tend to adhere to Marxist, Maoist, and Leninist ideologies. Before taking up arms, the agitating peasants try to obtain justice from the dominant forces through peaceful petitions.

ⁱⁱThis novel is translated into English by an eminent critic and translator Samik

Bandyopadhyay with the name *The Mother of 1084*.

ⁱⁱⁱ*I, Anupam* is translated into English by Nabaneeta Sen, Paulami Sengupta and Tias Basu in 1978.

^{iv}This short story is translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her anthologized collection *Breast Stories* in 1997.

^v*Unabyasth Dharti* is the Hindi translation of this collection by Ranjana Shrivastava in 2014.

^{vi}*Nabal Jomi* is the Bengali translation done by Poulomi Dasgupta in 2014. It is a competent historical and linguistic version of the original text.

^{vii}*In Other Words*, is the English translation of her non-fiction work which is done by Ann Goldstein in 2016.

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Strangers in Strange Lands: Unravelling (Muslim) Identity in Tabish Khair's *How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position*

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Dr. Binod Mishra**

Abstract

*With the rise of globalisation and cross-border migration, the issue of immigrant identity has become a matter of concern for the whole world. People move to different countries for social, political, educational, or economic reasons, leaving their homeland behind. This change in environment causes them to feel insecure, and they resist adjusting to their new surroundings. This research paper examines how Tabish Khair, an India-born poet, novelist, and academic based in Denmark, unravels the complexity of (Muslim) immigrant identity by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Muslim immigrants, including those from South Asia, are often suspected of posing a threat to the host country. This paper draws on the postcolonial notion of identity and focuses on Khair's 2012 novel *How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position*. The study follows a close textual analysis of the novel by focusing on characters, mostly Muslims, who suffer from disorientation to the new land and continue to live in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, trying to negotiate and renegotiate their identity for survival.*

Keywords: *Muslim identity, immigrants, stereotypes, religious fundamentalism, postcolonialism, terrorism*

Introduction

With the rise of globalisation and cross-border migration, the issue of immigrant identity, especially Muslim identity, has become a matter of concern for the whole world. The issue of identity is a challenging topic to comprehend, yet it is intriguing. Identity is usually defined in relation to “ethnicity and nationality” (Lahiri 161). In the case of personal identity, the interplay of culture and history has a more influential role in shaping and defining it. Identity by nature is not as “transparent” and “unproblematic” as it might seem at first. It has several aspects to it. Being aware of self or having an identity is exceptionally dynamic. It keeps changing with other impacting factors such as religion, class, caste, nationality, and culture. In other words, identity is “a production which is never complete, always in process ...” (Hall 22).

Erik Erikson, in his seminal book *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2010), proposes that identity is “being the same as oneself as well as being different” (71), which stresses the idea that the concept of “self” exists with that of “other.” As migration rises, it establishes a multicultural society based on differences. People from various socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds try to coexist, which may not always be viable. Failure to adapt to a new culture leads to a sense of alienation, consequently resulting in violence and conflicts. In this sense, it could be said that “the building of identities is both unifying and separating, sometimes both at the same time” (Moghissi xv). More often than not, some

people assert their identity in reaction to the adversarial environment of the host society than an expression showing a longing for their cultural roots, which gradually develops into a sense of alienation. People isolate themselves if they do not find like-minded people in a foreign land.

Furthermore, the kind of reception people receive in the host society also contributes to immigrant identity formation and related issues that mainly depend on their “racial, ethnic, and religious” backgrounds (Lahiri 55). It also primarily depends on how accepting the host is. In recent years, there have been several reports of anti-immigrant sentiments in the USA and European countries. Immigrants, particularly Muslims, have been labelled potential terrorists “regardless of whether or not they are believers or practising Muslims, or see Islam as a defining factor in their lives.” This negative attitude often leads these Muslim immigrants to adopt extreme religious and cultural expressions that “invite unfriendly and intolerant reactions from the host” (Moghissi xv). Consequently, they prefer living in ghettos and adopt a “ghetto mentality”, which, according to Salman Rushdie, “is the largest and most dangerous pitfall” (19). In such a situation, they fail to assimilate to a new place, creating “hurdles for acculturation” (Lahiri 56).

(Muslim) Immigrant Identity in the Globalised Present

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Muslim immigrants are often perceived as potential threats to the host society. Their devotion to their adopted land is frequently questioned even though Muslims worldwide are diverse in socio-cultural and political affairs. In the novel under consideration, Tabish Khair addresses such issues, particularly concerning South Asians in Denmark, exposes several stereotypes and biases, and challenges them through his unpretentious art of narrativisation, which is intriguing, witty and humorous.

How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position (2012) presents new perspectives on examining the issues of identity. Khair brings forth postcolonial characters to show how identity could be complex yet intriguing. He focuses on several biases and preconceived notions concerning one's identity and how this leads to the issue of survival not only at home but also in a foreign land. Such prejudices are based on stereotypes or generalised ideas and images about people. While dismissing prejudice as a result of ignorance may be simple, the daily news and information one receives also leads to the construction of stereotypes. When discussing stereotypical views, the role of the media cannot be overlooked either. They have wreaked havoc on society by spreading enough hatred through their propaganda and misinformed news broadcasts. In recent times, it has increased rapidly.

The novel is set in modern-day Denmark. The plot of the novel revolves around three central characters: the unnamed narrator, Ravi, and Karim, three South Asian immigrants living in Aarhus, Denmark. The narrator, who stays anonymous throughout the novel, is an English teacher who has recently had a divorce. He was born into a Pakistani Muslim family. Ravi, an Indian Brahmin, is an aspiring writer currently working on his PhD thesis in history. About forty years old, Karim is a significantly practising Muslim from India. He is a taxi

driver and lives in a small 2 BHK flat.

Ravi and the anonymous narrator rent two rooms from Karim, who also runs Qur'anic sessions at his residence on Fridays. Karim is an intriguing character; he often works overtime, occasionally receives strange phone calls and disappears for days, leaving Ravi and the unnamed narrator in the dark about his whereabouts. As the story progresses, despite being a Muslim, the unnamed narrator gradually becomes suspicious of Karim and presumes that Karim might belong to a terrorist cell. One day the narrator jokingly tells Ravi about Karim, "Who knows? He works all the time; he disappears suddenly; he gets strange phone calls; you cannot deny he needs the money for some reason." Ravi refutes this claim and jokingly says it as if Karim Bhai were "the main funder of Al Qaeda" (Khair 31). Several conversations happen between the narrator and Ravi; through them, we get insights into Karim's life.

However, as the novel unfolds, we learn that all of the assumptions about Karim are incorrect. He is summoned by the police and interrogated in connection with a bombing in town. He is, however, set free because he was not involved in it. On the contrary, he would frequently visit his ex-Danish wife, who had Alzheimer's disease. Karim kept it a secret, possibly because he did not want anyone to know. Nevertheless, Karim was still concerned about her. They were not, however, legally divorced. The narrator feels ashamed of himself for suspecting Karim, and he never dares to meet him again. In this novel, Khair apparently shows how Muslims are judged in the West and how all these preconceived notions about them become fatal for their existence in a foreign land. They feel insecure. The novel also shows the complex relationship between Muslims who still judge one another.

The novel reiterates that differences are part and parcel of our lives, and we should embrace them with dignity. If not, there may be widespread chaos and conflicts within social groups, eventually leading to violence. With the novel's unfolding and Karim being a taxi driver, one might think he is a terrorist. This very sudden thought is fatal. Moreover, due to the increase in violence in the name of religion worldwide, even other immigrants feel insecure. Recently, such communal clashes have become common in India as well.

Recent political decisions to ban Muslims from entering certain European countries are prime examples of this insecurity. In addition, the Western media has created a particular image of the Muslim community. Khair debunks this through the character of Karim. The anonymous narrator, also a Muslim, is portrayed in contrast to Karim. Despite both of them being Muslims, there is a vast difference in how they lead their lives. The unnamed narrator eats non-halal food, drinks alcohol, and does all sorts of things strictly prohibited in Islam; he "presents himself as a non-fundamental and acceptable face of Islam" (Bharti and Rana 142) which, he firmly believes, is needed for survival in the globalised world.

On the contrary, Karim avoids all these. He never cracks jokes or says anything that goes against the principles of Islam; he does not bother about the outside world. Still, he becomes the alleged terrorist until proven innocent at the end of the novel. Khair uses these two contrasting Muslim characters to reiterate that Muslims worldwide are not the same despite following the same religion. They have different cultural practices and ways of living, and we must accept this fact.

This novel is an excellent example of how differences can lead to mistrust. At the

same time, they can also be celebrated. They cannot categorically be brought under one umbrella. Karim's identity is always questioned because he is a devout Muslim and leaves no stone unturned to practise his faith. However, the anonymous narrator presents an entirely different picture. Karim and the unnamed narrator come from the same religion but two different cultural backgrounds and present two different ways of life. This aspect shows that religion and culture go hand-in-hand and may influence one's ways of life and how one identifies oneself.

Stuart Hall, in his 1996 essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," argues that cultural identity is not only a matter of "being" but of "becoming," "belonging as much to the future as it does to the past" (Hall 225). From Hall's perspective, identities undergo a constant transformation, transcending time and space. This aspect of identity is a dominant factor in this novel. The narrator leads an entirely Western life and is highly critical of Denmark. He tries to fit into the adopted country and presents himself as a liberal Muslim. In contrast, Karim restricts himself to his work and Friday Qur'anic sessions. He hardly says anything about Denmark, which reiterates that Karim is well aware he will not fit into the accepted norms expected in Denmark.

In his seminal book, *Covering Islam* (1981), Edward Said focuses on how the West projects the Muslim community and how the media is also responsible for it. On a similar note, Khair brings up the issue of Muslim immigrant identity and debunks the Western perception of the Muslim community as violent and ignorant. However, he takes an objective stand and emphasises that religious fundamentalism and fanaticism should have no place in a civilised society. At the same time, he also speaks critically of Islamophobia prevalent in the West.

Islamophobia refers to "both the fear of Islam as a faith and Muslims" (Büyükgebiz 51) as an ummah. Islamophobic people have a negative image of Muslims all across the globe. "Just like the colonial other, a Muslim other" exists in Western society (Büyükgebiz 51). However, it is a well-known fact that Islamic countries are very culturally different from each other. Muslims practice Islam in various forms across the world. Certain practices have more to do with culture than their faith. Despite these facts, the West projects Muslims as "evil, and, above all, eminently killable" (*Covering Islam* 18). Islamophobia has provided an excellent chance for the West to intervene in Muslim countries' domestic issues and Middle Eastern politics. The US military does not have any concrete legal justification for its presence in Syria "without ISIS and the fear of radical Islamism" (Büyükgebiz 52) that this militant organisation has propagated, leading to anti-Islamic sentiments in the West and European countries.

The novel under study shows the anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim propaganda of the Western media. In most of the incidents in the novel, the Danish media first blames Islam and Islamists without even bothering to question anybody. At the very outset of the novel, Khair refers to the Norway Attacks, which happened in 2011 in a summer camp and resulted in several casualties. However, it later becomes clear that the terrorist was a Christian fundamentalist, not a Muslim. It becomes apparent that there is a systematic accusation of Islam and (Muslim) immigrants in the media. The narrator comments that "the Danish media first blamed it on Islamists and then, when it became clear that a white right-wing Christian

fundamentalist was behind these acts of terror, somehow still managed to suggest at times that immigration and Muslims were the real cause” (Khair 114). This double standard for Muslim immigrants demonstrates the stringency of Islamophobia prevalent in the West. A Muslim can be tagged as a terrorist without any reason.

In another incident, the “Islamic Axe Plot,” Karim is arrested. However, three days after his detention, the police released him because he had nothing to do with that event and Al Qaeda. Despite this, Karim is still suspected by many media houses in the country. It is not only the media but also a politician from the Danish People's Party who “ranted about how weak Danish legislation was, how it allowed terrorists to walk away scot free” (Khair 181).

The novel also highlights how someone can be labelled a terrorist simply because of his or her skin colour or religion, as in Ajsa's case. She is a young woman from Bosnia. She gets influenced by Karim Bhai and discovers Islam through him and the local mosque. She does not experience the obstacles of being a Muslim in the West because she has a fair complexion. She does not have a Muslim appearance either other than her Muslim dress style. Her blonde complexion makes it simple for her to blend into society. “The narrator says, “She was a young woman who had discovered Islam as a reaction to both her parents and the place that history had confined her to: a place where her Nordic looks would probably efface her more easily than if she had been dark-haired and dark-eyed” (Khair 35).

By developing immigrant and native European characters, Khair creates a theatrical representation of society and illustrates how these fears impact community ties. The nameless narrator is unconcerned with Islam or any other religion. Despite being a Hindu, Ravi tries to learn about Islam from Karim Bhai. During a discussion between Ravi and Karim about God and faith, the narrator feels he has nothing to do with these issues and states that “I had given up on God a long time back; if God had existed, I am sure he would have reciprocated in kind” (Khair 82).

It is evident that the narrator clearly does not belong to Islamic culture. He holds a lousy attitude toward Islam. He calls himself a modern, intellectual Westerner. Above all, he does not even have anything in common with Karim Bhai other than the fact that they are both Muslims. He claims that he does not embrace Karim's interpretation of the Qur'an since Islamist fanatics such as Al Qaeda and ISIS employ a literal reading of the Qur'an to justify beheadings, killings, and the veiling of women. He stresses that Karim's religion breeds bigotry and hatred, leading to fascism. That is why he says that “too much stood between him and me, and there was no Ravi- with his mocking belief in all that is best in us-to bridge the chasm now” (Khair 187).

Nevertheless, the fact is that the narrator is also a Muslim. He still has a hard time fitting into Western society. In the end, he is also a foreigner there. When the police detain Karim, he immediately rushes to the authorities and tells them everything he knows about Karim Bhai, anticipating that he will be a suspect because of his racial and religious identity. He tries to be loyal to the adopted country. He feels terrible for being suspicious of Karim, even if he insists he has excellent reasons. The novel also refers to Dr Hanif, who was falsely accused of being a member of a terrorist cell.

“If you have a Muslim name, you have to be wary in some contexts. Remember the Indian doctor who was arrested and accused of being a terrorist in Australia just

because his sim-card ended up in the wrong hands? There are many other stories like that, in Asia, America, Europe. Ravi could afford to ignore them; I could not.” (Khair 172-73)

Edward Said, in *Covering Islam* (1981), rightly says that journalists often make extravagant statements that are immediately picked up and sensational by the media. They instantly associate Islam with fundamentalism, “although it has a flourishing, usually elided, relationship with Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. The deliberately created associations between Islam and fundamentalism ensure that the average reader comes to see Islam and fundamentalism as essentially the same thing” (Said 12). The 2011 Norway Attacks were two domestic terrorist attacks in which 77 people were killed. Any Muslims did not do them. Neither did any Islamist outfit claim that they had done so. However, these attacks still made Muslims across the world responsible. They were targeted across the West. They were provoked. The 9/11 terrorist attacks further deteriorated the image of the Muslim community worldwide. Khair brilliantly uses these historical backdrops in this novel and makes us question what we perceive as reality.

Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of the novel clearly reflects that Khair provides an excellent insight into Danish immigrants' lives by depicting their “sense of disorientation” (Bhabha 2) and a longing for belongingness. The nameless narrator gives us a glimpse into Muslim life and makes us realise that what we see or hear about people may not be true. Khair emphasises that religious fanaticism should be criticised in all forms, and individuals of different faiths should not be lumped together. Khair also presents Karim to make us understand that any practising Muslim cannot be called a fundamentalist and tagged a terrorist. Karim finds a sense of belongingness in his religion and secretly takes care of his ex-wife. He invites like-minded people to his residence for Qur'anic sessions and has formed a small community of practising Muslims. His religion gives a sort of comfort in the host country. “Islam and its symbols and practices create a sense of belonging and entry into a shared space based on common values or on a common perception of grievances, but this tendency also invites hostility and strengthens Islamophobia, contributing, in turn, to marginalisation” (Moghissi xix). The unnamed narrator and Ravi also strive to find a sense of belongingness by trying to have a liberal attitude and lifestyle and often date Danish women hoping to be a part of their society. Thus, Khair portrays the three South Asian characters in an impartial manner to reiterate that all immigrants cannot/should not be seen through the prism of ethnic biases as the buzzword for harmonious global order is inclusiveness.

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Colonial Essentialisation and Postcolonial Negotiation: A Critique of Satyajit Ray's "Shonkur Congo Abhijaan"

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Abstract

The article is concerned with the ways in which Satyajit Ray represents Congo, Africa, in one of his young-adult short stories featuring the famous fictional Bengali bhadralok scientist-inventor Professor Shonku. It argues that Ray's portrayal follows the ways in which the continent and its people have been essentialised in colonial representations. The genealogy of this reductivism of Ray can be traced back to a Bengali bhadralok fascination for the Global South, and to an erudite race-consciousness that emerged in colonial Bengal. The article also focuses on Shonku's attempt at dissociating himself from mercantile colonial enterprises thereby locating a peculiar postcolonial negotiation within the fabric of Ray's text.

Keywords: colonialism, Ray, Shonku, postcolonialism, Africa

Introduction

Satyajit Ray's (1921-1992) young-adult fiction series focussing Professor Shonku, a Bengali bhadralok scientist-inventor from Giridih, (presently in Jharkhand) India, is replete with adventures of the ace scientist in the Global South. This article deals with the Bengali text of the short story titled "Shonkur Congo Abhijaan" (Shonku's Adventures in Congo; 1981). The portions quoted from the text have been translated by the author of this article. The narrative is modelled on Michael Chrichton's science-fiction novel *Congo* (1980): "Some of the information in this story have been taken from Michael Chrichton's novel Congo" (Ray 470). However, there are remarkable resemblances between the two narratives which go far beyond "some information." Evidently, their representations of Congo are framed by the western stereotypes of Africa, but the scope of this article restricts itself to Ray's work. The aim of this article is to underscore the ways in which the narrative of Shonku unwittingly endorses the colonial ideology that essentialises and otherises Africa. At the same time, the article discovers a curious postcolonial negotiation within the fabric of Ray's text.

Tracing the Genealogy of the Text

The fictional Africa that surfaces in Shonku's narrative has its genesis in the deep-rooted Bengali bhadralok (middle-class gentile) fascination for the Global South in general and for Africa in particular. Imaginary travels to distant places outside national boundaries have always enchanted the Bengali middle class due to "a relatively early exposure to colonial education" (Mukherjee 137). In the mid eighteenth century, many European countries, especially Spain, France and England, consolidated and systematised their mercantile explorations of the non-European world. There was the Enlightenment urge to "systematise nature" that paved the way for a Eurocentric "planetary consciousness" in which Europe was

the centre and Africa, Asia and the Americas were frontiers (Pratt 15-36; Eeden 23). Consequently, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, travel writing emerged as a popular genre in England, and many other European countries, as it championed a male hero travelling to and mastering such frontiers with his indomitable courage and industrious spirit. The glorification of Alexander Selkirk and the tale of Robinson Crusoe could be taken as a case in point. Such representations of Africa in colonial literature are rife with stereotypes about the natives. Those monolithic images are offshoots of what Abdul R. JanMohamed terms “manichean allegory:”

The dominant model of power- and interest-relations in all colonial societies is the manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native. This axis in turn provides the central feature of the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation: the manichean allegory—a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object. (JanMohamed 63).

In the mid nineteenth century, canonical British texts started to appear in Bengali (Mowtushi 4; Das 109). Under the influence of a colonial, “masculinist” tradition of English adventure fiction which primarily championed the image of a male industrious explorer who survives all adversities in a non-European “natural” environment and obtains tremendous financial success in the end of the story, several nineteenth-century Bengali writers produced stories about male protagonists' tumultuous exploits in strange places (Gangopadhyay 189; Mowtushi 4).

To explore the colonial ideology that framed this Bengali *bhadralok* consciousness one has to look at the development of a curious race-consciousness in colonial Bengal. It must be noted that Bengali intelligentsia was conscious of their racial identity in the early nineteenth century (Kapila 472–500; Basu 56-57). However, in the late nineteenth century, as “geography” emerged as an important, scientific discipline through colonial pedagogy, the Bengali *bhadralok* started to perceive themselves as inheritors of the “Aryan” race. Furthermore, the native “writers of Bengali geography textbooks placed Britain, India, and sometimes China, at the apex of a hierarchy of global civilization, with Africa at the bottom” (Basu 56). It was the curricular geographical works taught in colonial schools, and also disseminated through vernacular translations, that fuelled the on-going essentialisation of Africa in Bengali young-adult fiction of the early nineteenth century (Das 33). It would not be amiss to claim that Satyajit Ray, who was born in 1921, came across (and internalised) those reductivist literary representations of Africa and the Global South during his formative years. It is a well-known fact that Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, whose novel *Chander Pahar* (1937) is set in Africa and suffers from a similar representational myopia, was a huge influence in Ray's cinematic universe. Therefore, it can be contended that Ray's perception of Africa was shaped by the colonial cultural imaginary of the continent which had been assimilated and perpetuated by his predecessors.

Barbarisation of Africa in Ray

Placing himself at par with European scientists and adventurers, Shonku continuously otherises the African. The story begins with a letter which has been written to Shonku by one of his European scientist-friends, an English Geologist, Christopher Macpherson. The letter initiates the process of naturalisation of a topographical hierarchy between Africa and Europe (Ray 442). Shonku's narration points out that three European research teams, including Macpherson's, have gone missing in the jungles of Congo thereby reinvigorating the colonial stereotype of Africa which projects it as a dangerous continent. Shonku's depiction of his teammate Mahoney is particularly important in this context

Here Jim Mahoney needs to be introduced. One can infer from the tanned complexion and sturdy physique of this forty-five year old Irish son-of-the-soil that he is what we call a white hunter. Hunting is his vocation. If we venture into the jungles of Africa, we need to have a white hunter. He is well acquainted with local languages, the mood and climate of the forests, and knows how to escape from wild animals. (444)

Evidently, Shonku's admiration for Mahoney, the white hunter, reeks of a nineteenth-century colonial ideology. In the nineteenth century, several parts of Africa served as hunting grounds for many European settlers. There was an invented tradition of British big-game hunting in Africa which was predicated upon the discourse of British mastery over African people and environment. Hence, praise of a "white hunter" in the context of another African safari reaffirms the language of power that underpins the tradition of European colonisation of African population. As Shonku acknowledges Mahoney's profound understanding of the jungle and its residents, Mahoney's mastery over the culture and habitat of Congo can be considered a symbolic reaffirmation of the discursive European superiority.

Continuously, Ray consolidates this manichean contrast between what can be called "Eurasian rationality" and "African primitivism." The European icon for knowledge and rationality is Mahoney while Shonku represents the Asian counterpart of the same. The reason behind Kigani's nonchalance towards Shonku's team is explained by Mahoney: "Why would they eat us? If your stomach is full would you go for meat?" (449). Soon, it is discovered that Mahoney has been right. The cannibals finished their meal before meeting Shonku and his team. Additionally, the pansophist Mahoney informs Shonku and others about the partial success of the government initiatives to put an end to cannibalism and adds that he neither likes to term them "diabolic" nor considers them "barbaric" because he thinks that they are different from others (non-cannibals) only in terms of food habit: "They know how to laugh, revel and are good-natured like us." Thus Ray naturalises Mahoney's cultural superiority. The cannibals are good only when they are similar to the Europeans. Later, the team is attacked by a band of gorillas, and evades the danger because of Shonku's self-invented "annihilin gun" (451). Likewise, the same gun annihilates the fearful and armed Bantu workers of the villainous scientist Haimendorf, when they attack Shonku and his team (466). Repeatedly, in this way, the "scientific" and "civilised" prevail over the "natural" and "untamed" at a symbolic level in the narrative only to propagate a reductivist image of the region and its people.

Romanticisation of Africa in Ray

In colonial discourse, beginning with the medieval period throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Africa, on the one hand, was sporadically, and later, systematically imagined as a formidable continent, a “barbaric” other to the “civilised” Europe; on the other hand, leveraged by the romantic movement, many Europeans imagined the Africans as the “noble savage” (Comaroff and Comaroff 32). One can notice strong and recurrent attempts at essentialising Africa in Ray’s narrative—attempts that are akin to the aforementioned colonial romanticisation. Despite danger allegedly lurking at every point in the jungle, the “primordiality” and “wilderness” of Congo attract Shonku as well as Wilhelm Kroll, a German scientist and close friend of Shonku, who, significantly has a penchant for the supernatural, especially “black magic.” Shonku remarks that Kroll’s recent interest in hypnotism has urged him to accompany Shonku in his Congo trip as Africa is “rife with such elements” (443). Concomitantly, approximating the colonial construction of Africa, Shonku seems to romanticise the jungle of Congo: “I have never seen such verdurous ceremony.... I realise that this primeval forest of Congo is an astonishing world... It evokes awe as if I have entered a medieval cathedral” (Ray 451-452). Notably, Shonku repeatedly defines the forest as primordial and considers it mysterious, isolated—an ahistorical zone away from “civilisation.” Amidst this apparently ahistorical domain, Shonku, along with his European teammates, encounters cannibals, Pygmies, Bantus and gorillas. Like the awe-inspiring flora of Congo, the cannibals (fearful but nonchalant), Pygmies (fearful but friendly), a Bantu witchdoctor (helpful and admonitory) and gorillas (formidable and belligerent) curiously contribute to the exoticisation of Africa. The Pygmies appear to be archetypal noble savages (Ray 454). They help Shonku’s team know the perils of the lost European research teams by providing with what Shonku terms “materials of the civilised world:” flask, fountain pen, and compass etcetera. Also, as it is found in the narrative, the Kigani cannibals let Shonku and his team go without any interaction, harmful or otherwise (449). Thus Shonku’s Congo becomes a microcosm of Europe’s Africa, the cultural imaginary—an aesthetic formation which was created and perpetuated on the basis of various physical and psychological encounters between the natives of Africa and Europe which happened during colonisation.

After confronting the nonchalant cannibals, benevolent Pygmies and ferocious gorillas, Shonku’s team comes in contact with a group of Bantus. Among them, Shonku finds only the witchdoctor to be noteworthy because the witchdoctor conforms to the colonial perception of Africa that Ray unwittingly endorses. The wizard elliptically warns Shonku’s team about their impending danger in the hands of a “red man” (who is none other than Haimendorf); and later, though the witchdoctor’s words prove to be prophetic, his warning does not receive any credits from Shonku (450). The colonial stereotypes of Africa project the continent as a land of occult and magic (Pels 195; Mudimbe 81). Since the wizard conforms to this reductivist image of Africa, Shonku finds him noteworthy. On the other hand, stark insensitivity is visible in Shonku’s depictions of the friendly group of Bantus, of the Gikuyu porters who bear the luggage for his team, and of the fifty Bantu workers who work for Haimendorf. Except Kahindi, the leader of the group of Gikuyu porters, none of Africans finds a name in the narrative (Ray 448). Even the deaths of three anonymous porters in the

hands of the robotic Tyrannosaurus merely generate a nominal, matter-of-fact response from Shonku: “Our team lacks three porters. So some of the lighter materials are being carried by ourselves” (458). Eventually, when Shonku and his European teammates escape from the blue-diamond mines of Haimendorf, amidst earthquake caused by the volcanic eruptions, Shonku invidiously remarks: “Kahindi must have escaped with his group of porters. This is not the time to think of them” (469). Thus Shonku's attitude towards the local population is prejudiced and condescending, while the jungle of Congo in Shonku's diary becomes an exhibition of a constructed “African culture.” The bestial and the benevolent are juxtaposed and paraded in such a manner that the representation unwittingly reinvigorates a colonial reductionist perception of Africa. Mahoney's pansophism, Shonku's discriminatory attitude to the people of the region and his romanticisation of “Africa,” along with the tremendous power of the annihilating gun bolster the colonial racist ideology in which Africa is always an “other” to the “civilised” Eurasian world.

Postcolonial Negotiation in Ray

As contended before, Ray's perception of Africa was framed by a nineteenth-century Bengali *bhadralok* consciousness about the discursive superiority of Aryan race. This particular consciousness propagated an ideology that sought to establish a “genealogical proximity [of the Bengali *bhadralok*] to a 'ruling race,’” the race of the Europeans (Basu 72). Shonku's concern for Macpherson, admiration for Mahoney and camaraderie with Kroll and other European teammates are indicative of Ray's fascination for the “good” western science/scientists. However, Ray's Shonku has another ideological trajectory which surfaced as a peculiar nineteenth-century contestation to the hegemony of colonial science. In the mid 1880s, when Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858–1937) and Prafulla Chandra Ray (1868–1944), the two iconic Bengali men of science, returned to India with foreign degrees, they were deprived of their due accolades and academic positions because of “racism and colonial high-handedness,” and hence they came up with a curious negotiation: “an acceptance of scientific rationality or positivism that the colonial model of science offered but, at the same time, the proffering of an alternate [sic.] that could appropriate and subvert the modes of coloniality” (Bhattacharya and Hiradhar 286). They were disillusioned enough with the racist biases that underpinned colonial governmentality but they never lost faith in scientific thinking and technological development that stemmed from the colonial model of science. In “Shonku Congo Abhijaan,” Satyajit Ray seems to exude a similar negotiation. Shonku's moral capital, which he gains when he rejects Haimendorf's offer, is indicative of Ray's negotiation between his reverence for colonial rationality and his abhorrence towards colonial capitalist greed for material wealth. Colonial “science” along with its materiality remains incomplete without Shonku's intellectual aid. Haimendorf, Gauss, Erlich and Halsman can build a monstrous Tyrannosaurus and colonise the Bantus to extract manual labour from them; but to survive in the “formidable” environment of Africa, a German man of science needs Shonku's innovative skills in medicine and weaponry (Ray 463-464). In order to extract blue diamond from Congo, a revolutionary element in the industry of electronics, Haimendorf, Gauss, Erlich and Halsman have built mines at the heart of Congo. The Bantu mercenaries constitute the cheap

labour force in this mercantile colonial pursuit. However, they need the pistol and medicine invented by Shonku to survive the “hostile” African jungle. The plan of Carl Haimendorf suits well with his past: as Kroll reveals, Haimendorf was a part of the Nazis and conducted dangerous experiments upon the Jews in one of Hitler's concentration camps (463). Shonku's refusal to Haimendorf's proposal is obvious. Nevertheless, Ray makes it obtrusive, and hence significant, by emphasising Shonku's hatred for Haimendorf: “There was an indomitable urge to bring out the gun from my pocket and obliterate this heinous man...” (464). The natural disaster which ushers in a poetic justice and the triumph of Shonku's team over that of Haimendorf signal a vindication of Shonku's rejection of “evil science.” Thus Shonku alienates himself from the evil science which lies at the heart of the exploitative mining project undertaken by Haimendorf. Shonku's position therefore is marked by a double alienation: on the one hand, he is the “civilised self” as opposed to the “uncivilised, primitive Africa;” on the other hand, he is an enemy of and ethically superior to the mercantile science of the west, which he rejects on moral grounds. This subject position is markedly postcolonial as it seeks to break free from the ideological interpellation of colonialism. This is significant because cultural colonisation of a community has inextricable links with the economic exploitation of the people of that community (Said 10-11, Thiong'o 11-5). Shonku perceives Congo through western eyes and unwittingly essentialises its culture and inhabitants; but he substantively dissociates himself from the economically exploitative dimension of colonialism. Ray seems to uphold the philosophy of karma which concerns itself with the consequences of an act (Lipner 261). It is Shonku's good karma or deed which saves the day for him in the end. That Shonku, along with his “good” Western teammates, escapes by dint of Macpherson's hot-air balloon, while the “bad” Western scientists (mis)led by Haimendorf are doomed amidst volcanic eruptions, offers a hint of a possible collaboration between the eastern and western scientists. The success of Shonku's mission in Congo thus indicates Ray's fascination for a discourse of scientificity that advocates for a union of the best of the east and the west. Such a joint-venture, though reeks of racism (as it is predicated upon the protracted colonial essentialisation of Africa), proffers a postcolonial alternative that subverts the hegemony of western science. In the post-colonial world, science is no more a monopoly of Europe. The west cannot use it as a tool of economic exploitation.

Conclusion

The article underscores the complex interaction between colonial and postcolonial discourses through an analysis of Satyajit Ray's “Shonkur Congo Abhijaan.” The discussion begins with a history of ideas that framed Ray's text. It argues that one needs to locate Ray's short story within the trajectory of the nineteenth-century Bengali *bhadralok* imagination about the strange and exotic lands and about a curious racial hierarchy. Then the article, through a close reading of the text, focalises the ways in which Ray romanticises and barbarises Africa. The reductivist view of Congo that Ray unwittingly upholds through Shonku is primarily a reinvigoration of colonial stereotypes of Africa. Towards the end of the discussion, the article discovers a curious postcolonial negotiation as Ray's protagonist assumes a subject position that challenges colonial ideology on moral grounds. Shonku inadvertently endorses the colonial ideology that otherises Africa as a land of the primitive and barbaric; yet he also attempts at gaining a morally superior state vis-à-vis the

economically exploitative dimension of colonialism. The ending of the narrative is suggestive of Ray's penchant for a coalition of eastern and western sciences, a possible collaboration that takes issue with the dominance of the west in the domain of science.

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Ambivalent Celebration of 'in-betweenness' in Select Films of Rituparno Ghosh

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Abstract

*After literary cultural semiotics, film studies started valuing popular sources. It demonstrates how films can speak for and to a national population, thereby creating a national identity for a group of people who are often extremely diverse and enervated by internal animosities. The introduction of moving pictures in the 19th century led to the association between cinema and social criticism. One of the country's most prominent queer filmmakers, Rituparno Ghosh, always had strong feelings about the traditionalist elements of Indian culture. In *Arekti Premer Golpo* and *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, Ghosh is ambivalent about Indian traditionalism. A dichotomy between “tradition” and “modernity”, along with “elite” and “vernacular,” is used as a framework for analyzing the narratives of gender and identity in both the films. In the selected movies, Ghosh attempts to legitimize gender difference in the context of gender binarism and a sexist social background by asserting progress and novelty, but also differentiates transgender individuals in relation to caste and class in ways that obliterate the acceptance of transgender identities and narratives.*

Keywords: *Film Studies, Queer, inclusion, nonconformist, alteration, transgender*

Introduction

It is not necessary for a performer to identify as queer in order to be considered a queer artist; rather, being queer in art implies that the performer rejects the deceptively firmest power structures, regardless of the performer's sexuality. Being queer is the only way one can cultivate the ability to see through what appears to be normal and sacred. Instead of focusing solely on gender performativity codes, queerness should also include a nullification of normativity, which is often mistaken for naturalness. Known as a correspondent for a Kolkata-based publicizing and marketing firm in the 1980s, Rituparno Ghosh (1961–2013) was a Bengali film director, versifier, and playwright. Infomercials have become a lucrative business for him, and he has won numerous awards for the company he worked for, Response India. His feature film debut, *Hirer Angti*, was critically acclaimed but never released commercially after two Doordarshan documentaries. Rituparno's later films, as well as his increasingly public and noticeable departure from his own sexuality and gender alteration, are linked to the evolving accounts of sexual and gender distinctiveness in Bengal and India. During the 1990s and 2000s in India, there was an increase in the amount of media coverage of 'alternative' sexuality. Amidst this time period, the formation of a number of community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations that work with the LGBTQIA+ community also began to take place. In contrast to older occupied class/lower caste community formations like the hijras and kothis, which predated liberalization, new discourses on transgender and transsexual identity have emerged in this context.

As the lives of the Bengali middle class changed due to economic liberalization,

Ghosh's films reflect these social, cultural, and economic shifts exceptionally well. In spite of the fact that the films are based on Bengali culture, their narratives and human relationships are universally relatable. With the power to question, Ghosh gives his characters agency. As a filmmaker, Ghosh also challenges the idea that heterosexuality and monogamy are a given. To understand Ghosh's protagonist, Butler's understanding of performativity and identity formation is critical. Butler's famous use of the drag queen as the essential figure who subversively reveals the performativity of all genders emphasized Gender Trouble's importance for queer theory. In other words, the apparent rigidity and binary structure of gender are illusions created by repeated performances of gender ideals (Somerville 19). Rather than having fixed identities, Ghosh's characters are constantly changing. Through their creative acts of performance, the characters disguise and reveal themselves. As identification is not a state of being, these actions are well-thought-out. Adapting and integrating a new way of life is a never-ending battle. Body language, attire, and stage presence all contribute to the portrayal of this age-old conflict.

There is an important scene at the climax of Kaushik Ganguly's movie *Arekti Premer Golpo*, which stars Rituparno Ghosh, wherein Abhiroop Sen and Chapal Bhaduri, the film's two main protagonists, compare their respective gender perceptions., Chapal Bhaduri, at the end of his acting career in Bengali open-air theatre (jatra), plays himself as Abhiroop, a fictional filmmaker based in Delhi. In the film, Abhiroop is played by Rituparno. As Rituparno plays the younger Chapal in the film's refurbishments of Chapal's past, a parallel narrative is established between Rituparno's performance as the younger Chapal and the drama that unfolds in Abhiroop's life as the documentary is being shot. Locals are concerned that a premature enactment of a mythological composition presenting Shitala (the Deity of Plague) will lead to an outbreak of the disease. The police intervene on their behalf. Angrily, Abhiroop considers protesting at the police station because of the villagers' 'absolutely ridiculous' behaviour. The police are already negotiating with Abhiroop's cinematographer boyfriend, Basu, so Chapal advises Abhiroop to stay behind and let men do men's work – *byatachheleder kaaj byatachhelerai koruk* (let men do men's work) (Datta 170).

According to Rituparno, who played the role of Abhiroop, states that women belong to one category, same follows for men, and they are a third category, which reflects that they don't need to follow any set pattern of society. The movie scene wherein Abhiroop firmly points his hand to himself reinforces the notion that he belongs to the third category. Assuming that Abhiroop is in the "middle" or "third" position, Chapal is mildly mocked for his apparent, gender binarism credence of being a woman in a (mistakenly male) physique. This is because Chapal believes that Abhiroop is in one of these positions. The fact that Chapal and Abhiroop appear to be adhering to traditional gender roles draws more attention. While Abhiroop takes on the role of a middle-class English-speaking director from the city, Chapal is the one who plays Bengal's "traditional" folk plays. In the movie's narrative of gender diversity and identity, "tradition" and "modernity" are further aligned with an elite-vs.-vernacular dichotomy.

Ghosh's films, *Arekti Premer Golpo* (2010) and *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* (2012), endeavour towards legitimizing gender difference amongst gender binarism and sexist societal background by making assertions about headway and newness, but also

differentiate transgender individualities in form of caste and class, which consequently obliterate the organization of transgender identities and narratives. Despite the films' persistent efforts to establish them through teleologies of modernity and development, these class/caste disparities remain sensitive, uneasy, apprehensive, and are vulnerable to being confronted with. As much as Abhiroop appears to be superior to Chapal in terms of his class/caste-bound narrative of bourgeois modernity and enlightenment, his reputed innovation and emancipation are also undermined by prompts of their cohesion, most notably their equally unsatisfied efforts to attain effective particular relations.

Arekti Premer Golpo asserts that there are two models of (trans)gender credentials: the binary (typical) model and the non-binary (three-gendered) model, both of which are negotiated in Chitrangada. These models can be distinguished by their use of the word "binary." Both movies make an effort to recover and even celebrate their protagonists' thirdness and gender liminality. Considering how similar these characters are to Rituparno's, it shouldn't come as a surprise that both movies examine the male-to-female intermediate model in different ways. This is something that both movies do. On the other hand, these selected movies represent a fundamental break from the Indian working class homosexual men folks, who have attempted to combat the stereotypes about gay male effeminateness by masculinizing gay distinctiveness. These men have argued that 'gay' is both more masculine and more respectable than gender variant individuals from lower-caste kotha and hijra communities, who are less privileged than their middle-class peers. In other words, the films chosen reflect a significant departure from the Indian middle-class gay men who have attempted to confront.

The film explores the relationship asymmetries and power dynamics that are prevalent between male and female partners as a result of the reluctance of males to fully commit to romantic partnerships with females. Eventually, Abhiroop and Chapal's love interest, both roles played distinctly by Indraneil Sengupta, take a back seat to their respective families. Their position in society is distinct from that of an unresolved romantic triangle. Abhiroop, after the birth of Rani's wife, is able to keep her distance from Basu and continue living her own life despite the fact that Abhiroop is now Basu's daughter-in-law. Chapal worked for Kumar Babu as a domestic helper for a significant amount of time before he unexpectedly terminated her employment. On the other hand, Chapal is Kumar Babu's primary target, and he takes advantage of her. When their individual and financial circumstances are compared, it suggests that there is a greater dichotomy between location, social class, and gender. In contrast, Rituparno, who provides his own commentary on the movie, draws attention to the fact that Chapal and Abhiroop have very different conceptions of their gender identities. According to an interview that Rituparno gave to *The Telegraph*, Abhiroop and Rituparno share a lot of similarities with each other. In his opinion, going through with gender reassignment surgery for the sole purpose of fitting in with a society that is predominately heterosexual is a waste of both time and money. If this is the case, then why is Roop willing to reinvent herself as a female in order to pursue a goal that is mathematically impossible? This is the primary factor that differentiates Chapal and Roop from one another. Roop is under the impression that he is neither male nor female because his body does not correspond to either a man's or a woman's body, and vice versa. (Bakshi and Ghosh)

The conflict between binary and nonbinary models is externalized in *Arekti Premer Golpo*, whereas the conflict is more internally mediated in *Chitrangada*. Rituparno Ghosh, one of India's most prominent queer filmmakers, has long held reservations about the traditionalist aspects of Indian culture. Even though he acknowledged that ancient texts like the Mahabharata shaped modern India, he also saw that the country's extreme conservatism threatened his own more liberal and nonconformist views on sexuality. *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, Ghosh's film about his conflicted feelings toward Indian traditionalism, brought these feelings to the fore. Rituparno says, "gender equality and playing with gender . . . that was something done by Tagore himself . . . that gender is imposed upon us . . . sometimes by our parents, irrespective of our biological sex . . . we have to play up a gender to the society . . . which may not be what we want to do . . . to him [Tagore] it's a story of wish, her father's wish versus Chitrangada's wish. So, my film is a deconstruction of the Tagore text" (Datta 193).

The movie *Chitrangada*, on the other hand is an accolade to Rabindranath Tagore's contemporary play with the same name, *Chitrangada* (1936). Tagore's dream of Indian distinctiveness and individual sovereignty is expanded by Ghosh, who introduces the fundamentals of radical, ethnic, and sexual liberalism into the mix. In contrast to Ghosh's previous homages to Tagore, *Chitrangada* uses a charged queer imagination to reimagine the drama's political and erotic energies. In his novel, *Chitrangada*, the *Mahabharata*'s legendary warrior princess, is reimaged by Tagore in the land formerly known as 'Manipur.' The film's recurring theme is a dance-theatre storyline. Rudra (Rituparno Ghosh) is a choreographer and dance teacher living with his parents in Kolkata, India. He is in love with Partho Majumdar (Jishu Sengupta), a rhythmist working on an original *Chitrangada* play that he wants to direct to honour Tagore's 150th birthday. For example, we can glimpse what *Chitrangada* may have been like, which seamlessly blends images of everyday reality and the realm of dreams – where the past is intertwined with the future in an inextricable way, allowing characters to move across time and states of mind to be personified. In the very last scene of the movie, Rudra and his parents have a conversation about his father's will, which refers to Rudra as his "only son and heir." This occurs just before Rudra transforms into a female form. All three characters are shown in their hospital room, where close-ups are used to create an intensely realistic scene. Eventually, the kinfolk breaks down when Rudra's father begs him to come back to the house of his birth.

This two-gendered (male-to-female) model is used by Rituparno's character Rudra, who has a personal experience with the allure of heterosexual womanhood. As seen in Tagore's *Chitrangada*, *Chitrangada* is an Amazonian woman warrior searching for answers about her true gender. The works of Tagore elicit a wide range of interpretations. As with Rudra's story, *Chitrangada* is framed in a similar manner. Partho, a percussionist and recovering drug addict, is cast in *Chitrangada* by Rituparno out of sympathy for Rudra, who has also been subjected to "ostracism" because of her effeminacy. During rehearsals and performance, Rudra falls in love with Partho. As their relationship develops, Rudra begins to wonder about a "sex change." It is important to note that, in contrast to transwomen like Tista (Datta 180), the decision to undergo "sex reassignment surgery" is seen as a reaction to heteronormativity rather than an expression of a prior identity. The film dramatizes Rudra's

internal conflict over questions of identity, love, duty, and autonomy by intercutting scenes from the play at various points throughout the run time of the movie. Rudra has defied the traditional gender roles and career expectations of Bengali middle-class family.

On the basis of the discernible naturalization of gender that Rudra presents, she explains how social edifices of gender and cisgender people's edifices of gender uniqueness are rendered invisible, while individuality and self-hood edifices that cross prearranged gender margins are judged and scrutinized to be unnatural. This is because the discerning naturalization of gender that Rudra presents is the basis for her argument. Criticism of Rituparno's alleged hormone treatments and surgeries may be seen as an attempt to respond to the scrutiny of this film. It also criticizes transgender people and bodies for being pathologized and for being associated with illness or death. Both high art and economic status are predicated on Rudra's alleged gender transcendence and her ability to negotiate transitional procedures without interference. The position of the (male) artist, in contrast to that of the homemaker, appears to enable an identity that transcends gender. As a result, 'sex change' procedures are completely obscured by the enormous privilege of freely negotiating them. Many transgender people cannot afford or are unable to afford sex reassignment or gender affirmation surgery. Gender dysphoria must be diagnosed, a static gender identity declared, and the ability to 'live' in the target gender demonstrated before health insurance will cover transgender people.

At the same time, both *Chitrangada* and *Arekti Premer Golpo* use this well-worn trope by having two men play the roles of the 'other woman' in both films. At a performative level, this femaleness is mapped onto a biologically identified male body. As a cross-dressing playwright and choreographer who anticipates and nearly endures gender reassignment surgery in order to espouse an orphan, Ghosh appears in *Chitrangada* and *Arekti Premer Golpo* (for in India, there is no legal provision allowing two men to adopt). As seen in Ghosh's queer films, which prominently gloss over local subcultures that existed prior to the global LGBTQ movement and situate their narratives within the neobhadrolok class, their radicalism doesn't detract from the cultural dominance of "neo-bhadrolok" and "gay man." For the kothi from lower socioeconomic strata of society, they reinforce the hierarchical relationship between the English-educated, metropolitan "gay man," who is mostly the product of an English-neo-liberal bourgeois discourse about sexual identity politics. It is true that both films provide a platform for practices and subjectivities that go beyond binary gender identifications. A higher level of non-binary transgender or genderqueer individuality is only available to upper middle-class people like Rudra, or Rituparno, and Abhiroop, who proclaim their subject situation over both the male to female transition description and the female to male transition. In other words, characters like Chapal, who questions Abhiroop's pretensions in *Arekti Premer Golpo*, continue to remain in a marginalized state in society. The celebration of Rituparno by the state and the middle class is particularly ironic and poignant given the enormous disparity that exists between the upper class and the gender-variant communities that they represent. These communities, which aren't shown in the movies, are criminalized, monitored, and pathologized as a result of Rituparno's posthumous gun salute and celebration.

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A Critical Analysis of Female Masochism through Select Creative Works

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Abstract

Masochism is generally perceived as an innate female tendency. But is that really the case? Perhaps, it depends upon experiences in individual's life. This paper mainly explores the pains women inflict on themselves in order to escape reality, especially when there is no love around them, and by fantasizing and abusing, they get heightened pleasure. Moreover, women show masochistic behavior because in a patriarchal society, they are brought up in a way so as to bear pain which can be either psychological or physical, or both. In order to support the statement that female masochistic behavior is dependent on unpleasant reality, the case is put forward in two sections. In the first section, there will be an analysis of a movie called, "The Piano Teacher," directed by Michael Haneke. The second section will examine the case through a book titled, The Myth of Women's Masochism, written by Dr. Paula J. Caplan

Keywords: *masochism, female masochism, female masochistic behavior, myth of women's masochism, patriarchal society*

There is often a debate on whether masochism is a psychological or a specific sexual condition. One major dispute rests on the role of gender. Most females claim to have been abused mentally, emotionally and/or physically at some point in their life. They are torn between what their inner self tells them to do (an independent lifestyle) and how society expects them to behave (to be submissive or be in the service of their husbands). In his essay, "The Subjection of Women", John Stuart Mill argues that "men do not want solely the obedience of women; they want their sentiments; not a forced slave but a willing one" (26). Therefore, this expectation is deeply rooted to a great extent within the patriarchal set up. This case can be understood better through the novel by the noble prize winner, Elfriede Jelinek titled, *The Piano Teacher*, published in 1983. It is a disturbing story of the female protagonist named Erika Kohut, the piano teacher who shares a turbulent relationship with her mother and tries to find an escape through a masochistic relation with her student. In 2001, a movie called "The Piano Teacher" (La Pianiste: original title) was released which in a way did justice as an adaptation of the novel.

Remarkably directed; Isabelle Huppert gives a performance of amazing emotional intensity as Erika Kohut in the movie, "The Piano Teacher." A repressed woman in her late thirties teaches piano at the Vienna Conservatory and lives with her tyrannical mother (played by Annie Girardot), with whom she has a volatile love-hate relationship. After watching "The Piano Teacher," one can question why does Erika behaves in a strange manner, what causes her to alienate herself from others. Is it some mental disease or is it the impact of her upbringing? The movie is open-ended and such questions that might be there in audience's mind remain unanswered. Erika seems to inherit the grim and stony nature from her mother, with whom she lives. After all, children notice their elders and behave accordingly. Being all alone, Erika gratifies her sexual appetite through porn videos, voyeurism, and masturbatory

practices that involve pain, suffering and self-mutilation. It seems that it is her mother's oppressive attitude towards her due to which Erika develops this tendency of hurting herself. Constantly interrogated by her mother, Erika neither has privacy nor allowed to have external interests. Moreover, she is supposed to account every minute of her time. This is evident in one of the scenes where Erika's mother asked her the reason for being late resulting in a physical fight between the two. Physically and mentally abused by her mother, it seems that Erika has no choice but to expose her body to severe pain. Perhaps, it becomes a way of escaping harsh realities around her. There is a flight from selfhood. Erika's condition in some sense arouses sympathy in audience's mind. Further, we notice that Erika's father is missing in the movie. It is clear that she does not have a 'happy family'. Every child needs a good quality life which includes the exclusive attention of the parents. A lack of attention compels the developing mind of the child to behave in such a manner that it gains attention from the elders. And this lack turns more dangerous when the child reaches his/her puberty. In the movie – unfriendly and serious Erika cuts her genitals with a razor blade in the bathroom. This confirms her masochistic tendencies.

Though Erika keeps her emotions secret and hidden, the audience realizes about her masochistic desires when she reveals them to one of her students, Walter (Benoit Magimel). Walter seems interested in her and finally agrees with what Erika wants in their sexual meet. Their first sexual contact is an enactment of the power games between a “top” and a “bottom.” Erika wants to be the bottom, but she wants the game played out by her rules and in accordance with a strict fantasy that resides within her own head. In one of the articles titled, “Masochism: A Queer Subjectivity?”, Amber Musser states that “...the masochist oscillates between submission and domination, rendering reality (and binaries) absurd in favor of fantasy.” In the movie, Erika has a highly detailed and specific fantasy that Walter has no idea of. She sends him a letter containing the rules she wants Walter to play along. In one of their encounters also, Erika makes him understand how she wants to have their sexual meeting and she asks Walter to follow the instructions. She orders him to squat over her face and then to punch her in the gut. Erika shows Walter a shoebox from under the bed containing her ropes and chains. Firstly, this shows that masochists might get into a role-playing fantasy. Secondly, it proves that Erika wants to fulfill her masochistic violent fantasies by playing the role in reality now. In *Masochism in Modern Man*, Theodor Reik claims that “Phantasy has the power to transform the existent reality by interpretation conforming to paramount desire, and to conceive the future as present” (274).

Finally, in the movie, we come across a scene in which Walter beats Erika and humiliates her. It is plausible that he might be playing the role which Erika wanted him to play. He punches Erika in the face, shouting “is this what you want?” During this encounter, Erika shouts “not the face” expressing the guilt of being beaten up as if she is his wife and “not the hands” expressing the fact that she makes her living with her hands. One thing is for sure that masochism does not only include pain, it includes humility as well. In an essay, “Edmund Burke, Gilles Deleuze and the Subversive Masochism of the Image,” Peter Cosgrave claims that “Masochistic fantasy is the site of a sardonic mockery of authority that turns the instruments of punishment into the tools of pleasure” (421). But in the movie Erika fails to get pleasure during the sexual meeting as it does not turn up the way she wanted it to be. Erika is

unable to comprehend the behavior of Walter. Here, fantasy and reality do not become one; this results in Erika accusing herself. She now realizes that the shame, abuse, violence are the only emotions she deserves. This encounter tells about Walter that he did what he was asked to do. Perhaps, he could read only the violence in her letter. In the final scene, Erika stabs herself in the chest and walks away and here the film ends, raising many questions such as why does she stab herself? Is it an act of breaking herself free of societal roles? Or does she show her disappointment as she fails to carry out her violent fantasies successfully? Perhaps, the last shot implies that Erika finally escapes her role as a daughter and also as a teacher. However, the movie maintains an ambiguity and it is left open for spectators to draw conclusion as per what they have seen. This adaptation of Jelinek's novel is a showcase of feministic desires, emotional complexity, societal taboos and shades of grey in one's personality.

Do women who display masochistic behavior enjoy the pain? Or do they merely try to escape the societal norms through it? To substantiate the case further, Dr. Paula J. Caplan's book titled, *The Myth of Women's Masochism* published in 1985, argues that women are not masochists, despite the belief that they are. In this book, she discusses the unequal status between man and woman, the roots of which lie in religion. According to her, religion plays a crucial role in the construction of gender bias. It is evident in the Old Testament how women were subjugated when Eve was punished by God for giving Adam the apple - "To the women He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (2). This demonstrates that there is a long history that dates back to the scriptures, in which women were often ill-treated and not given an equal status to men. In the book, Caplan states:

"Although Freud wrote about masochism in both sexes, he explicitly said many times that masochism is feminine. Even masochistic behavior in a man was labeled feminine by Freud, so that masochism, which was not considered normal or typical in a man, was thought to be so in a woman" (20).

Caplan asserts that many mental health professionals who provide services to women have been trained to believe that women are masochists. She maintains that it is easy to blame women's problems on masochism rather than looking for the deeper cause of their unhappiness. But the question arises what is the cause of women's unhappiness? Caplan in an interview admits that women in painful relationships or frustrating jobs, or those who are exhausted meeting the needs of children, spouses and employers tend to blame themselves for not fulfilling the duties. The point is that women's behavior which is considered as masochistic should instead be attributed to the traits such as: the ability to delay gratification and wait for rewards through effort; the capacity to put other people's needs ahead of one's own; the belief that is inculcated in them since their childhood that women should have limited expectations. In fact, there is a need to understand that the behavior which is considered masochistic in women is ironically defined quite healthy as sacrificial, or courageous, or hard work in men.

Caplan explains that some women show masochistic behavior so as to avoid separation from their husbands (in case of abusive husbands). Also, the society plays a significant role in making women masochists because generally it is the fear of society which makes women silent and dumb. They are scared of receiving insults and taunts from the

people around them in case of broken marriage; patriarchy makes women's personal desires impossible. Moreover, Caplan feels that some women are bonded just because of the occasional affection their abusive husbands express. Women tend to blame themselves because in the patriarchal society, they are made to believe that the evil resides within them. Also, there is a common attitude in women of taking the way of submission and shrinking before violence rather fronting up to it. Women are the product of nurture and not nature. Appropriating Foucault (See detailed discussion on power in Michel Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* published in 1980) here, it seems everything in life comes under power dynamics. There is a constant interplay of power: of control, of authority, of obedience, of surrender. It is for sure that both patriarchy and masochistic behavior are based on power dynamics. Therefore, patriarchy involves masochism somewhere.

In a patriarchal society, women voluntarily accept that men should be their masters and they would make no complaints against it because patriarchy has enslaved their minds as they are trained to live for others. As a result of which there is a destructive attitude in which the women turn inward instead of outward upon others. In submission, women are taken out of their personal limitations and are left reduced, weakened and humiliated. Masochism in some sense neutralizes women's oppression under patriarchy. They try to find pleasure by hurting themselves. One must notice that generally, there is a willingness in women to sacrifice everything for their partners. This reflects a feeling of their insignificance and helplessness in the society. They are taught that their main purpose in life is to serve others no matter how much pain it involves; the more suffering the woman tolerates, the greater is the love for her partner. In an interview with Glenn Collins, Caplan explains “we know everything we need to know, its common sense. I offer the revolutionary proposition that we should give women as much credit for being emotionally healthy and for wanting to be happy, as men (for more information, refer to the article, titled “Women and Masochism: Debate Continues,” *New York Times*, 1986).

In all, *The Myth of Women's Masochism* is a thought provoking text which makes the reader ponder over the issues raised by Caplan. She manages to convey the real situation of a woman in which she is trapped. She opposes the idea of considering women as innate masochists because she believes that they are forced to display these tendencies so as to meet the societal expectations. It is very difficult to get rid of this ideology of perceiving woman as an innate masochist as it is deeply rooted in our Indian society and that is why there is a 'fall' for forever in a woman's position. However, from the above discussion one can say that it is high time now to change this common perception. In addition to this need, this masochistic behavior also develops due to insufficient loving nurturance or abusive upbringing which ultimately results in low self-esteem. For this, one should always remember that pain and pleasure are two sides of the same coin; therefore, one must lead a life passionately as well as courageously.

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Commodification of India: Analysing the film *The White Tiger*

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Abstract

*Films produced in Hollywood have a global audience. But sometimes films are produced with the aim of capitalising on cultural products by taking into consideration global audiences' expectations and the subject's market value. This paper argues that the film *The White Tiger* was produced to cater to the Western appetite for consumption of exotic India. However, it is problematic because it legitimises the Western perception of India as being chaotic and backward. It ignores the positive aspects of a multicultural society in favour of the negative. The paper uses the concept of re-orientalism to analyse *The White Tiger* and its fragmented image, depicting India with dysfunctional law and order, caste and class-led disparity, and pervasive corruption. It concludes that the film fails to depict a holistic picture because of its aspiration to commodify the stereotypical image of India.*

Keywords: commodity, culture, rural-urban disparity, re-orientalism, stereotypical.

Introduction

“Film is an art form and a cultural institution worthy of serious intellectual consideration” (Pramaggorie and Wallis) because of its immense outreach and impact on the masses. Globalization has created favourable economic conditions for television producer and filmmakers to market their films internationally. It helps television producer and filmmakers in establishing an efficient system for film production, distribution, and exhibition on both local and international markets. In the context of the film and television, Straubhaar explains that the demands of production companies for commercial success led to the emergence and standardization of certain successful formulas as a result cultural producers work within the boundaries of certain successful genres or formulas. He noted that, economically, globalization is the spread of capitalism as a system, of consumerism and commercialism as social ethics (Straubhaar 96). Furthermore, Ampuja suggested the need to understand the cultural issues resulting from the economic logic of media commercialisation. He noted that culture has become synonymous with business because of the shifting nature of advertising and control, new forms of commercial strategies utilised by media giants, and the general rise of promotion and brand marketing. He argued, “the social reality of capitalism is 'totalizing' in unprecedented ways and degrees. Its logic of commodification, accumulation, profit-maximisation and competition permeates the whole social order” (Cited in Ampuja, Wood 11). Wasko et al. argued that marketing activities such as product advertising, tie-in campaigns, licensing and merchandising commercialise Hollywood films and enhance culture's commodification, promoting a consumer society (272). Sometimes commercialisation and marketing strategies compel film makers to commodify stereotypes of the culture.

The selection of such film subjects may be considered a commodity due to the fact that it is decided by audience demand and producer supply; hence, it produces trade value. According to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai "commodities can provisionally be defined as objects of economic value" (Appadurai 3). Similarly, Wasko argues that film's political economy must recognise "motion pictures as commodities" created and disseminated within a capitalist industrial framework (Wasko 121). One such case is the film *The White Tiger* produced by Netflix and other production companies keeping in mind the popular demands of the global market. Netflix is well-known for its data-driven suggestions, which aim to customize the user experience to each individual customer. However, data science at Netflix goes much beyond that, it also helps to predict content demands of the audience. ("Data Science in 30 Minutes: Predicting Content Demand with Machine Learning" 03:15–05:21). In this case, Netflix's production of the film appears to be more interested in situating India's darker sides as commodities. *The White Tiger* can be seen as a commodity because "the commodity is the particular form that products take when their production is principally organized through the process of exchange" (Mosco 129). The film caters to "the insatiable hunger for global consumption of Indian culture by representing dysfunctional law and order in India; class and caste conflict; and the failure of India's claimed modernity" (Dwivedi 103), while intentionally ignoring to include the bright and progressive aspects of India. The narrative about India is in high demand in the global market of popular culture, whether it be a book written by a diaspora author or a film produced by Hollywood or a Western company like Netflix or Amazon Prime. Considering the demand and supply produced by the makers of Indian tales, the "over-riding fear is that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate—that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten" (Hooks 39).

This article argues that such films produced by Western directors with Indian producers and actors aim to capitalize on the Western appetite for consumption of the exotic Indian culture. They create what Stuart Hall describes "a meaningful discourse" from their "dominant hegemonic positions" which is decoded by majority audiences from their "negotiated positions" with help from dominant definitions that "connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalisations, to the great syntagmatic views-of-the-world. . . even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted or mystified ways" (Hall, 516). However, it is problematic because this film legitimises the Western perception of India as being chaotic and backward. It compromises India's image by deliberately overlooking the positive aspects of a multicultural country in favour of highlighting the negative. Such representations can be traced back to colonialism, yet it's crucial to emphasise on some films. Srinivasan and Shekhawat in an essay about Jean Renoir's 1951 film, *The River*, that the film presents lives of people near the Ganges and India as a pleasant place under colonial rule and during partition. Renoir's selective representation focuses on "a glossy image of a happy British family" creating "Raj nostalgia" (Srinivasan & Shekhawat 5). But this partition-era film ignores tensions of socio-political struggle, bloodshed, and poverty. They argued that the film exoticizes India from "an occidental standpoint" by depicting and intensifying cultural contradictions in society (16). Several scholars argued that films produced by NRI filmmakers-Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair, and Gurinder Chadha garner so much media attention

because of their exotic portrayal of India (Parameswaran 22, Desai) and *Slumdog Millionaire's* “reductive view of slum-spaces” (Sengupta) continues the trend.

This trend of re-orientalism as Lau and Mendes explained, “is based on how cultural producers with eastern affiliations come to terms with an orientalised East, whether by complying with perceived expectations of western readers, by playing (along) with them or by discarding them altogether” (Lau and Mendes 3). They focus on India with crime, corruption, caste and class divide as recurring themes they adroitly highlight. In her article Clini noted that from the beginning of the twenty- first century, there has “been a rise of fiction depicting poverty” as “more IWE, Indian films and representations of India of all kinds have focused their attention on the underbelly of India, the slums, the destitution, the crime and the inequalities” (Lau and Mendes, 138 Clini, 22). This creates a negative image of India due to their broad outreach. Besides, “Popular culture in general (and film and television in particular) have always traded in stereotypes, images and tropes that reduce any given social group's diversity and complexity into superficial markers, often derogatory, that come to represent the entire group in some readers' minds” (Benshof 246). Re-orientalism among the diaspora may stem from a desire to concretize their newfound positions in the West, and thus they comply with the commodification of cultural products by taking into consideration global audiences' expectations and market value. Since films are centred around marketing and viewership, a systemic formula is adopted by using recurring themes, utilising celebrity brand value and endorsements, and manipulating favourable reviews and awards for investment and returns. However, in the process of reorienting India by exoticizing its ethnic identity and culture, India has been reduced to a commodity and its culture to a spectacle for the global audience to consume.

The production of *The White Tiger* is dependent on the issues associated with dark India because these serve as exchange values. The global viewer's desire for Orientalist narratives of the relentless exoticisation of Indian culture has been met by the production of the film. The film commodifies Indian culture (both material and non-material culture). Ertman and William's view is important here, commodification “is like embalming or mummifying a living thing” (Ertman and William 178). According to them, when “black culture” is commodified “in accord with hegemonic white tastes”, it “loses its organic edge, its authenticity, its purity, its originality, its spontaneity, its vibrancy, and most importantly its rootedness” (178-179). Similarly, as a result of commodification, the film is made up of a number of imaginative yet unauthentic sequences that promote stereotypes of Indian culture in an excessive manner.

Analysis: Rural–Urban Disparity

Our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage
system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline,
courtesy, or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs.

-- *The White Tiger*

The above voice-over of the protagonist Balram represents the disparity between urban and rural settings and the upper and lower classes. Ashok lives in a luxury apartment in a

suburb of Delhi, and Balram lives in the basement of a similar building, representing class inequality in urban India. It demonstrates how the increased prosperity of metropolitan areas lead to the worsening of living conditions for people of the lower class. It shows urban infrastructure's failure to provide even the most rudimentary services, such as a sanitation facility for lower-class people. Scenes depicting Balram defecating outside, and in another scene with Balram in a cockroach-covered mosquito net, represent the harsh living conditions of domestic servants. The representation of the existence of class disparity in urban India is certainly irrefutable, and the assumption of the filmmaker that the globe should watch and think about Delhi's poverty and the reality of entire India is also entirely plausible. However, it is undeniable that the film fails to holistically depict India. For instance, the scenario in which an affluent family travels by local train fails to appropriately depict the means of transportation in India. This is because the film's director is more concerned with demonstrating negative aspects like class gap as a commodity for the targeted Western audience.

Similarly, the film provides an in-depth look at rural life - particularly the mud-walled alleys and homes with grass-covered roofs; domestic animals stomping about in the mud in front of the house's entrance. A short glimpse of Balram's aunt, Kusum, leads the director's camera to capture the village like a queen. Kishan smashing coal at the tea shop; his father straining to pull the heavy rickshaw; various images of children and men bathing near buffaloes; in the filthy water of a river; ladies washing clothes, and men brushing their teeth. Another scene provides an inside view of Balram's small hut where women are sleeping on one side and men on the other while Balram is reading in the light of the lantern. Animals are carried by other passengers on the bus when Balram is on his way to Dhanbad. In its aim to represent life in rural India, it focuses on the fragmented image of an impoverished population. However, the representation of the village can be charged for its exoticism because the film fails to show any other village or how a larger part of the Indian population still lives in rural areas with better facilities like concrete houses, roads, and electricity. The film-maker attempts to generalise the complexity of a village into forty seconds by rapidly switching between thirteen to fifteen different shots. However, all these shots showcase the despicable condition of rural India without once focusing the lens on the scenic beauty of farms and fields uncorrupted by urbanisation. Arundhati Roy's critique of *Slumdog Millionaire* provides a succinct description of poverty in *The White Tiger*. "Politically, the film de-contextualises poverty – by making poverty an epic prop, it disassociates poverty from the poor. It makes India's poverty a landscape, like a desert or a mountain range, an exotic beach, god-given, not man-made" (Roy).

Devoid of Law and Order

In another scene, when Pinky's rash driving leads to an accident, Balram signs written testimony taking the blame. It indicates that a servant has little control over his life and a master may subject servants to any form of abuse, including putting servants in prison for their actions. Most of the Indians are caught in "the Rooster Coop", in Balram's words, the "trustworthiness of servants is so strong that you can put the key of emancipation in a man's

hand and he will throw it back at you with a curse' (11:45). The audience can perceive that most servants in India have a similar or comparable fate to Balram. As a member of an upper-class society, Pinky is prepared to evade any accusation. Due to the extreme vulnerability of the impoverished, the legal system likewise favours upper-class society.

Towards the end of the film, when Balram becomes a businessman and his driver causes an accident, Balram controls the situation as a member of bourgeois society. Balram offers financial compensation and a job to the victim's elder brother. Even in this instance, the police had little interest in filing a case against Balram's company. It implies that India will accept whatever judgement upper-class society reaches regarding the situation. The audience is made aware of the dysfunctional law and order in India under these conditions. Apart from the situation of law and order, the film suggests that driving on Indian roads is particularly hazardous. The audience may ask, if this is the scenario in India's capital, how is the rest of the country fairing? In addition, the film displays people driving on the wrong side of the road; cows on the road, and people living on footpaths whose children play on the road; all of which increase the likelihood of an accident occurring. The film may be entertaining with the plot of accidents and murder, but the way the director shows an absence of law and order in India, it can discourage any outsider from visiting India.

After realising that the world around him is immoral and corrupt, Balram chooses a path comparable to and more vicious than Ashok's. He then murders his master, Ashok and establishes his own company, ultimately becoming a successful entrepreneur. It gives the impression that rich upper-class Indians have to be annihilated for others to rise in the social ladder and assassinating wealthy masters, stealing their wealth, and starting a business is not a trivial task but an entrepreneurial one. In this case, people of both socioeconomic strata are portrayed as potentially dangerous to one another. This narrative can alter the relationship between upper-class individuals and domestic workers and can encourage scepticism towards domestic service workers.

Unethical Behaviour

When The Great Socialist, a local politician, demands payment of two million rupees from The Stork's coal mining firm, complications arise. As a result, Ashok and Pinky relocate from Dhanbad to Delhi to find a way to seek exemption from paying taxes and avoid the bribe. The corruption presented in the film is so pervasive that Ashok bribes politicians of the opposing party working in the Parliament. The film poses question on the integrity of the democracy as frustrated Ashok Says, "Look We're driving past Mahatma Gandhi, after just having given a bribe to a minister. The world's biggest democracy. It's a fucking joke" (39:7). Later, Balram offers a bribe to the police officer following his late master's footsteps. In Balram's word, "for the poor there are only two ways to get to the top, crime or politics" (1:58:29). Balram, an entrepreneur, born and bred in a corrupt environment, is a product of it indicates the viability of engaging in dishonest commercial practices. The film tries to portray everyone in India as corrupt or criminal, including servants, masters, politicians, and government officials, however this clearly generalises the truth of some people and "facilitates the metonymic cultural representations" (Dirlik 113).

Master-Servant Relationship

Balram is a bright student who comes from a lower-class society. Despite the fact that he is on the verge of receiving a scholarship, he is forced to drop out from the school. Balram and his brother Kishan work in the tea shop to settle their father's debt. Balram's father passed away at a young age because the hospital lacked both a doctor and the necessary resources. Balram learns to drive and finds employment with the American-returned couple, Ashok and Pinky. The modern couple is courteous and respectful to their servant. However, The Stork and his other son, Mukesh's treatment of Balram reveals the disdain upper-class individuals have for servants. Several times Mukesh strikes him on his head. Before Kicking Balram The Stork angrily says, Sister fucker, where were you? Go get the oil and massage my legs (01:12:09). In another scene, Pinky's friend also insults him for being filthy and lower class as she says, "This lower caste, na, they are all the same" (51:5). The inhumane treatment of the servant is repeatedly highlighted till the servant is filled with rage and loathing for his master. However, there could be some examples of this kind of relationship between a master and a servant, but generalisation could be harmful to the image of both classes.

Conclusion

While there is no constructive recommendation for addressing the issue, the negative aspects of Indian culture are packaged for consumption of developing countries as if it were, in Arundhati Roy's words, a 'glitzy item in the supermarket' (Cited in Mendes 479, Roy). Several scholars argued that "Pulp Orientalism" (Desai 78) in *Slumdog Millionaire* is consistent with developing countries "voyeuristic fascination with the spectacle of poverty" (Mendes 479). Looking at the film's depiction of both rural and urban poverty from a close view, while neglecting other aspects of India that are brighter and more progressive, it appears that the film maker followed the same formula of success. Such a kind of commodification of any culture creates more demand among the filmgoers, consequently the film producers and the actors actively engage in the process of re-orientalising and commodifying. The success of such kinds of films even encourages the actors from India to actively engage in the process of re-orientalism. In addition, the film's nominations for multiple prizes and rising popularity show that such a negative narrative about any emerging Oriental country has the potential to succeed among Western audiences. On the other hand, the film maker or producer can face difficulties in attracting the Oriental viewers because of its re-orientalism. For instance, despite being one of the world's most popular subscription streaming services, Netflix India has been struggling to please the Indian market and is worried about its declining number of subscriptions from the country. It has also opted to abandon its "serious, dark content" and experiment with new concepts with a more commercial bent for Indian viewers ("Netflix"). Similarly, *The White Tiger* has not received an enthusiastic response from the Indian audience. The most troubling part of the commodification of negative aspects of Indian culture is that it always damages the country's image.

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Not so Pink Reality: Unravelling Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury's *Pink*

Bahaar*
Dr. Nipun Kalia**

Abstract

Popular culture and films in particular are sites of representation where the subject and object positions are created and changed to suit the needs of the times. Films are a beautiful medium to portray the undercurrents in a society. They show the inner desires, conflicts, complexities and thoughts of the characters that are built. When analysed closely, in films, what can be seen not all of them will represent a nuanced interplay between the forces of patriarchy. However, some may end up reinforcing the gender norms in a subtle manner whereas others posit new possibilities for freeing women. Pink (Dir: Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, 2016) deals with some of the current issues that women face every day. Set in New Delhi, Minal, Falak and Andrea are young independent working women who are sexually harassed and wrongly accused by the perpetrators. The research paper will analyse how the film Pink raises issues related to the issue of consent, sexual violence, patriarchy and slut shaming of women. This paper will subject a female-centric film; Pink that was celebrated as a victory for feminism to see the extent to which it is truly feminist and empowering.

Keywords: *Feminism, Gender, Sexuality, Film Theory*

Introduction

Films not only provide entertainment but also shed light on some of the issues that are previously unheard and unseen of. Films directly or indirectly affect our perception about the way we feel, think, talk or conduct ourselves in the society. A cultural artifact, cinema is a powerful form of art that is subversive and can have immense influence on the audience due to its ability to reflect the reality convincingly (Kamei 81). Films reflect the culture, ideology and the societal norms prevalent in the respective society and provide an opportunity to peep into the world that we inhabit, consume and relish. When analysed closely, films usually lay bare the nuanced interplay between the forces of patriarchy and the dominant ideologies at work. It is the conundrum of all the forces which can be carefully dissected and scrutinised while analysing a film. However, some may end up reinforcing the gender norms in a subtle manner whereas others posit new possibilities for freeing women.

Pink (Dir: Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury, 2016) deals with some of the current issues that women face every day. Set in New Delhi, Minal, Falak and Andrea are young independent working women who are sexually harassed and wrongly accused by the perpetrators. The research paper will analyse how the film *Pink* raises issues related to the issue of consent, sexual violence, patriarchy and slut shaming of women. This paper will subject a female-centric film; *Pink* that was celebrated as a victory for feminism to see the extent to which it is truly empowering and feminist (Mishra par. 1). *Pink* addresses issues pertaining to women in the modern era. For centuries, women have been subjugated in the patriarchal set up of the society. Woman is assumed to be a weaker sex, judged on the basis of her clothes, choices and desires. The film in question tries to analyse the rape culture and sexism that is prevalent in the society, more so in a society that is considered modern, urban

and educated. When a woman is abused or raped, instead of punishing the perpetrators, it's her character that is questioned and attempts are made to stifle her voice (Majumdar par. 3).

Pink raises some of the crucial issues that we are still struggling in society. It represents the harsh experiences of the women who are sexually harassed. When Minal Arora along with her two friends Falak Ali and Andrea Tarang attend a rock concert with some of their male friends, they are unaware that soon their happiness will turn into a tragedy. Rajveer Singh, nephew of a powerful influential politician attempts to rape her; Minal in her self – defence attacks him with a bottle. He is badly injured and shifted to the hospital. When she decides to lodge a complaint against these men; instead, she is rebuked by the Police for physically assaulting Rajveer. Minal is accused along with her friends for attempt to murder. Minal visits another police station where her complaint is seriously heard by Assistant Commissioner of Police. The lines said by the police officer, “*Aapke jaisi achhi ladkiyaan, aise ladkon ke saath jaati hai kahin?*” (A decent girl like you doesn't go out with such boys) show women are questioned on their character while they face sexual harassment (*Pink* 0:30:07-11). Minal visits another police station where her complaint is seriously heard by Assistant Commissioner of Police. Deepak Sehgal (played by Amitabh Bachchan) a retired lawyer who suffers from bipolar disorder helps the women to fight the case.

Masculinity and the Absence of Consent

Men are made to believe that they are accustomed to aggression. They are masculine in nature if they have certain characteristics like wrath, violence, courage and dominance (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). If a man does not show the qualities appropriated by masculinity, he is mocked at and ridiculed. It becomes necessary for him to have these traits otherwise it will question his manhood. Effeminacy in a man is looked down upon and bullied by society. In turn, men are supposed to adhere to hegemonic form of masculinity. Gender theorist Judith Butler in her book “*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*” (1990) argues that gender is socially constructed in society. If a man does not perform according to his gender, he becomes derision among people. Therefore, it is important for him to be what is considered to be manly in behaviour (Butler 24). The colour pink conveys hope, strength, dignity, independence and empowering of women (Khan par. 13). It is often seen that pink signifies something which is fragile and delicate whereas blue colour signifies masculinity and strength. This is how the colours are stereotyped. Therefore, the colour pink is associated with women and blue is meant for men (Kothiyal par. 1). Women are taught to obey the commands of men. They are expected to behave in an appropriate manner; otherwise, they will invite trouble for them. Keeping the genderfication of colours aside, colour has its own signification in film language. Colour, tone and hue play an important role in creating a meaning in a cinematic text, which can be highlighted by a careful examination of the colour scheme predominant in the film.

During the trial, Minal is asked to explain why she chose to go with the men, whom she has just met during a rock show, moreover, she is questioned on her behaviour and the way she had dressed up; it reflects how a woman is made to take the blame for her sexual harassment. Minal is strongly persuaded to admit that she had smashed a bottle on Rajveer's head, when he refused to have sex with her. Falak, who is having an affair with a divorced professor, is forced to reveal her relationship in court. Meanwhile, Andrea who hails from Meghalaya is first asked by the opposing lawyer about her place of birth. Being a North-Eastern girl, she is subjected to stereotypical perception of being anglicized and eventually

'easy'. During one such scene, she is described as either 'Sikkimese - Arunachali or Manipuri' girl by the perpetrators. Throughout the film one can easily observe how women who come from different cultures or religion are discriminated on the basis of their background and looks. They are generally stereotyped to be of a loose character. Andrea is not only oppressed but rather alienated from the society where she lives. Deepak Sehgal indeed raises objection to the racist question that is asked to Andrea. He asks why does the same question is not asked to the witnesses or the accused. The film shows how people have developed a biased attitude towards the North-Eastern women.

In the film, one of the witnesses tells the judge that many boys used to visit Minal's apartment, he is wittingly mocked by Deepak for his conservative mindset. Deepak further intervenes by telling how people judge the character of a woman by simply looking at the friendship she develops with a man. If a woman goes to the temple she is regarded as being good but if she attends a rock concert, she is labelled as bad. It becomes very easy to assassinate her character through the choices she makes and lives her life. Every time it is the woman who has to bear the brunt and suffer the consequences whenever she tries to raise her voice against such violence.

Pink scrutinizes the pre-conceived notions which people have regarding a woman's freedom. In the film, three women Minal Arora, Falak Ali and Andrea Tariang are constantly threatened by Rajveer and his friends. Women are always targeted if they try to give their opinions. They are criticized for speaking up against the decisions of men (Sharma par. 1). *Pink* depicts how it becomes easy for men to stereotype women on the basis of their clothes (Chopra par. 1). In fact, when Minal goes along with Rajveer to attend a rock concert. Rajveer believes that he has the liberty to touch her. Rajveer is furious after he comes to know that Minal has lodged a complaint against him. His friends kidnap Minal while she is walking on the road. They sexually molest Minal in the car and warn her not to tell anyone about the incident. Minal is frightened and refuses to go outside. When Minal rebukes Ankit for his words, he decides to teach her a lesson. Ankit starts threatening Kasturi Lal, the homeowner where Minal is a tenant. Further, he along with other men starts following Andrea. Falak quits her job, since everyone thinks her to be a prostitute. Indeed; Minal, Falak and Andrea have to face wrath of Rajveer. The friendly behaviour of Minal towards Rajveer and his friends also puts a question mark on her character. Nowadays, women could be seen working in different professions, whether it is to join the army or to become an astronaut, but yet people are unwilling to accept their freedom and choices (Pandey par. 4). Minal and her friends face similar experience while they attend the rock concert. Just because they went with the boys does not mean that they can be forced to have sex with them. In case, if a woman experiences sexual harassment, her independence becomes the biggest weapon against her. In this way, the society tries to curtail her right to freedom.

The film highlights the issue of consent through an efficacious scene, where Minal is questioned by her lawyer to answer whether she is a virgin as everyone assumes her to be a woman of low morals. The entire scene that follows is the central point of the entire narrative which tries to lay bare the discourse around the sexuality of woman. The effectiveness of the scene is attained by the judicious usage of film language by the film maker. Right from the camera angles to editing, colour tone, sound, costumes, etc. everything is systematically fixed to provide the intent and purpose of the film (Hudlin 51). In the essay "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema", André Bazin focuses on how reality is created through the films. The film language plays a significant role in making the plot understandable to the audience. According to Bazin, the inherent meaning of a film can be detected by the audience itself.

While mentioning about the films, particularly made during 1920s and 1940s, he argues that a film can introduce the reality to an audience either through the director's belief in representing the image onscreen or by having a belief in the reality (Bazin 24).

The scene uses a dexterous combination of eye level shots and reverse shots between Minal and Deepak, where Deepak deliberately targets Minal to divulge her sexual history in an open court. Minal is visibly uncomfortable with the entire line of questioning but continues to answer. Initially, the facial expressions on the face of Minal depict she has not expected to be questioned like this. Strikingly, the colours, blue and black that Minal is wearing during the trial provides an atmosphere of passivity and suspicion. In the particular scene, Deepak is carefully looking at Minal's face while she answers to him. (*Pink* 01:35:18-40). When he is speaking to Minal, the other people sitting in the court are zoomed for a few seconds. This shows how the camera is particularly fixed on both Minal and Deepak in order to engage the audience with the importance of the scene. The scene is without any music or any background sounds, with the help of riveting exchange and astute balance of words and arguments, the entire mise en scene is carefully constructed to make sure that the audience absorbs and ruminates on every word. Many people wonder why Deepak wants Minal to answer his question. Though Minal is shocked to hear the unexpected question but she doesn't hesitate in telling the truth. Perhaps this scene has become the most crucial part of the film. It is often assumed, if a woman has gone through many sexual experiences, she would never mind to have sex again. Men forget that "when a woman says no, it means no", they need to respect her decision, instead of misinterpreting as an approval by her. Rajveer had developed the exact opinion of Minal and he misjudges her character when she decides to go along with him. The issue of consent has indeed become problematic, especially for the men who are of the opinion that a woman doesn't have an agency of their own. A woman's laughter and friendly behaviour could easily be misconstrued by him as an invitation; a clear signal that she is willing to have sexual relations with him.

Normalization of stalking in the name of 'formulaic' Romance

Film theorist Laura Mulvey in her groundbreaking essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) argues that a woman is always sexually objectified through the eyes of male protagonist, which she terms as male gaze. The camera forces the spectator to adopt a male perspective and focuses on the body of the female instead of establishing her significance, indeed; making her presence passive in the film (Mulvey 11). Cinema is a cultural tool and is governed by the dominant ideologies prevalent in the society. In a patriarchal set up, cinema often provides the hero central position in the narrative where the plot revolves around him and the female is usually confined to be a passive bearer of the look. Her presence is merely to fulfil the sexual interest of the male hero. The camera deliberately manipulates the image of women through the eyes of male characters; thereby making her confined to gratify desire of the hero (Kulkarni par. 5). When it comes to depicting love and romance, Bollywood has always adopted a formulaic approach where stalking by the male hero is normalized usually in song and dance sequences. Routinely by the end of the song the heroine gives in to the demands of the hero and is shown to fall in love with him, in turn proving to the spectator the 'ultimate formula' to win a girl. The word 'consent' has always been non-existent in Bollywood films. When the hero touches the heroine without her consent, it is termed romance. Moreover, the heroine is expected to bear sordid action of the hero. Bollywood songs depict stalking to be charming among audience. Men believe stalking

as an integral part of love. Stalking is not considered a crime.

In Bollywood films, it is often portrayed that when the heroine refuses to accept love proposal from the hero, he considers the refusal to be an acceptance for his love. He either starts stalking her or tries to impress her through his antics. This has been adopted as a 'formula' to win over a girl in Bollywood films since ages. Even if she is not convinced by him; he never gives up. In the end, while saving her from the goons, he finally succeeds in winning her heart. Thereby, the word 'consent' becomes unimportant. For men, a woman's opinion does not exist; she is just treated as an object of desire.

During questioning in the film, Rajveer becomes furious, when asked if his sister drinks or goes to parties. He responds that only the men drink in his family and women who belong to 'good' families do not indulge in drinking. But when Deepak shows Rajveer a picture where his sister is seen taking drinks, he gets annoyed and threatens Deepak for trying to defame his sister. He did not even hesitate in calling Minal and her friends 'prostitutes.' Deepak comments that when a man drinks it is termed fashionable and on the other hand, if a woman drinks; she is criticized by the society. He continues that just because Minal was drunk did not mean that Rajveer had the license to touch her body without her consent. When Minal urged him to stop, he should have stopped.

The Feminism of *Pink*

The film sheds light on the regressive attitude of the people towards women. A woman who wishes to fulfil her dreams is always mocked by society. Often, she is demoralized by her own family members when she decides to go against their will (Cixous 878). When Minal is asked by Prashant to explain why she is living alone in Delhi; shows how women who stay away from their homes are always judged harshly in society. It becomes easy to blame her for whatever happens. Right from childhood, a girl is made to respect every decision taken by her elders even if she doesn't approve of it. Once she gets married, she needs to follow every instruction from her husband. She has to perform all the duties and take care of her husband. In this way, a woman is bound to be restricted within the boundaries of her home (hooks 28). When Minal is arrested, everyone in her locality discusses that she has created a big trouble for herself by living alone. Moreover, it depicts how people believe a woman's freedom to be her greatest enemy.

In the film it was apparent that the boys are going to win the case, since they had strong evidence against the girls. However, in an unexpected turn of events, the girls actually win the case. Indeed, it was a big victory for Minal, Falak and Andrea, especially Deepak who helped them to fight their case. The film made the audience realize that there was no place for violence against women, in fact, those who thought that they would easily escape from the punishment were absolutely wrong.

Unlike, many films made on sexual harassment, *Pink* emerges to be a convincing win for all the women who have faced gruesome experience of sexual violence. The film represents the word 'consent' in a precise and yet striking manner. When a woman is stalked by the hero in the film, it is never considered to be a heinous crime (Joseph par. 7). There is no effort taken in highlighting the immoral consequences of stalking. The understanding of consent is never emphasized in films. In *Insaf Ka Tarazu* (Dir: B.R. Chopra, 1980) Bharati Saxena, a young woman (Played by Zeenat Aman) is physically assaulted by a rich businessman. During the court proceedings, the opponent's lawyer tries to defame her. When she is unable to get justice from the law, she decides to seek revenge on the perpetrator. The

film showed how a woman is made to feel like a culprit whereas no questions are raised on the rapist. However, the film is known for the long and disturbing molestation scene (Gahlot par. 10). In another film, *Anjaam* [Dir: Rahul Rawail, 1994] where Vijay Agnihotri, played by Shahrukh Khan falls in love with an air hostess Shivani (Madhuri Dixit) who does not reciprocate his feelings. Despite facing continuous rejection from her, Vijay persistently attempts to win her heart. He follows Shivani everywhere she goes, making her life much complicated. Vijay is unable to face the rejection and consequently, he follows the path of violence in order to win her love. He makes her life miserable for not giving in to his demands. In other films like *Darr: A Violent Love Story* (Dir: Yash Chopra, 1993) and *Raanjhanaa* (Dir: Anand. L. Rai, 2013) both the characters Rahul (Played by Shahrukh Khan) and Kundan (Played by Dhanush) respectively, stalk the women they love. While consent is not emphasised in these films, rather stalking is misunderstood and presented as love. On one hand, films continued portraying the hero as dignified stalkers, on the other a film like *Pink* emerged as one of the strongest proponent of consent. It makes a powerful appeal and tries to persuade the audience to realize the significance of consent (Palisetty par. 3).

Men like Rajveer dislike to be defeated by women; in case they are unable to have control over them; they become violent which ultimately leads to crime. *Pink* depicts a bitter reality where women still experience slut-shaming and sexual objectification. Overall, the film conveys a very important message that men must respect women and if she says no; it should not be taken as an insult to their masculinity.

Patriarch – The Saviour

When the trailer of *Pink* was released, it generated a lot of curiosity. Most importantly, it was the poster which intrigued the audience. In the poster, Deepak is seen with an angry stare while Minal, Falak and Andrea stand in the witness box. The hapless expressions on their faces show their seeming innocence and that they have been misjudged in a patriarchal society. Moreover, two hands holding the word 'Pink' in the poster depict that crime can never be tolerated under the law. These hands demand justice for the women who have been mistreated in society. Indeed; the poster plays a vital role in making the audience aware about the subject of the film. Despite the fact that the film is about the horrific incident and the trial thereon faced by these three women, the major portion of poster is rather occupied by Amitabh Bachchan's face whereas the three girls are sidelined by his dominant positioning. It could be a gimmick in order to attract the audience by using the popularity of Amitabh but the visual politics of the poster cannot be ignored. *Vakeel Saab* (Dir: Venu Sriram, 2021) a Telugu remake of the film *Pink*, ends up becoming a story about the lawyer fighting and eventually winning a case rather than women fighting for justice. Another seemingly feminist film on surface turns out to be about the hero (the lawyer) saving the three helpless girls. In the visual culture of cinema, women in posters are somehow overlooked due to the hero portraying as the saviour to them (Prasad par. 3). Similarly, in the poster of *Pink*, the three girls are subdued as compared to the overpowering dominant image of Amitabh. He inadvertently becomes the primarily the focus of the poster while the terrified girls of *Pink* are pushed to the periphery. Looking at the poster of *Pink*, the audience may assume Amitabh to the hero, the much needed saviour for these 'damsels in distresses'. Audience reception theory, popularized by Stuart Hall, explains how the audience somehow interpret the hidden message conveyed by director or even fail in recognizing the intent of the film.

In *Pink* everyone assumed Rajveer is going to win the case against Minal but

unexpectedly, Minal, Falak and Andrea win in the end. In fact, the director revealed in interview that earlier it was decided Rajveer would win. Later, the climax of film was deliberately changed where Minal won the case. The purpose was to make audience realize about the significance of consent and to inspire women to fight against the patriarchal mindset of society.

In a scene where Minal is walking along with Deepak in the park, as soon as she hears some boys talking about her, she quickly covers her head with hooded jacket. Meanwhile, Deepak pulls down her hood to make her understand that she does not need to feel ashamed of herself. Deepak who is seen wearing a mask; symbolizes the misogyny that exists in the society. Moreover, it indicates a warning sign for Minal, Falak and Andrea who are unaware of the danger that they are going to encounter in their life. The mask further suggests that it is not only the air which has been polluted; but also minds of the people living in Delhi.

When Minal is arrested, no one has any idea that Deepak who suffered from frequent mood swings would be able to provide her justice. After Rajveer has been shifted to the hospital, the character of Deepak Sehgal is introduced in the film. He is seen wearing a pollution mask, every time he goes outside. He carefully observes Minal, while she is running in the park. Deepak easily comes to understand that Minal is in trouble. In fact, he saves Falak Ali from getting injured when she is crossing the road. Falak is frightened to see him, while he advises her to be careful. The dark and bruised eyes of Deepak depict anger towards the conservative mind set of society.

Conclusion

The film shows a male lawyer fighting the case of Minal. It is often observed in films that deal with issues of women, eventually in the end; a heroine is protected by the hero who appears in the form of a saviour. Deepak indeed acts as a saviour for Minal, Falak and Andrea. Despite being strong and independent they still need a man to save themselves from the crime which they never committed. It is interesting to note whether the film would have made the same impact if in place of Amitabh a female actor as the lawyer was chosen to defend the girls. Although, the film is all about empowering women, yet after the success of film, Amitabh Bachchan had uploaded a picture on his twitter account where he could be seen happily posing with the entire team of *Pink* (minus the three women protagonists) which only had men. But it drew a heavy criticism from people regarding the absence of the three women who played a significant role in film (Dixit par. 1).

Deepak Sehgal as lawyer gives moralistic speech while defending Mina, Falak and Andrea. During a scene in the film, he says “*Hamarein yahaan ghadi ki sui character decide karti hai*” (In our society, clearly the clock determines the person's character) which shows how women who work late at night are suspected to be of questionable character. When women walk during day time nobody doubts their intention (*Pink* 01:15:19-24). *Pink* based on the theme of consent is successful in making the audience realize about the importance of the word 'consent' which has been neglected for long in Bollywood. Perhaps it is essential to respect a woman's decision and this could be possible if people start treating woman as human. *Pink* has made a powerful plea through its hard-hitting dialogues to convince the audience to realize the significance of consent.

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Analysing *Bulbbul* as a Feminist Fairy Tale Debunking Child Marriage in India

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Abstract

*The history of child marriage in India is a long one and this evil still exists in the country even after 75 years of independence. Though the country has battled this social ailment to a great extent and India aims to empower all women and girls and achieve gender equality by 2030 as per the Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), the battle is a long one as one in four young women in India was a child bride as per the 2019 report of UNICEF. This paper's objective is to analyse the status of SDG 5 in India along with taking a parallel narrative of film *Bulbbul* (2020), a feminist fairy tale which lays bare the repercussions of child marriage and the hypocritical patriarchy that exists in India behind the close doors. Considering to raise the marriageable age of women from 18 to 21 in India has been a revolutionary step in this direction and it will help a great deal to combat the practice of child marriage and help girls to empower themselves socially and economically. The paper will highlight how both Indian government and cinema have provided the opportunity to women to feel equal and empowered in the society.*

Keywords: *Child marriage, Fairy tale, Feminism, Gender equality, Women's empowerment*

Introduction

The institution of marriage is a commendable feature of Indian culture and is projected as a fantasy to the young girls in order to drill in them a feeling that this is something they need in life to be happy. Hindu scriptures show marriage as a very sacrosanct institution which must be religiously followed. The culture of India considers an unwed young girl as a threat to the social system, hence the palpable reason for the practice of child marriages which are in vogue in some parts of the country. For the patriarchal forces obtaining in the Indian society the body of the female becomes a site to control, hence the patriarchal laws insidiously weave a romantic picture for girls to make the process easier. Girls are made to believe since their childhood that getting a prince charming is the main goal of their life and all things personal, social, or economic are secondary. A girl is taught to keep her husband above herself and devote herself entirely to him. But sadly, no one tells the entire part of the story that the fairy tale can have disastrous consequences too for the girl child psychologically and physically. Child marriage is a very cruel practice that has been on-going in India since centuries and still, many cultures are practicing child marriage clandestinely. Child marriage is prevalent especially in “socially, economically and educationally backward sections” in “the states of Rajasthan and Bihar,” nearly accounting for 27 percent of marriages in India” (Deswal). Thus, lack of education and indigence emerge as major contributing factors that lead people in India to marry off girls at a tender age. In spite of the dip in the magnitude of

child marriages in India, it is still a long way to go.

Child Marriage in Pre- and Post-Independence India

Child marriage was a big ailment in the pre-independence society of India. Marrying underage girls was a common practice and this resulted in crippling girls socially and economically at a very tender age. Binding girls into the institution of marriage was a decided step of the patriarchy to control them psychologically and physically. But gradually, the country outlawed this evil practice in 1929 and after 75 years of independence, we can see a stark change in social and economic condition of women with government giving a nod to the proposal to increase the marriageable age of women from 18 to 21 years. Union Minister Smriti Irani said that “as a democracy, we are 75 years late in providing equal rights to men and women to enter into matrimony” (*Business Standard*, “Bill to Increase Marriageable Age of Women to 21 Years Introduced in LS”). Now, any marriage below the age of 21 will be considered a child marriage, but still, there are many states of the country in which child marriage is still practiced, mostly in poor socio-economic sections of the society or places with less development. This is the reason why India has included gender equality as one of its 17 sustainable goals which are to be achieved by 2030.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment as Fifth Sustainable Goal of India

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations 9). SDG 5 aims to battle the discrimination that girls have to face in different sections of the society. The exploitation and violence that women endure pose a threat to a successful society. Forced or early marriage reduces a woman to a mere object who does not have an opinion of her own. The reproductive health of girls is compromised a lot in early marriages and some complications even result in deaths. SDG 5 is concerned with both private and public violation of a woman's rights as sometimes the domestic sphere becomes a trap for a female, despite living in a free country. India's dedication to combat gender equality and support women's empowerment is commendable “but the promise of a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment, including digital empowerment is still wanting” (*Wikipedia*, “Sustainable Development Goal 5”).

Criticism of Child Marriage in *Bulbbul*

Child marriage curbs the mental, social, and economic growth of a girl in the early years of life and thus women empowerment becomes a far cry in the country if this issue is not tackled at a fast pace. Thus, it is no wonder that Indian government has made gender equality and women empowerment as a crucial part of the list of the sustainable goals to be achieved by 2030. In this light, *Bulbbul* (2020) becomes a hugely impactful medium to communicate the medium to the masses. Inspired by Indian government's commitment to fight the practice of child marriage, the filmmakers have also revolutionized their content to show the female

characters in a revolutionary light. Earlier, a woman was represented as a meek and docile character in cinema as someone who obliges to the every command of the patriarchal community. But now, we see female characters in an empowered light as the society is going through a social and political change with women being self-dependent economically and taking charge of their lives. Phallogocentric powers ensure that women are not liberated socially or economically so as to continue the domination. This factor is decoded by Tutun Mukherjee in her analysis of film *Water* (2005) directed by Deepa Mehta. The movie discusses the theme of child marriage and widowhood, where Mukherjee notices that the social practice of child marriage prevails majorly “to avoid social ostracism if a daughter remains unmarried after attaining puberty” (Mukherjee 37). The film attracted a lot of controversy as the conservative forces in India were against any narrative that rips off the garb of so-called culture that imposes patriarchy in name of tradition. One such film is *Bulbbul*, which is a period film written and directed by Anvita Dutt. The film shows the physical, psychological, and social repercussions of child marriage in India in the context of 19th century Bengal Presidency in India. As per the 2019 report of UNICEF on child marriage in India, the percentage of “child marriage remains high, and in some states, notably West Bengal, the decline is modest” with prevailing norm of “bride trafficking from poorer states such as Jharkhand and West Bengal to well-developed states such as Haryana and Punjab” (Jejeebhoy 9, 20).

In the film, a little girl Bulbbul is sold by her parents into a rich household under the practice of child marriage. Bulbbul is married to Bade Thakur who is way older than her. She in fact is too young to differentiate between her husband and brother-in-law, Satya, and considers Satya as her husband as he is almost of her own age. Satya tells her the story about a demon-woman (*chudail*) who comes in the night of the blood moon to gobble up the princess. This story remains in the psyche of Bulbbul even in her adulthood and she herself takes the role of the demon-woman as her alter-ego and kills all men who troubled girls or women. What society considers as demon-woman is represented as the embodiment of the spirit of Goddess Kali. The director wants to show that a woman must channel her inner Kali in order to be empowered in the society and fight against the patriarchy.

The name of the heroine holds a very strong symbolic significance. *Bulbbul* or nightingale is a small chirpy bird and it symbolizes melody and beauty. The bird symbolism in itself oozes out the aura of wings and freedom. Moreover, some cultures associate nightingales with “darkness and mysticism” due to their dark colour (Wilde). As most of the “films start from a crucial phase of the protagonist’s life which changes the entire course of his/her life,” Anvita Dutt too portrays Bulbbul as a joyful and chirpy little girl in the beginning of the film (Vyas and Shekhawat 15). She jumps around singing and eats mangoes sitting on the branches of the tree, just like a nightingale. She is shown as free like a bird in her childhood. The dreams and desires of Bulbbul are crushed when she is given as a child bride in her young years. But as she grows old, she becomes a fierce woman who has a mind of her own and looks over the entire household in her husband’s absence. Bade Thakur represents the patriarchal mind-set of the 19th century India. He supports child marriage and treats his wife like an object who cannot have any wishes of her own. He beats Bulbbul and makes her a cripple when he sees Bulbbul being friendly with Satya, while on the other hand, he himself has extramarital relations with his sister-in-law, Binodini. Surprisingly, Satya too does not

understand the situation of Bulbbul despite being educated in abroad. He questions Bulbbul's character and asks her to behave properly. Cripple Bulbbul becomes like a wing-less bird who has lost the ability and joy to fly. She loses her chirpy self and becomes a mysterious dark force that inhabits forest in the ruddy night of Blood Moon, taking revenge from all the people who are clipping the wings of the females. Thus, the symbolism of bird Bulbbul operates in the film from beginning to the end, with Bulbbul transforming from a melodious bird to a preying one.

Doctor Sudip as the Voice of the Modern India

The journey of the Indian feminist movement can be traced in the progress of the storyline of the film from the character of Satya toward the persona of Sudip. Postcolonial Indian cinema focuses on giving a voice and agency to the abused and oppressed women in the society. Through a digital platform available to a large number of audience, “history and narration have found a novel way to manifest itself” (Srinivasan and Shekhawat 289). *Water* (2005), *Pink* (2016), *Queen* (2013), *Thappad* (2020), *Devi* (2020) are the latest examples of 21st century feminist Indian cinema where issues of child marriage, widowhood, rape, marriage, domestic violence, are discussed openly. While Satya is representative of the male mind-set influenced by patriarchy in pre-independence India, Doctor Sudip is the voice of the post-independent modern India. Doctor Sudip treats the feet of Bulbbul after they are destroyed by the brutal beating done by her husband. The domestic abuse of Bulbbul and Bade Thakur's attempt to mutilate the feet of Bulbbul is representative of the patriarchy's attempt to restrict the movement of a woman both mentally and physically. He considers Bulbbul as his puppet and does not like when she develops a platonic relationship with Satya. Dr. Sudip empathizes with the condition of Bulbbul and trains her to stand on her feet again, which again shows that if men of modern India have an understanding mind-set towards the condition of women, then women can reach their full potential and can contribute to society in a better manner. He does not call Bulbbul a demon-woman like Satya but a goddess as he knows that all the murders that Bulbbul attempted was to give a message to society to not treat girls and women as playthings.

***Bulbbul* as a Feminist Fairy Tale**

Bulbbul is a fairy tale with a modern twist. Contemporary Indian cinema is observing a trend where folklore and mythology is reinterpreted in a feminist light. *Ahalya* (2015) is a short film where the Epic *Ramayana* takes a postmodern shift with feminist representation of the Ahalya episode, putting the male desire as the locus of criticism and it “emphasises the desires or needs of women by giving them a chance to rethink mythology” (Roy 16). In a similar tradition, *Bulbbul* is a fairy tale for the feminists who don't need a hero and take the responsibility of fighting the society in their own hands. Bulbbul is her own saviour who fights her battle by herself by channelling her suppressed revolutionary spirit. The degree to which a woman was considered weak in 19th century India can be seen from the fact that Satya cannot believe that the murders can be done by a woman. At the end of the film, Satya turns

out to be the spirit of modern India who sees the corrosive nature of patriarchy for society. He shuns the mind-set of Bade Thakur and forms a liberal ideology of his own.

Anvita Dutt, the director of the film, compares the movie to a “fantasy” or a “fairy tale” (Dutt). Dutt shows that the whole notion of what a girl or a woman should consider her fairy tale is framed by the patriarchal society only and women need to rewrite their fairy tales by putting themselves in the place of the prince charming. Dutt says that the entire journey of the protagonist in the film is an effort to discover and love her true self. Her real identity remains hidden under the narratives of the landlords who only see her as an object to satisfy their sexual needs and as a trophy wife which they can show to the society. Behind all the glory of the manor is a helpless and confused little girl who did not have a chance to express her emotions and be herself. In Dutt's words:

The reason why I don't read newspapers is because when I open newspapers, I read worst things in them that are done to women and, I am, in a fable like form, showing you that how bad it can go, how wrong can a fairy tale go. You know, we are like, the romance that you spoke about, the romantic ideal of the prince and the princess and a happy ending, no one tells you what reality is. So, within the fairy tale, I wanted to tell you, this is how bad it gets. (Dutt, “EXCLUSIVE Interview with Bulbbul Director Anvita Dutt and Actress Tripti Dimri”).

Anvita Dutt was inspired by Rabindranath Tagore's representation of women in the pre-independence society; the major issue of child marriage and how the women were restricted to the four walls of the house and bearing psychological and physical abuse. Tagore's sister-in-law, Kadambari Devi, herself was a child bride and he had a deep connection with her because of her creative ability and the approximately same age of both of them. She was a “childless, lonely, neglected wife” who had “literary sensibility, which enabled her to give feedback on Tagore's creations” (Ghosh). The suicide of Kadambari Devi left an indelible imprint on the mind of Tagore and most of the female characters in Tagore's works are inspired by his sister-in-law. The intellectual and emotional relationship between Tagore and Kadambari Devi is mirrored by Satya and Bulbbul in the film.

Women Empowerment and Society

Tagore's sister-in-law committed suicide, and in the film too, we see Bulbbul succumbing to the forest fire lit by her own brother-in-law, Satya. The forest fire is symbolic of the punishment the patriarchal society of pre-independence India used to give to a woman with a liberated mind-set. Kadambari Devi's suicide also is an indicator of her inability to deal with the domineering world around her and not being able to live in a suffocating environment. Kadambari Devi loved literature like Tagore and used to participate in the literary gatherings that used to happen at the manor but it “wasn't a norm back in the day as a woman's participation in such events were frowned upon” (Dey). Similarly, when Bulbbul tries to manage the political affairs in the manor in her husband's absence, she is made fun of by her brother-in-law and he advises her not to mimic a landlord. Binodini, the widowed sister-in-law of Bulbbul, also tells her to do stuff which suits a woman. This shows that women empowerment is not taking full pace as women with limited mind-sets are themselves

determined on limiting other women. Sorority is the need of the hour to achieve the full potential of women empowerment not just in India, but the whole world. With women directors and producers standing up for the plight of women in general, “different projections and filmic images [...] have dared to go beyond the conventional portrayal and created a new identity of the empowered women with examples from films like *Fire*, *Pink*, *Gulaab gang*, *Kahaani*, etc” (Shekhawat and Vyas 1).

Red Colour Symbolism in *Bulbbul* and Indian Folklore

The film *Bulbbul* focuses a great deal on the symbolism of colour red. The colour red holds a huge meaning in the marriage tradition of India, and the director juxtaposes the red colour of Blood Moon, *Bulbbul*'s bridal ensemble, the bleeding of *Bulbbul* when she is beaten by her husband, and later brutally raped by a mentally sick brother-in-law in a helpless condition. This shows how the red colour that promises happiness to a young girl in child marriage may turn out to be the colour she bleeds if she is not powerful enough to take a stand for herself and fight against the wrong and the domination of the patriarchy. The folklore and culture of India associates red colour to auspiciousness. It is used as a vermilion in puja and by married women as a symbol of the longevity of their husbands. But the film shows that a woman leads a painful existence beneath the entire garb that is put on as a show to the society. The blurring of the promised fairy tale world and “the constant movement from strength to passivity leads to enormous stress placing the woman's mental health under constant threat” (Sharma et al.). Irrespective of many reforms in the direction of ending child marriage in India, “as recently as 2015-16, more than one in four women aged 20-24 – 27% – reported having married before age 18 in India as a whole” (Jejeebhoy 5). Surprisingly, many young girls are brainwashed since tender years and are made to believe that child marriage is in their favour only as ultimately the main aim of their life is to be of service for their husbands. The director of the film challenges this notion and reveals that a woman can stand up for herself all alone if she is provided enough room and agency to empower herself. When Bade Thakur leaves the manor, *Bulbbul* builds up her persona and manages the entire manor by herself without the help of any male. She also works behind a mask as a so-called demon-woman to punish the men who do wrong to any girl or woman. Like the protagonist Anuradha of Madhur Bhandarkar's film *Satta* (2003), she “gradually finds her own identity and starts getting a hang of the game of power” (Shekhawat 85).

In Indian folklore, the tale of a demon-woman or *chudail* who lives on trees and preys on girls is very common. The folklores show the heroine as a beautiful princess who meekly follows the patriarchal code and does not have a social or financial existence of her own. A witch “pushes back against the very backbone of patriarchal society” and this term is used by men “as an excuse to demonise women who dare to break free from patriarchal shackles” (Jain). These tales were often told to scare girls so that they do not leave home or see the reality of the world or become independent. But, the director tries to show that the girls need to step out and see the world as it is, rather than believing the stories that are told to them. In doing so, Anvita Dutt take the reference of Goddess Kali who is the embodiment of self-sufficient female energy and shows that *Bulbbul* is in fact possessed by Goddess Kali's spirit rather than

any *chudail*. So, *Bulbbul* is a revisionist version of the tales of Indian folklore where a wronged woman or *chudail* speaks back and does not let her voice being smothered by the cruelty of the patriarchy. In pre-independence India, an independent woman with an opinion was referred to as *chudail* as she was considered a threat to the patriarchal setup. Ensuring that a girl becomes habitual to the patriarchy was the very basic reason for child marriage. So, by juxtaposing a child bride with the demon-woman, the director shows that a woman must channel her liberated self which is often crushed by the patriarchal regime. The film blurs the boundary between *devi* and *chudail* and gives a message that a woman's empowerment happens when she is not bounded by any specific mould set by the patriarchal society. Films such as *Devi* (2020) by Priyanka Banerjee throw light on these double standards prevailing in the society and these film makers contribute "to enlighten the masses in exposing the actual story of women being involved" (Shekhawat and Vyas 2).

India's Efforts to Combat Child Marriage after 75 Years of Independence

Modern India is now committed to eradicate the practice of child marriage by implementing many policies, programmes, and laws. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) poses strict punishment for people who are involved in the practice of child marriage. Several cash transfer schemes have been introduced by the Indian government so that the girl child is not seen as a burden to families of socially and economically weak backgrounds. Slogans such as "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" have raised awareness in people to educate girl child and help her to boost her confidence. The proposal to increase the marriageable age of women is a massive step in this direction. It will help women to fulfil their dreams and become socially, politically, and economically independent without any fear of social judgement or family pressure. "UNICEF said 25 million child marriages were prevented worldwide in the last decade, with the largest reduction seen in South Asia - where India was at the forefront" (Srivastava). Hopefully, India achieves the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment without any hiccup by the end of this decade.

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Black American Women's Autobiography and Trauma: Reframing Genres

Smriti Deori*

Abstract

This paper contends that Black American women's autobiographical writings can be read as trauma narratives. What has become an established trauma paradigm, because of its bases in Western psychology and culture, fails to account for the writings of Black American women and hence there is a need to develop culturally specific interpretive models. When read through such a framework, their autobiographies provide interesting templates that challenge established conventions of both autobiography and trauma literature. Such writings defy the psychological handicap promoted by what has become a dominant trauma genre, and instead show how the writers carve out unique subject positions to give witness to their stories of physical and psychic sufferings. The paper calls for a broadened understanding of what constitutes trauma and in doing so seeks to understand autobiographical agency, truth, and subjectivity in relation to the experiencing of that trauma. It specifically looks into two distinctive categories of Black American women's autobiographical narratives; activist autobiography and the many avant-garde forms that came to define their autobiography during the last decades of the twentieth century.

Keywords: *Black American, women, trauma, autobiography, psychological handicap, agency, truth, subjectivity, activist, avant-garde*

This paper starts with the contention over whether the autobiographical narratives by Black American women might be read as trauma narratives. In asking this question, it also invariably leads to other related problems. If we do analyze these texts using trauma as a parameter - since these do not in many ways conform to what has become a more or less ossified trauma genre - there would be the need to develop an analytical framework in which to place them. In other words, a model of study which would be attentive to Afro-centric philosophy and scholarship would be necessary to study the issue of trauma in Black life and how traumatic experiences have affected Blacks in America. While arguing for such an interpretive frame, this paper also seeks to understand autobiographical subjectivity and the question of truth in relation to the experiencing of pain.

It was in the 1990s that the field of trauma studies started taking shape. Scholars like Cathy Caruth promoted a theory of trauma which had its roots in deconstruction and psychoanalysis. The critical insights and tools offered by this theory have, of course, been immensely helpful in the understanding of trauma and how it reflects in literary texts. What is problematic, however, has been the dispensation of Caruthian trauma theory to reduce trauma into a rigid model and to leave out texts that do not conform to that framework. Stef Craps in *Postcolonial Witnessing* points out how trauma theory—despite Caruth's claims that trauma might serve to connect disparate cultures—remains trapped in Eurocentric biases and fails to ensure cross-cultural solidarity,

They marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority

cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-western or minority traumas. (2)

Recent scholars as Stef Craps, Gert Buelens, Roger Luckhurst, Michael Rothberg, Ruth Leys, Judith Herman etc., working with the intention of freeing trauma studies from such confines and taking into account the various and variegated experiences of trauma across the globe, have emphasized upon how trauma can result not merely from a single, shockingly devastating encounter but also from repeated exposure to any sort of abuse/oppression. According to them, dominant trauma theory, with its Western cultural roots, fails to take into account the oppressive and dehumanizing circumstances that non-western/minority cultures face routinely. It, for instance, leaves out the traumatic lineages of racism and colonialism. Moreover, dominant trauma theory with its injunction that trauma could only be transmitted and not represented prescribes an avant-garde aesthetic, “a literary practice which employs certain disruptive formal techniques of postmodernism—most familiarly, perhaps, fragmented, non-linear chronologies, repetition, shifts in narrating voice, and a resultantly decentred subjectivity—in order to...transmit trauma” (Gibbs 27). Alan Gibbs also points out how studies of trauma narratives leave out texts that do not adhere to such principles.

Recognizing this limitation, scholars, since the past decade, have realized the need for a more globalised and synergistic approach to trauma scholarship. Such an analytical framework would be attentive to the diverse social and historical forces behind trauma as much as to the fact that such divergent contexts call for different modes and strategies of cultural and artistic representation. Many non-western and minority writers like Toni Morrison, Patricia Grace, Nayomi Munaweera, Ana Castillo etc. consciously reject the notion of the unspeakability of trauma in favour of the view that traumatic histories and stories must be narrated and passed on if a sense of justice is to prevail.

In this regard, many Black American psychologists are of the opinion that the Black experience in America cannot be fully comprehended unless one looks at it through the lens of exploitation and concomitant trauma. According to W. E. B. Dubois, extreme human rights violations trap the victim in a psychological maze and ends up making him/her feeling inferior and traumatized. Similarly, Marimba Ani suggests that the ideological domination exerted by one culture over another can leave the people of the dominated culture traumatized. She goes on to emphasize that the Black psyche has been subjected to persistent traumatic experiences owing to the continuous assertion of European cultural values. Western psychological scholarship suggests that the experiencing of a traumatic event leads to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is characterized by the victim's inability to surpass the psychic handicap induced by the trauma This study, however, in conformation with recent scholars who intend to 'decolonize' trauma, argues that exposure to traumatic experiences does not always deprive the recipient of his or her intellectual ability to overcome trauma through self-assertion.

Coming to autobiographical narratives written by Black American women, they engage a wide range of alternative representational strategies in order to bring to light their

stories of psychological injury. As Sidonie Smith puts it in “Autobiographical Manifestos,”

However problematic its strategies, autobiographical writing has played and continues to play a role in emancipatory politics. Autobiographical practices become occasions for restaging subjectivity, and autobiographical strategies become occasions for the staging of resistance. Thus...the autobiographer can lay out an agenda for a changed relationship to subjectivity, identity, and the body. (435)

Black American women writers by employing various disruptive writing practices and revising conventional forms of autobiography create new templates for the emergence of subjectivity.

If we adopt such a broadened perspective on what constitutes trauma, then, the autobiographies of Black women could be read as trauma narratives which document the painful racist and sexist denigration that they encounter. Racialized trauma can be more devastating in the case of Black women. Being Black women, they are not only the 'Other' of the 'unified, universalizing subject', claimed by White men but also the 'other' of the 'other(s)'—Black men and White women. As the 'Other' they are already displaced, but as 'the other of the other(s)', displacement and hence alienation become twofold. With their differences, then, from both the dominant group and the 'others', defining the 'self' becomes increasingly difficult.

Another hindrance to narrating the self is the expectation of truth/reality from most autobiographies. However, 'reality' is a conflicted zone, politically and historically determined and inseparably related to the contemporary power dynamics. Truth consumption means that there is a shared understanding of what constitutes 'truth.' The question of whether truth can be assigned to particular individuals or communities depends on their position in relation to social discourses of power. Moreover, as Leigh Gilmore argues, in *The Limits of Autobiography*,

As a genre, autobiography is characterized less by a set of formal elements than by a rhetorical setting in which a person places herself or himself within testimonial contexts as seemingly diverse as the Christian confession, the scandalous memoirs of the rogue, and the coming-out story in order to achieve as proximate a relation as possible to what constitutes truth in that discourse. These contexts are reproducible; repetition of the forms that characterize them establishes expectations in audiences. Yet conventions about truth telling, salutary as they are, can be inimical to the ways in which some writers bring trauma stories into language. The portals are too narrow and the demands too restrictive. (3)

The dominant autobiographical modes, then, with their strict conventions regarding authenticity and truth-depiction can prove inadequate and even inimical to writers from marginalized communities who are already placed in a precarious position when it comes to the cultural authority assigned to them. Black American women autobiographers, therefore, often have to search for alternative forms of autobiography where the commitment to 'truth' gives way to an obligation for narrating representative aspects of their lives. By manipulating the experiences of the “I,” the traumatic experiences of the “we” are brought to light and thereby a greater 'public' truth is sought to be achieved (Gilmore, *Limits* 4-5).

Due to the constraints of this paper, we would limit ourselves to trying to understand

two distinctive categories of autobiography composed by Black American women—activist autobiography, and the avant-garde forms that came to characterize some Black women's autobiography during the last decades of the twentieth century—as showcasing how consistent trauma creates interesting templates of life-writing.

Autobiographical texts written by women involved actively in resistance politics show how the reading and understanding of activists' narratives might be transformed once they are studied through the 'trauma' lens. The autobiographies of activists like Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, Elaine Brown etc. have mostly been seen as a carrying forward of their political goals and hence, have been valued as presenting a counter-hegemonic view of the world. What has received little scholarly attention, however, is the psychological journey—the psychic sufferings involved when one is constantly pitted against the power structure.

Activist autobiography presents a way of understanding the correlation between socio-historical trauma and activism. Such autobiographies often document a journey through poverty, class struggle, racist and sexist attacks, self-doubts, politicization, incarceration, and even bodily torture. They show how repression from the state machineries along with socio-economic hurdles can lead to a reorganization of the political demography. Like most women from the third world, their taking on of political responsibilities is not a feminism inspired abandonment of traditional gender roles but a response to actual socio-historical conditions. In a similar manner, the decision to write their autobiographies seems to be politically motivated. Speaking exclusively of writers writing from an experience of prison, H. Bruce Franklin opines,

People who have become literary artists because of their imprisonments tend to write in an autobiographical mode. The reason is obvious: it is their own personal experience that has given them both their main message and the motive to communicate it. (250)

The experience of repression or injustice can, thus, lead to a motivation to change the social structure through the act of writing. In the process, literary conventions themselves undergo changes. As Barbara Harlow, in her essay “From the Women's Prison,” puts it,

In the same way that institutions of power...are subverted by the demand on the part of dispossessed groups for an access to history, power, and resources, so too are the narrative paradigms and their textual authority being transformed by the historical and literary articulation of those demands. (506)

In the case of activists writing their autobiographies, it, then, becomes difficult to see the texts as anything other than a continuation of their activist works. Margo V. Perkins in her 'Introduction' to *Autobiography as Activism* talks about how the autobiographical texts of activists are often motivated by their political ideologies,

Black Power activists use life-writing as an important tool for advancing political struggle...[T]hese activists use autobiography to connect their own circumstances with those of other activists across historical periods...Activists use life-writing to recreate themselves as well as the era they recount. Many things are at stake for them in the process. These things include control of the historical record, control over their own public images, and control over how the resistance movement in which they are

involved is defined and portrayed. In the case of those narratives that are directly tied to impending struggle, activists may even be writing to save their own lives. (xii-xiii) The seamless overlapping of the political and the personal in the case of activist narratives generally prompt readers to focus more on the public battles—the challenges put forth to the power structure, thereby ignoring the personally and psychologically devastating experiences involved in the course of such a journey. Borrowing Henry Giroux's expression, Perkins, for instance, comments that reading the autobiographies of activists acquaints readers with a “language of empowerment” (xii).

Agency and empowerment, however, can be repercussions of a traumatic history. As already discussed, trauma has been mostly understood in terms of its decapitating effects whereby its recipient is rendered a passive victim with no scope for agency. In discussions on trauma healing and recovery as well, the working through of trauma by means of social action has largely been ignored. The relation between trauma and activism, then, has been underrepresented and needs some scholarly attention.

The complex interworking between pain and social action is especially relevant in the case of trauma generated from repeated social abuse and injustice. In such instances of persistent and pervasive traumatic incidents, as opposed to trauma induced by a single catastrophic event, psychological coping mechanisms of numbing, flashbacks, dreams and nightmares might come out as inadequate. When trauma results from being a part of an unjust world order, healing could occur only when that reality is altered for a more livable space. It, thus, involves the process of recreating a sense of meaning and purpose of one's existence. Speaking about how intra-psychic mechanisms can prove insufficient, Vivienne Matthies-Boon comments,

Reinterpreting a traumatic experience in light of positive outcomes means one can say that 'it has been worth it', which makes the world appear less random and hostile. Reinterpretation does not occur in isolation but in an intersubjective relation to others, and takes two forms: the personal lessons learnt and the structural benefits for self and others (Janoff-Bulman 1992, 135; also Tedeschi, Park, and Calhoun 2009). The latter, which is more likely to occur than the former after human-inflicted trauma entails the reinterpretation of traumatic experiences as having served a purpose such as better labour conditions or greater political freedoms (Janoff-Bulman 1992, 137). Through such perceived positive outcomes, 'trauma survivors are able to establish some meaning and benevolence even in the midst of meaninglessness and malevolence' (Janoff-Bulman 1992, 139). (626)

Trauma and activism are, then, mutual influences with traumatic experiences inciting action and activism leading to further exposure with state sponsored violence. Activists have to always deal with the fear of possible re-traumatization in the form of physical and psychological torture. In this regard, further research is needed to comprehend the socio-psychological mechanisms at work in the case of people committed to social action.

Composed in four parts and recounting the first twenty-eight years of her life, Angela Davis's *An Autobiography* (1974), for instance, can be read as a prison narrative. Her political autobiography serves the purpose of documenting a crucial period in American history, thereby, countering the state propaganda of covering it up. Defying traditional categories it

mixes autobiographical episodes with documentary records, showing how autobiography merges into history and vice-versa. Davis's autobiography, thus, tasks itself with disrupting and rewriting American history of the 1960s. In her documentation of different events, she makes public what was fated to be another erasure of history and builds a counter history in the form of her autobiography. An Autobiography, however, is also a record of the traumatic circumstances that prompt its writer to a life of activism and activism derived social change.

For self-consciously political figures like Davis, writing assumes a very different stance. The autobiographies of political detainees, as H. Bruce Franklin notes in his study of the prison narratives of Blacks in the U.S., are not meant to showcase literary genius,

The works of today's prisoners...are rarely intended as a display of individual genius...most current autobiographical writing from prison intends to show the readers that the author's individual experience is not unique or even extraordinary. (250)

Since their writings condemn the oppressive authoritarian structures, the very act of writing connects the writer with the general masses in their struggle against power. This sense of unity is, in fact, deep rooted in African culture and philosophy and contributes as much to individual psychological well-being as to collective strength. As much as the writing of autobiography is a political stand for Davis, it is also a psychologically healing process for her.

In a similar vein, we would like to understand the many experimental forms that came to define self-representational projects by Black American women in the latter half of the twentieth century as conscious attempts to enter the otherwise denied spaces of meaning creation and interpretation. While autobiographical narratives documenting the pain of having been marginalized in a predominantly “other” culture can and should—as this paper argues—be seen within the framework of trauma, experimenting with the modes of telling such stories results in new strategies of “working through” traumatic experiences and concomitantly effects new, more empowered subjectivities. Black American women writers like Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Alice Walker, in their quest for survival and self-definition, employ variant modes of writing the self into existence. Such writers challenge autobiography's accepted conventions: blending poetry into prose, mixing mythology with history, juxtaposing essays, stories, and myths, and decentering the “I” of autobiography as and when needed.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, especially since the 1960s, critical theory—influenced by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, and the Tel Quel group in general—started engaging in a radical questioning of any notion of sovereignty of the author. Concepts of self, subjectivity, consciousness, agency, and consequently, any sense of authority over the written word started becoming 'anti-theoretical.' Concomitantly, what emerged was, as Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith call it, the concept of a universally 'colonized subject' deprived of any agency (*De/Colonizing the Subject* xiv). It is against such a theoretical background that women of colour and other minority writers found themselves. Speaking of Western theory in general and feminist theorizing in particular, Watson and Smith comment in their “Introduction” to *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*,

[H]owever compelling and sophisticated this critique of the subject may be, it is a

central instance of the universalizing agenda of western theorizing that erases the subject's heterogeneity as well as its agency. This agenda has become increasingly apparent in feminist theories that hypostasize a universally colonized “woman,” universally subjected to “patriarchal” oppression. (xiv)

Such abstract victimization proves especially detrimental to Black American women and other women of colour as it puts to question the very purpose of their writing. Poststructuralism and deconstruction's dispensation to see the subject as a mere construct of prevailing discourses re-shatters the sense of self already shattered by traumatic socio-historical forces.

Elizabeth Fox Genovese points out that Black American women writers, refuting “the implied blackmail of Western, White male criticism” have grabbed the “abandoned podium” of authorship (67). This new author who has replaced the 'dead' White male author is, however, not a mere 'reproduction' of the old. Careful not to “re/present the colonizer's figure in negation,” to quote Smith again (Introduction xix), they may subvert conventional White mainstream traditions.

It is in the light of these arguments that the present paper tries to understand the unconventional autobiographical practices that emerged during the late twentieth century. It sees the radical, autobiographical “I” adopted by these writers as a consciously chosen position of political intervention. If a sense of agency and autonomy lies in the ability to break away from established textual norms and conventions, the engagement of formal experimentation by such writers under question offers us a new, empowered subject. They create a new space from which to forge their entry into the restricted domain of meaning creation and interpretation. In the process, it also makes us reconsider attributes conventionally associated with the subject of trauma.

In *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), for instance, Audre Lorde experiments with the conventional autobiographical preoccupation with truth telling by mixing fact, fiction and myth to create new spaces for subjectivity. Indeed the fact/fiction binary is a consequence of analytic strategies that see autobiography as inseparably related to truth, hence bringing forth ideas of an 'authentic' or 'truthful' subject position.

In *Zami*, Lorde transforms autobiography into biomythography, the term she attributes to her experimental form. Gilmore, in *Autobiographics*, argues that,

In the transposition of autobiography to biomythography, the self, “auto” is renamed “myth” and shifted from the beginning to the center of the “new spelling.” Lorde's mythmaking attaches less, then, to the life she retells than to the self who can tell it. (27-28)

Through her mythmaking project, Lorde maps an alternative history where the self can feel at home.

Black American women's self-representational writings, then, do not always conform to generic principles. With their complex strategies of representation of the self and trauma, they create subject positions which challenge the conventions of autobiography as well as trauma literature.

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Exploring the Psyche of Female Disables in Jaishree Misra's *A Love Story for My Sister*

Biswajit Sarkar*

Abstract

Physical impairments have been considered the only form of Disability for a long time. On the other hand, society tends to neglect psychological impairments or mental illnesses as disabilities and brand such persons as whimsical, eccentric, insane, and mad. Women with psychological impairments are more often termed as madwomen. Bartha Mason in English literature is a popular example that incites criticism of the patriarchal society and culture. Women with disabilities find themselves in a doubly jeopardized position; first, the society brutally victimizes them for being a female, and secondly, because of their disability. Disabled women suffer more in their psyche when they compare themselves to normal women and find out that they cannot meet the expectations of society. This paper focuses on Jaisree Misra's A Love Story for My Sister and analyses the ways of representing women with psychological impairments. In the novel, Margaret and Tara are two victims of Stockholm syndrome, a psychological condition wherein a victim sympathizes with the victor. Margaret used to write a diary and vent her emotions and sufferings, while the narrator expresses the sufferings of Tara after her kidnapping, rape, torture, and psychological trauma. Thus, this paper tries to unravel the psyche of women with psychological impairments and trace the instances which make them suffer. Besides, what they do to vent their pangs and agonies is a matter of discussion. Finally, it argues that the socio-cultural construction of psychological impairment leads to suppression and a reconstruction of the ideas around these impairments is needed to improve the living experiences of persons with psychological impairments.

Keywords: *Psychological impairment, Disability, Woman with disabilities, Madwoman, Double jeopardy, Trauma.*

Introduction

The term 'Illness' has been used to mean “a visible deformity” or “alteration of bodily structure” states Thomas S. Szasz in the introduction of his book *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*. According to him, this definition has been proved to be faulty in the mid-nineteenth century and after that in modern psychiatry 'illness' denotes “alteration of bodily function” that includes psychological changes which are not visible. Psychological illnesses are more complex to understand than physical impairments, and for that reason, society tends to neglect these psychological or mental illnesses. But when it undertakes a woman with a psychological illness, the suffering is immense and the woman has to face multiple forms of harassment and oppression. In society, a woman with mental illness is often thought of as a witch or madwoman which leads to her hunting and killing publicly justified. In English literature too, we can find examples of madwomen like Bartha Mason in *Jane Eyre* whose voice is never heard and is burnt to ashes by the patriarchal society.

Authors and scholars in the field are of the opinion that understanding the psychological agonies of a disabled person is more important than physical suffering. This paper aims to locate the psychological sufferings of disabled women and understand their psyche to unravel the truth behind their agonies and find out some solutions to the evils done to them by the patriarchal society.

Michel Foucault observes in the preface of *Madness and Civilizations* that there is no direct communication between “modern man” and “man of madness” because of some abstract reasons like “order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, the requirements of conformity” (Preface10). According to him, previously mad people have been locked up in the “Great Confinement” to separate them from society. The establishment of the asylums in the nineteenth century to refine mad people is just another example of the segregation of psychologically ill persons. Similarly, Sander L. Gilman thinks that madness is a complex idea that is subjected to “political and ideological pressures” (Gilman 326). So, mental illness and madness are defined by certain norms in society that differs from culture to culture and when a person fails to conform to these norms, she/he is declared mentally ill or mad. Categorizing a person as mad leads to segregation from normal society and becomes a victim of various forms of oppression, and suppression.

Prominent scholars like Lennard Davies in the field of Disability studies think that disability is the fourth form of oppression after the three major marginalizing factors – Race, Class, and Gender. Whereas, Ana Be, a leading feminist scholar in this field, in the article titled “Feminism and Disability: A Cartography of Multiplicity” discusses the interdisciplinary nature of this field and traces the developments of feminist scholarship which started during the 1980s, and finds out that disabled women are “often at a relative disadvantage to both disabled men and non-disabled women, and that their specific issues and experiences remained invisible” (Be 363). Besides, Sami Schalk, a renowned activist and a disabled herself, in the article titled “Disability and Women's Writing” says that “discourses of disability have been and continue to be used against women as a form of patriarchal oppression” (Schalk181). She thinks that the representation of women who are considered mad is a 'hysterical' discourse used against them to marginalize, suppress, and oppress.

Disability is also a gendered experience where disabled women face multiple harassments than disabled men. Feminist scholars in the field argue that disabled women are considered “asexual” and “incapable” to perform “sexual, reproductive, and maternal roles” (Addlakha, Introduction 17). According to Renu Addlakha:

Heterosexuality, work and motherhood are 'normally' associated with women in general, but are not used to describe women with disabilities who are uniformly considered to be passive, dependent and deprived. Feminists have critiqued the traditional roles of daughters, wives and mothers as oppressive, but these may be the very roles that women with disabilities aspire to, precisely because they are denied to them. Consequently, the feminist struggle against the oppression of the institutions of marriage, family and childcare will be different for women with disabilities. (17)

In another article titled “Body Politics and Disabled Femininity: Perspectives of Adolescent Girls from Delhi,” Addlakha opines that “women with disabilities are perceived not to measure up to the physical standards of non-disabled women, nor does the society expect

them to take on the normative roles wife and mother that are expected from the latter” while disabled women “struggle to diminish such negative stereotyping in an attempt to develop a positive sense of self within the parameters of some physical deficit and patriarchal cultural ethos” (236).

Similarly, Nandini Ghosh talks about these issues in her article “Bhalo Meye: Cultural Construction of Gender and Disability in Bengal” and locates the experiences of disabled women throughout their life cycles during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood in order to explore the cultural construction of disability and discrimination on the basis of gender. According to her, in Bengali culture “a 'bhalomeye' refers to a good woman, who, in common parlance, means a morally upright woman with all the positive feminine attributes, primarily one who is the pivot of an ideal family” (205). Traditionally, women are thought of as housekeepers, maintaining the '*sansar*' and their principal roles are to be wife and mother. But when a girl is born or acquires a disability, it strikes the family as a catastrophe that their daughter has become “flawed and physically less capable than other girls” (205). Disabled women are more vulnerable to abuse and oppression than normal women, which only ridicules the patriarchal society. She comments that:

Disabled women face both denial of their sexuality as well as sexual abuse. Men in public spaces often treat them not only as objects of pity and ridicule, but also as available for sexual favours. The same ideology that deems disabled women as sexually unattractive works in favour of men who treat them as objects of pleasure without fear of repercussions since, they reason, 'who would ever think of doing anything to a girl like her?' (215)

This male gaze of the society makes disabled women prone to violence and helps the oppressor to get away freely. This victim position makes disabled women feel more pressure about their impairment alongside the psychological turmoil that they are unable to meet the expectations of society.

Thus, it can be understood that in a normative society, normal men and women are supposed to perform some social duties. But when someone falls short of conforming to those norms, he/she can be called disabled from society's perspective. Similarly, persons with mental illness cannot meet the set standards and lag behind. With this personal problem and suffering of a mentally ill person intersects the socio-cultural misfortunes which further disperse the person. Besides, disabled persons are thought of as burdens in the family and sometimes mentally ill persons are cast away by their families. On the other hand, a mentally ill but sane person when realizes this condition, it just adds to the calamity of the person. In the case of disabled women, they are thought of as 'asexual' and 'incapable' to perform maternal duties ascribed to them for ages by society. Furthermore, when a woman is mentally ill, she is treated as a madwoman or witch and becomes a victim of multiple harassments. So, a difference between the experiences of disabled men and disabled women can be seen. Further, scholars also observe that women with disabilities face double marginalization and are more prone to violence as compared to normal women.

Analysis of novel

Jaisree Misra in her novel *A Love Story for My Sister* (2015) deals with Stockholm syndrome, a “psychological response wherein a captive begins to identify closely with his or her captors, as well as with their agenda and demands” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Margaret and Tara are the two victims of the said mental condition in the novel although there is a gap of 140 years in their victimhood. Pia fictionalizes the story of Margaret Wheeler into a novel from the personal accounts of Margaret's letters and diary writings. Pia's investigation of the victimhood of Margaret reveals that she has been abducted during the uprising of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny in British era Cawnpore (Kanpur). Margaret's letters and diary entries take us through the events and agonies that she experiences after being abducted from her family by a “lowly sepoy” named Nizam Ali Khan who appears to have saved her by taking her away from the rebels to the confinement of a hut (75). She can hear the cries of Amy, a friend of hers, who is raped and violently tortured by the rebels, and being a first-hand audience of the crimes, she is terrified and worried about herself and her friend's future. The word like – “randi” is new to her which suggests how brutally the rebels are going to treat the English girls and ladies.

This abduction of Margaret is shocking and traumatizing for her and it binds her to ponder on getting back to the British camp and the reactions that will follow. According to her, people in the camp will be pleased by her return but she “knew that in her rescue lay lifelong imprisonment to the fate that had already befallen her and could never be erased” as they will consider her as “soiled goods, to be pitied and reviled, a social pariah” (115). Not only that, “no one would willingly be her friend, no one would ever marry her” as she has passed some time “in the captivity of a native sowar” (115). As a result, she is confused by the question of what to do with freedom and prefers to remain in the hut alone but never succeeds to escape. She simply asks Nizam “When you go to Peshawar, will you take me with you please” (116). This is when she sympathizes with her abductor (or maybe with herself) and becomes a victim of the Stockholm syndrome and chooses to be with her “noble rescuer” (134).

Nizam proposes Margaret to marry him and she agrees and changes her name to Meherunissa. They pretend that she is a mute from birth which allows the womenfolk to act as caregivers and try to feed her as they believe that “God's blessings lay in caring for the voiceless” (130). In Peshawar, Meherunissa used to write a diary beside her housework and some social work like reading letters for someone, helping students with English in the area, and becoming popular. The diary works as the Third space for her where she vents all her emotions, and thoughts and it is a “dear diary” for her (158). In her journal entry dated 12 September 1857, she thinks about the past events and about her present identity of being a respectable Muslim wife. Her quest for the answers to how the British cantonment will treat her, nothing less than an “outcaste,” “pitied,” and “gradually hated” which will become “another kind of hell” for her (173). In the writings of Margaret, her constant search for her true identity is very much evident. Further, she is saying about her journey to a distant place and reaffirms her position as a strong woman by stating that “no Englishwoman could have ever undertaken such a dramatic transformation, nor embarked on such an expedition, of that I am sure” (191). On the other hand, she suffers emotionally for being away from her home at

Cawnpore, her “beautiful childhood home” (191). The memories of her father's dead body at Maskhar Ghat on the Ganges haunt her and she reconciles herself with these words – “memories like that are too painful to be held on to and, in the course of my journey; I taught my heart to let them go” (193).

Margaret regains her confidence and self-esteem back to normalcy after several months of her abduction despite the flashes of those events that she often gets. She reveals that in these months she has “learnt to love him (Nizam) well” and she is getting accustomed to the culture within the family of Nizam as she is “trying hard as possible to fit in” (212, 310). But all her emotions written in the letters and diary succumb to mean nothing when her husband finds them. She tries to convince him by kneeling before him and addressing him as “my jaan, my dear husband” (315). But he remains unmoved as he feels betrayed and offers to take her home back once again. Margaret frantically cries and tells him that she does not want to go back and reaffirms “my people are here. You ... your family ... you are my people now...” (316). Her story ends with the consolatory words from her mother-in-law that in marriage and love people are bound to cause pain to each other and they are bound to forgive each other. Later she finds out that Nizam is unwilling to forgive her and he is “smarting” (317).

The other victim in the novel is Tara Fernandez who is kidnapped from Malviya Nagar, Delhi in 1997 by Dinesh and Himal Thapa, two illegal men from Nepal. She is raped and tortured by Dinesh immediately after her kidnapping in a Maruti van and she falls asleep to the torment of forced sex which rips her apart. The narrator elaborates the agony that Tara “experienced a sharp burst of concentrated agony – a lightning flash – in her groin and the middle of her spine, way above where there was no pain at all” (166). Himal is directed by Dinesh to rape her but Himal tries to befriend her instead. They mock rape; fake cries are made by Tara to convince Dinesh that Himal is at his party. Himal and Tara devise a plan to escape from Dinesh and return to Tara's home in Delhi. All these incidents are like movie scenes for Tara and she could not believe that this is happening to her. “Tara could not bear to think of the word 'rape'. It was what happened in those hard-hitting 'A' rated movies, not in real life, not to *her*” (166-167). Dinesh is like an “animal” to Tara (168) who comes to her repeatedly to torture and violate her:

She tried to switch her mind off at these times, floating into some distant ether from where she was able to watch, almost dispassionately, as he thrust himself into her, grunting and groaning like a wild beast. Sometimes he even burst in through the door to kick her viciously for no apparent reason. (180)

She is also being drugged besides the tortures. Himal offers Tara to escape from the horrors of Dinesh which she agrees to and they somehow manage to get out of hell. They hide in a small hotel where she worries about her clothing as she has none to wear but “it was with the greatest relief she had ever known that she stood under a thin shower of lukewarm water, relishing the feeling of washing away the grime and shame she had endured” (189). This is when she comes to know about Dinesh's plan which is to keep her “for himself for some time” and not sell (pimp) her (194). Himal tells her how these types of persons take control over these girls by “rape, violence, drugs, sleeping tablets” and when this becomes a habit “they don't even want to escape” (195).

Gradually she and Himal become friends and “she felt strangely worried on his

behalf". She thinks "escaping with her in tow and stealing Dinesh's wallet, there were many reasons for Dinesh to make it his mission to hunt them down" (195). She feels "marginally safer" with Himal and develops trust for him and a "cold rage" is forming for Dinesh (195). She wants the hard punishment possible for Dinesh like – castrated and killed. Tara and Himal go to Mukteshwar in the Kumaon Mountain and manage to get a job for themselves. Tara becomes a seller at a garments shop run by an NGO and Himal worked at a Dhaba. Besides, they have also taken false identities – Tara becomes Nisha and Himal becomes Rajesh. She develops an emotion for Himal and asks herself "was it stupid to start thinking of Himal as a kind of *boyfriend*" (224). These emotions grow stronger as they shared a bed and occasional kisses which led to sexual intercourse that they both enjoyed multiple times. This relationship with him gives her a sense of completeness. She feels that "walking down this enchanted, sparkling street in the company of a man with whom she was setting out to explore job prospects made her feel not just grown up but somehow *complete*" (227). Both are feeling happy in their companionship and suddenly, one day Tara is horrified by a glimpse of a figure which resembles Dinesh, "a figure from hell" which at once triggered her trauma (263). After her eighteenth birthday when she finally called her home and talked to her parents, the dead bodies were found in Jahanpanah forest, near Delhi.

Thus, the novel portrays the two victims of Stockholm syndrome – Margaret in 1857 and Tara in 1997. The gap in time is of 140 years and there is a visible difference in the victimhood where Margaret changes her name and lives happily with Nizam, whereas, Tara has been killed along with her companion Himal. This shows that the living experience of the disabled in this society is worsening and it is certainly not in their favour. Representation of psychological conditions is difficult as well as understanding them is a tough task. Stockholm syndrome is simply a psychological response, sympathy towards the victor, and this sympathy is not considered normal and common in society. Thus, society thinks of them as mentally ill and disabled and this tag of disability do not only harm the person with a disability but it includes the family members also which is not counted and remains unexplored. In both the cases of Margaret and Tara, their family members have to undergo a mass questioning about their daughter's situation and face multiple criticisms by the society.

Conclusion

Madness or other forms of psychological or mental illnesses are hard to distinguish with bare eyes as they are esoteric in nature. A mentally ill person fears to express the true feelings because of the tags like –'depressed', 'psycho', 'mental', and 'insane' that the society offers and makes a psychologically impaired person 'disabled', or 'mad.' The doubly jeopardized victimhood of women with disabilities as discussed, lead towards a general discourse that position them as an outcaste in the society which ultimately results in separation and confinement. They are prone to violence as compared to normal women and are often thought of as Madwoman, 'asexual', and 'incapable' to perform maternal duties ascribed to women for ages by society. The novel, *A Love Story for My Sister* by Jaisree Misra showcases how a psychologically impaired woman like Tara or Margaret leads a happy married life and enjoys their womanhood. They are sexually active and able to perform

maternal roles as usual like a normal woman. Margaret and Tara try to overcome their limitations as psychologically impaired and prove that they are worthy enough to be called Normal and can fit into society. Now, in the Twenty-first Century, with the development of medical sciences and the identification of various forms of physical, mental, and neurological illnesses, the quality of living conditions of the disabled is improving. Besides, the continuous efforts of scholars, activists, and policymakers in support of disabled persons are helping them to get a better position in society. So, the society shall take cognizance of their existence instead of neglecting them, and accept them wholeheartedly as a part of the society and culture.

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A Feminist Reading of Wendy Holden's *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope*

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Abstract

Wendy Holden traces the true life stories of three young Jewish mothers Priska, Rachel, and Anka who were sent to Auschwitz II –Birkenau by the Nazis in 1944. Concealing the fact that they were pregnant to Dr. Josef Mengele, the three young mothers were able to escape the selection process to gas chambers upon arrival. After undergoing severe trauma in slave labour camps, they did not give up their will to survive in that harsh condition because of the love towards their unborn children. This paper attempts to address the physical, psychological and sexual violence faced by these women on the basis of their ethnicity and gender during holocaust. It also highlights the bravery of these women which defied all odds against them. Their motherhood magnifies the qualities of sacrificial and unconditional love in an impoverished atmosphere of cruelty and oppression.

Keywords: *Auschwitz II –Birkenau, Mauthausen concentration camp, gender violence, Nazi, Jews, born survivors*

Introduction

In the Nazi occupied Europe, Jewish women and children were targeted because they carry the power of the next generation. In a civilised country like Germany, no one would have imagined that such atrocities against women would be carried out in the name of racial prejudice. Though SS guards and Gestapo are trained killers, the common people also played a huge role in helping the implementation of racial hatred for the sake of monetary gain and racial pride. Wendy Holden's *Born Survivors: Three Young Mothers and their Extraordinary Story of Courage, Defiance, and Hope* is a biography which revolves around the lives of three young mothers Priska, Rachel and Anka during the holocaust in 1944. Though these three women are Jewish, their life experience before entering Auschwitz was completely different as they belonged to different families and varied family backgrounds. But their experiences inside the death camps were almost similar as they faced cruel treatment from the Nazis who failed to acknowledge them as humans. This paper attempts to address the physical, psychological and sexual violence faced by these women in Auschwitz II- Birkenau, Freiberg Factory, Open wagons and Mauthausen camp. It also highlights the identity crisis and the process of dehumanisation faced by these women. It unravels the power of human spirit and courage in the lives of the Jewish mothers who stood strong in the face of dehumanisation and unreasonable hatred.

Gender based violence is a human rights concern. A person who faces violence on the basis of gender has no right to life, safety and security and is subjected to torture, degrading treatment and discrimination. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts,

coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Gender based violence is not seen generally as a politically significant phenomenon because it happens in private and is not visible to the public (Brison 266).

The theory of femicide refers to the gender specific violence against women (Shaw 1). During the second wave feminism in the 1970s, femicide developed as a feminist theory. Violence is linked to power and there is no act of violence that does not intersect with gender (Shaw 1). “In the context of Nazis, race and gender, racism and sexism are closely connected with each other” (Gupta 40). When the Nazis rose to power, they were worried about the declining birth rate among the Germans. They put the blame on the women's movement for its cause. Nazis hated women's organisations which were based on bourgeois liberalism. They believed that the women's movement was part of an international Jewish conspiracy to subvert the German family and destroy the German race. The process of female emancipation was reversed, instead her degradation and depersonalisation became an element of Nazi German ideology (Gupta 40).

During the holocaust, Jewish women were doubly oppressed. First, they were harassed because of their Jewish origin. Secondly, because of their womanhood, they were looked down upon by the Nazis since they view women to be child bearing machines. In this scenario of racial hatred and gender discrimination, Jewish women were left with choiceless choices. Most of the women were separated from their husbands and children when they were put in ghettos and slave labour camps. This led to the early onset of emotional trauma. There were innumerable victims of gender violence whose voices and cries for freedom were silenced by the Nazi perpetrators. In *Born Survivors*, through the voices of three women survivors, one could clearly understand the pitiable condition of women who were sent to Auschwitz. The three young Jewish mothers Priska, Rachel and Anka defied the odds of survival and became witnesses to the unspeakable horror inside the death camps.

Priska Lowenbeinova is a Slovak Jew, aged twenty eight, when she entered Auschwitz. Her husband is Tibor Lowenbein but got separated from him as soon as she stepped into the extermination camp. She was a teacher by profession. She gave birth to her daughter Hana Edith Lowenbein (Hanka) while working in the Freiberg factory.

Rachel Friedman is a Polish Jew, aged twenty five, when she reached Auschwitz. Her husband is Moshe Friedman (Monik) who owned a textile factory and belonged to a wealthy family. She was separated from her husband in the Lodz ghetto hours before she was deported in the train to Auschwitz. She gave birth to her son Mark in the open wagons in winter 1944.

Hanna Nathan (Anka) is a Czech Jew, aged twenty seven, when she entered Auschwitz. Her husband is Bernhard Nathan and was separated from him in the Terezin ghetto when he was loaded onto a crowded passenger train on 28 September 1944 (Holden 117). Later she made a foolish decision to get deported on the train voluntarily thinking that she would get reunited with her husband. Miraculously, she was able to give birth to her daughter Eva in the Mauthausen camp.

Though these three women experienced violence at the hands of Nazi during the same period and same locations, they never knew each other. It was only when the children of these three mothers met at Mauthausen in 2010 to attend the sixty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the camp, they happened to figure out that they were not the only born survivors.

They were excited to meet the other born survivors as if they belonged to the same family. The traumatic past of their parents brought them together and they became siblings of the heart.

Until the mid-1980s, the holocaust experience was never analysed through the lens of gender. Till then, the Nazi “Final Solution” was understood as a total genocide against the Jewish people. Everyone defined as “Jewish” was marked for annihilation, not paying too much attention to their gender. Narrowing down on gender was seen as misleading from the systematic murder of the Jews, diminishing the importance of the Holocaust and deflecting attention from Nazi policy. Only after mid-1980s, it became accepted that studying gender may lead one to a richer understanding of the Holocaust. The lives of Jewish women were endangered as women, as mothers and as caretakers. The Holocaust produced experiences and dilemmas unique to Jewish women. In many instances, an individual's ordeal was shaped by gender. Gender also produced different responses. Mary Felstiner pointed out, “Along the stations toward extinction... each gender lived its own journey” (Hayes 163).

Physical Violence

Food, clothing and shelter are the basic physical needs of human beings. In Nazi death camps, the basic needs of the Jewish people were not met fully. Instead it was given partially in a meagre fashion. To the outside world, the Nazis propagated a message that Jews are filthy creatures and Europe has to get rid of them. On the flip side, it was the Nazis who tormented the innocent Jews by denying the basic needs and reduced them to nothingness.

Upon arriving at Auschwitz, all the pregnant women, old men and women and children were sent straight to gas chambers mercilessly. Dr. Joseph Mengele played a significant role in selecting able bodied men and women for labour. The three young women unknown to each other concealed their pregnancy and passed the selection for slave labour camp. All their belongings were taken away from them. They were even subjected to removing their clothes and walking nakedly before SS guards to reach the shower room. All their lovely locks of hair which glorified their feminine beauty were shaved and no hair was left on the body. They were given prison clothes and were reduced to nothingness by utter humiliation. “Stripped of their clothes, their hair, their identities and their dignity, they were often left with painful nicks, and with scalps that hadn't been completely shaved and sprouted irregular strands. Friends and relatives huddled together and gripped each other in tight embraces, afraid to lose physical contact because they suddenly all looked the same and 'no longer human” (Holden 123). The humiliation to undress before men was much more detrimental and much more traumatic for women than their fellow Jewish men.

When they reached the shower room, they were relieved to see water coming out of the pipe as they were frightened of the gas chamber. No soap and no towels were provided. Many of the women opened their mouths to quench their thirst with that water. Later they realised that it was not fit for drinking as it was a highly contaminated liquid. Throughout their life in the concentration camps, sanitary facilities were not provided and hence diarrhoea and dysentery was common among all the inmates.

With eight hundred women in each block, their place was overcrowded. In addition to that, their place was infested by lice, rats and bed bugs, the place of rest only aggravated their

pain. When someone fell sick, no medical help was rendered to them. Instead they were killed and subjected to Dr. Mengele's experiments. Life was so horrible and daily living conditions were made worse by the long duration of labour. Anka said, "We worked fourteen hours a day" (Holden 172). Most of the highly educated Jewish women were physically drained after they finished their manual labour as they were not used to doing that kind of work earlier.

With meagre food rations, hunger and thirst was their constant companion. Malnutrition was on the rise and the three pregnant mothers worried about their pregnancy as they were highly malnourished. "Aside from massive weight loss, the women's extreme malnutrition caused all sorts of medical problems for which they received no treatment or sympathy" (Holden 191).

In addition to the hostile environment, Jewish women were abused physically by both male and female SS guards. Compared to the male guards, the female guards acted wickedly. They not only hit and whip the prisoners but also devise punishments that would affect them as women. This might include forbidding the prisoners to use the toilet or commanding their friends to shave off what little hair that was left of them (Holden 174).

Sexual Violence

Abortion was prevalent in ghettos as Nazis were keen on wiping out the Jewish race. The Jewish babies were not welcomed even by their parents for the fear of losing their precious children in the hands of Nazi soldiers. Those women who give birth to babies in the ghettos were forcefully removed from their newborn child and the child was sent immediately to Dr. Joseph Mengele's special block known as "The Zoo" where the SS captain and his medical staff carried out unethical and harmful operations such as sterilisation, castration, electric shock treatment, amputation on dwarves, twins, babies (Holden 148).

Priska, Rachel and Anka concealed their pregnancy to Dr. Joseph Mengele when he inspected the women by squeezing their breasts. If the breasts secrete milk, then that woman would be sent to the gas chamber instantly. Though these three women told lies, they were not sure whether they would be able to give birth to their children without getting caught. But all three of them evaded the thought of worry and replied negatively to the doctor's question, "Are you pregnant, pretty woman?" (Holden 1).

During the initial years in the camp, the women who were menstruating had limited means to soak up the blood. Also, the women were only allowed to use block latrines once or twice a day. With no proper sanitation, women were exposed to all kinds of infection and disease. The three young mothers were able to escape that pitiable predicament as their babies were safe inside their shrinking body (Holden 139). In the later years due to malnutrition, the women stopped menstruating as they felt dead inside. On the other hand, some Jewish women acted as prostitutes for the SS men in order to enjoy better living conditions in the camps. After liberation, two prostitutes committed double suicide at the electric fencing as they were afraid to be taken alive by the Allies (Holden 274). "Women who worked as prostitutes or entered into prostitutional relationships were crudely tarred as collaborators and linked to those who abused them" (Person 104).

Priska delivered her child in full view of the Nazi soldiers and prison doctors in the

Freiberg factory. The SS men placed bets on whether the baby would be a boy or a girl. In the same way, Rachel delivered her child in the open wagons and Anka in the Mauthausen camp with no privacy and their deliveries became a public spectacle. After giving birth to children, the mothers felt danger lurking near their new borns as they were born into a world run by Nazis where their birth is not celebrated but condemned. They felt vulnerable as they were unable to breastfeed their babies. "Priska's chief concern was to try to encourage baby Hana to feed, but her breasts were flat against her chest and there was no substance to the little milk that she had"(Holden 221).

In the Nazi population policy, there exists a strong connection between Nazi pronatalism for "desirable" births and its antinatalism for "undesirable" ones (Bock 407). The Nazis encouraged the young German couples to have more number of children. On the contrary, they were bent on killing Jewish women and children because the women have the power to reproduce the next generation. "Built into the Nazi genocide of the Jews was the gender-specific mass murder of Jewish women, deemed the procreators of the Jewish race" (Young 1779). After being raided by the Red Army, the Nazi soldiers were keen on destroying the evidences of the genocide and interested in sending women and children in large numbers to the gas chambers. Miraculously, Priska, Rachel and Anka escaped along with the other women as the Nazis ran out of Zyklon B gas in the gas chamber of Mauthausen camp. Women were targeted till the last minute of the Nazis' surrender to the Allies.

"Women who were neither mothers nor fighters, but manipulated sex for their own and their families' survival, remained an untold story of the Holocaust"(Person 105). This shows the sad reality for women survivors who were abused sexually. On the contrary, the women survivors who were not subjected to sexual violence find it relatively easy to rebuild their lives anew from the beginning.

Psychological Violence

The moment the women were separated from their husbands, they lost their security in life completely. They become easily vulnerable as they have been removed permanently from their protective partners. Instead of love and joy, fear and anxiety filled their minds and caused wreckage both to thought life and emotions. Fear of the unknown was dominant among all other phobias. The fear of theft was common in the camps because the women acted on their animal instincts due to perennial hunger and thirst.

When the women inhaled the thick smoke from the chimneys in Auschwitz and came to know the end of their loved ones, their hearts were broken and their hopes shattered beyond remedy. They become all the more paralysed with fear due to the closed structure of the blocks with no windows and overcrowding nature. Even when they fell sick, they were afraid to visit the clinic for the fear of losing their lives in the experiments of Dr. Joseph Mengele, the Angel of Death.

Many women lost their minds and wept bitterly for the death of their loved ones. While others, broken and indifferent, retreated to themselves and existed like ghostlike figures with no hope. Their despair became contagious and death was considered as deliverance from the bondage (Holden 136). Whenever they were reminded of their good old

memories with family and friends, it gave them mental torture (Holden 234). When the Jewish women saw the German women leading their normal lives on the way to the Freiberg factory, they appeared as ghosts to those women. No one dared to show them any kindness. None of them thought that they would survive and lead normal lives again (Holden 186).

The hope of seeing tomorrow sustained the three young mothers and other women who have not given up their hope. There was no dream to cherish inside the camps as their life was filled with agony and sorrow. Most of the women were too tired to fight or resist the oppressors as they had lost all strength emotionally and mentally. For Anka, it was her human spirit that kept her going (Holden 221). When Anka was given milk to drink by the stationmaster Mr. Pavlicek in Horni Briza while she was in the open wagons, the glass of milk revived her strength. She remarked, "That glass of milk brought my humanity back" (Holden 235). For the three young mothers, their unborn babies gave them hope to live and endurance to bear the unspeakable trauma.

Conclusion

Even though Priska, Rachel and Anka faced physical, sexual and psychological violence on the basis of their gender inside the concentration camps, the indomitable spirit of motherhood enabled them to speak boldly to Dr. Joseph Mengele upon their first inspection. These courageous women gave birth to children in Nazi concentration camp amidst uncertainty and fear of the future. Their children Hana, Mark, Eva were not only 'born survivors' but also 'siblings of the heart.' Providential grace, courage and determination helped them to hold on to life till their day of deliverance. It was a miracle that these three young women could find themselves numbered amongst the living in the final roll call (Holden 305).

Judy Cohen pointed out, "In hindsight, it is clear that in Birkenau being a father didn't automatically sentence a man to death. But being a mother with a child or visibly pregnant, or just holding the little hand of a child, even if the child wasn't your own, meant instant death." In the face of dehumanisation, these three Jewish mothers tried to maintain their identity, dignity and values. By living their lives to the fullest with their children after liberation, they finally defeated Hitler's plan of eradicating the Jewish race.

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Analyzing Clinical Gaze and Body Dysmorphia in Roxane Gay's *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*

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Abstract

This paper elucidates Body Dysmorphia in its function, taking into account the medico-juridical mechanism complementing the clinical gaze. Considering the contemporary biomedicine and its obligatory phenomenology following the genealogy of medical sagacity, being healthy is often understood as having a certain size, shape and configuring to certain body mass indices; with the human body as a subject of explicit medical knowledge and an object of clinical practice. This study takes into account Roxane Gay's autobiography, Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body to analyze the fallacious medical culture adhering to medicine power structure, psychopathologies, social constraints and the flawed BMI. Keeping up with the aforesaid, this paper applies the Foucauldian theoretical framework to explore the objectification, oppression and othering of the 'fat.'

Keywords: *Body Dysmorphia, Medical Gaze, othering, objectification, fat, thin.*

Introduction

The contemporary society is bound to the obligatory biomedical conditioning in the doctor-patient dyad that follows the reductionist power of medical establishments further developing into serious psychopathologies and disordered eating patterns pertaining to fulfill the fallacious needs and set standards, to abide by medical and social chain of commands. The medically constructed perfect body shape conformations are assigned to a patient's body through the act of 'Medical Gaze' serving as a generalized notion for every human body as per their outer body appearance. Further development of esoteric medical terminology and systematic description of diseases for the identification and classification of the diseases allows the medical centers to analyze a patient's illness as a consequence of the immediacy of visible nosology. By assigning certain indices and restricting the body notions, these medical establishments try to bring a sense of discipline to the undisciplined body through various medical prescriptions, throwing away the true identities of the victim with an authoritative gaze of objectification, termed as 'Medical Gaze,' which traces the medico-juridical mechanism of materializing a patient following the genealogy of medicinal sagacity with the mechanics of knowledge and power within the medicine and its structure. For the medical practitioners, Foucault asserts "He who describes a disease must take care to distinguish the symptoms that necessarily accompany it, and which are proper to it" (Foucault 8). The medico-legal implications are the unspoken medical and social constructions that are directed towards every individual in such a manner that these perceptions remain absorbed in the societal space, unknowingly and undoubtedly.

Theoretical Background

The paper approaches the narrative by Roxane Gay's *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* by applying a qualitative method inclusive of a textual analysis to construct its arguments through the application of Foucauldian theoretical framework to analyze the embodiment of a fat patient's body. Michel Foucault's concept of 'Medical Gaze' has been applied to examine how the medical establishments objectify the patient's body by dichotomizing them as 'normal'/'abnormal' and thus 'thin'/'fat.' Under Foucault's notion, Clinical Gaze contemplates the human being as a mere docile body. In his book *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (1973) opines that “the great break in the history of western medicine dates precisely from the moment clinical experience became the anatomo-clinical gaze” (“Open Up a Few Corpses,” Foucault 1973) with discovering a patient's constitutional anatomy which is the structural entity and its operative idiosyncrasies is a conglomeration that can be professionally negotiated by a physician. The selection of biomedical modicum of the patient's problems is done by the doctors ignoring the rest peripheral non biomedical data; encompassing the medical gaze that conforms to the motifs which are best suited to the doctors. *The Birth of the Clinic*: namely, a shift that prompted the notion that from now on a defining role of the doctor would be to subject suffering patients to the most rigorous and exacting of medical gazes (Philo 13). The Medical Gaze can easily penetrate the human body to ascertain true meanings to it and acquire the secrets of the body following the diagnosis of the disease with prescribing the treatment, not restricted to the physical illness but to any sort of aspect that caters to the physician's gaze. The Medical Gaze characterizes both the object of knowledge and the subject knowing that object; it is as much a part of the object as it is of the observer (Foucault 165). The paper asserts the establishment of new tests and invention of biomedical rules in the name of medical culture that believed in the doctor's diagnostic wisdom feeding the medical sovereignty and “diseases started to be treated not so much as abstracted categories, but more as events, processes and pathologies that become visible in a geographical system of masses differentiated by their volume and distance” (Philo 13).

Medical Gaze and Fallacious Medical Culture

Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body describes Gay's memories of carrying a dysmorphic body image that is unacceptable personally, socially and medically relating to her fat body being a shame. Gay postulates being fat was repulsive to being hurt and her sentiment is well described by her disordered over-eating which was a repercussion of her childhood trauma. “Individuals who have experienced sexual abuse are also more likely to develop eating disorders” (Chen et al. 2010). In her early life, Gay had observed the ways in which the fat people were leered at in disgust, so she concluded fatness to be sinfully undesirable. Owing to her understanding of fatness being undesirable to men and her traumatized juvenescence that kept her eating more and more for mental peace and physical stoutness just to feel shielded and out of the societal harm's way, Gay even naively thought to choose to date women in order to make sure that dating women would be safer and easier. To hide her femininity for ensuring security, Gay preferred to wear men's clothes but ultimately, her secure safe place became her

invulnerably undesirable obese body, as an obese woman is largely visible which is certain yet remains invisible to the desire of men. This was Gay's response to civilly constructed stigmatized fatness and idealized thinness in the society and medicine as well that called to her body as an "abnormal" object strictly asking for repair and slashing down; but on the other hand the obese body had become the safe home of the narrator.

The dominant medical and cultural belief regarding fatness is that a 'fat' body is a medical issue, a disgrace in society and blight aesthetically. The medical establishments are the biased court houses passing unkind judgments, directing stringent rules and regulations for the medically unfit and checking upon the biomedical parameters while questioning the existence of the 'fat' (Klaver, 2009). This social and medical abuse moved the narrator Roxane Gay, causing her to contract Body Dysmorphia and negative body image further calling out to dissatisfaction, body vexation and harassment that prompted over-eating and obesity. She lays bare how over-eating was her resolution to remain invisible and unseen to the eyes of the cruel and vicious. When clinically interpreted, over-eating is the condition where a living being ingests more calories in ratio to the expenditure of energy expelled via physical activities that can promote corpulence, obesity and insulin bodily defiance. Disruption of hunger regulation, impaired brain function, nausea, bloating, and promotion of excess body fat might eventually override encouragingly one to eat for pleasure even when he's not hungry, rendering the sufferer unexplainable through the various ways by which all the excerpts of medical power relations render human beings as mere discourses, institutions and practices which are disciplined, subdued and subjected through medicalization.

Followed by her frequent hospitalization that exposed her to realizing that she was not a normal body, Gay who had already tried liquid dietary with saying, "another attempt to solve the problem of my body" (68), finally opted for a Bariatric weight-shred surgery that could help her to remove 85 percent of her stomach and this sleeve gastrectomy lead to the objectification of her persona into a mere body. When the obese patients try on various dietetic and nutritional treatments for their severe obesity and these treatments come up against failures, then the patients oftentimes approach the bariatric and gastric bypass surgeries for their physical and psychological well-being (Busetto et al. 235). These surgeries are nothing less than the alteration in the patient's anatomy, changing the whole internal biology of the human body without considering the psychological response of the individual. In the memoir, Gay narrates the incident of her being at the hospital, which is "an ambiguous one: theoretically free, and, because of the non-contractual character of the relation between doctor and patient, open to the indifference of experiment," (Foucault 83); sitting with some other 'obese' patients who were being prepared for the gastric bypass and the sleeve gastrectomy that is the weight-loss surgery by a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist was trying to train them for their after surgery life which would help them to "become next to normal" (5). This relates to Foucault's consideration of the biomedical fields as part of a prevalent disciplinary apparatus, which intends to lay down the specific parameters for what is 'healthy' and therefore 'normal.' The eyes of a medical practitioner are the eyes that can more competently penetrate the patient's body to discover the aberrant elements and these eyes have been endowed with the powerful authority of recognizing the structure of the body along with the miniscule anomalies (Scott 2004). On another day, Roxane's meeting with her doctor

ends up with her being objectified, as the doctor upon entering the examination room where she has been weighed, measured and quietly judged, exuberantly pointed her out by saying “You're a perfect candidate for the surgery. We'll get you booked right away” (7). As an object of scrutiny, the human body gets medicalized serving the work purpose of doctors, medical examiners, nurses and other medical professionals. These medicalized human bodies are sought to act as the models for understanding the research, classification and diagnosis. (Klaver 2009)

Fatness manifests itself in many social contexts and aspects that are interpersonal relationships, media, employment etc and thus these manifestations have atypical yet similarly discriminating domains that are directed towards the 'fat' (Chapman 2021). The society demands and presupposes the 'fat' to want to lose weight and work on the issue of their fat bodies and thus the fat people adhere to the clinical surgeries for such solutions. Through discriminatory treatment and insensitivity at the hospitals, the doctors leave no chance to distinctly differentiate between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal' by following the explicit medical obligations. Contrary to this, “A certain balance must be kept, of course, between the interests of knowledge and those of the patient; there must be no infringement of the natural rights of the sick, or of the rights that society owes to the poor.” (Foucault 83). None of the fat patients are likely to undergo any laparoscopic surgery without wanting to feel 'normal' rather than speaking of better health. After the surgical repair, Gay had a brand new stomach and she could feel the neat incisions across her body, specifically her torso with minimal scarring. Her brand new stomach was newly stitched and she couldn't even eat anything for the next few days in order to hold the fragility of her altered anatomy. Whole of the hospital nearly buzzed around the new her but she was the same with her unchanged older outlook on life. She wasn't hungry anymore, rather she was starving. The surgery according to her was a lovely fantasy that fantasized the cutting of one's body with removal of some body parts.

Through her autobiography, Gay frontlines the power of internalized Medical Gaze as the patient tends to respect and follow the doctors' advices impulsively incorporating the same into the manner they notice themselves and observe others too, accepting the clinical flaws and limitations. “By means of the endless play of modifications and repetitions, the hospital clinic makes possible, therefore, the setting aside of the extrinsic” (Foucault 110). Patients have a tendency to embrace biomedicine's moral boundaries, exuberantly incorporating the gaze into how they evaluate themselves and others. Gay, in her memoir, has asserted her belief about her own body as “I was a body, one requiring repair” (7) unmoving the internally incarnated idea of being 'abnormally fat' and a social plus medical misfit. The statement “What those doctors offered was so tempting, so seductive” (6) demonstrates how a patient internalizes the objectifying power of the physicians. The writer's statement “the doctor told us the price of happiness” (7) makes her desired fancy to lose body weight through gastric bypass quite explicit with her agreement of opting for the bariatric surgery over fatness positivity reflects the successful internalization of medical gaze practiced by the medical practitioners, into the minds of patients. Gay says that she is hyperconscious about how she looks and she thinks of a constant destructive refrain and quotes:

I am, perhaps, self-obsessed beyond measure... I am the fattest person in this apartment building. I am the fattest person in the class. I am the fattest person at this

university. I am fattest person in this theatre. I am the fattest person in this airplane. I am the fattest person on this interstate. I am the fattest person in this city. I am the fattest person at this event. I am the fattest person at this conference. I am the fattest person in this restaurant. I am the fattest person in this shopping mall. I am the fattest person on this panel ... (157)

Her agreement of opting for the bariatric surgery over fatness positivity reflects the successful internalization of medical gaze practiced by the medical practitioners and induced body mass restrictions, into the minds of patients. Roxane Gay writes “People see bodies like mine and make their assumptions. They think they know the why of my body. They do not” (3). Fatness is a disgraced stigma in the human society disfiguring the 'obese' which extends courage to the people to judge and mock the 'fat'. There are so many rules for the body-often unspoken, fluid, dynamic and ever-shifting. Roxane feels that an over-weight body ultimately becomes a matter of public records in many aspects and for the over-weight bodies she quotes, “Your body is constantly and prominently on display” (110). Speaking of the social taxonomy for the over-weight human body, the narrator describes her intimate familiarity with the vernacular for 'fat women'. An over-weight woman can be a BBW or a SSBBW that is a big beautiful woman or a super sized big beautiful woman. Besides, she can be chubby, curvy, round, 'healthy,' heavy, stout, husky, and even thick; the impolite slangs are a pig, fat ass, fat pig, fatty, cow, fatso, buffalo, elephant, whale, and etcetera. The body parts of an obese woman get names like double chins, thunder thighs, cottage cheese thighs, side boob, back fat, spare tires, man boobs, muffin tops, beer bellies and what not (130). These terms - the casual, the clinical or the slangs are rude public dissections and definitions of a fat woman body which is highly offensive. Gay quotes “no one wants to be infected by obesity, largely because people know how they see and treat and think about fat people and don't want such a fate to befall them” (113) calling attention to the social hatred for fatness.

Inhumane and Flawed Body Mass Index

Speaking of the inhumane and technical term BMI, the narrator quotes, “it is a term, and a measure, that allows the medical establishments to try and bring a sense of discipline to undisciplined bodies” (9). This is one of the various indicators that explicate the amount of disobedience and unruliness a human body might carry. The memoir gives voice to Gay's discern on being judged as “super morbidly obese” (20) as when she ponders over the BMI or body mass index regulations. Super morbidly obese is the chronic vulnerability of an individual characterized with a BMI rate of 50 and even higher. Gay puts forward her notion in her biography, “As a fat woman, I often see my existence reduced to statistics.” (114) comprehending the inhumane and flawed BMI check which is an alarmist way to medically control and map human bodies through biomedicine that provides the fat people with the fallacious notions and irrelevant fixed goals regarding beauty, size and slenderness; thereby distinctly ignoring the diversity in humans (Syed 14). BMI is a considerable surrogate measure of body fatness because it is a measure of excess weight rather than being the measure of excess body fat. “One of the formula's obvious flaws... is that it has absolutely no way of discriminating fat and muscle” (Belluz, 2016). “The term morbid obesity frames fat

people like we are walking dead, and the medical establishment treats us accordingly” (10) is rather a declarative claim by the narrating patient, than just a verbal saying. Such horrible reduction of a lively human being into a mere human body with no existential gravity is unbelievable yet it is attributed so comfortably by the clinics:

It is worth noting that in 1998, medical professionals, under the direction of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, lowered the BMI threshold for 'normal' bodies to below 25 and in doing so, doubled the number of obese Americans. One of the reasons for lowering the cutoff: A round number like 25 would be easy for people to remember. (10)

“The hospital domain is no doubt not pure transparency to truth, but the refraction that is proper to it makes possible, through its constancy, the analysis of truth” (Foucault 110). The medical practitioners are inclined towards their own doctoral community lacking being patient-oriented that certainly creates an abusive power structure, pertaining to the medical perception adhering the style of thinking in medicine. The medical gaze restricts the clinicians to use narrow diagnostic criteria in the treatment of the patients. The frequent local reductionist thought about a disease erases the person hood of the patient, constituted of a subject of knowledge and an object of medical examination that further moves towards dehumanizing the patient. The simultaneous consequence of a patient entering the sphere of medicine is followed by his entrance in the domain of power where there occurs the comfortable manipulation of the patient under the professional authority of the medical practitioners and the autonomy of the medical gaze, influencing the behavior of people towards the fat followed by explicit bias, prejudice and discrimination aimed at the 'fat-other' which occurs within a society with the diktat omnipresence of aesthetic thinness constructing fatness to be pathological, pejorative and shameful (Cottais et al. 2021).

Conclusion

In the contemporary aetiology of biomedicine, here is a great need of an accompanying 'social gaze' with the 'medical gaze' so that the medical establishments also take into consideration the social determinants of health and disease not just the biological ones in order to avoid the strict materialization of a patient's body. The paper deplors the medicinal and socio-cultural naturalization of the 'fat' and 'obese' individuals who fall prey to essentialism and stereotypization. The pervasive weight stigmas in the society and biomedicine as well, are so intensifying that they take up the shape of fat phobia laced disgust in the minds of individuals which elucidates the weight based social identity crisis. Fat stigmatization can have multiple traumatic socio-mental implications on the targeted group. The inadequacy of the biomedical approaches to fatness fails in recognizing the influential impacts of the extensive social environment on the health and behavioral patterns of individuals. Essentially, the weight stigma has resulted in the othering of the 'fat' which leads to fat phobia that can be defined as the pathological fear of obesity or fat bodies. Therefore, the clinical limitations of BMI should be considered. Patients go through the biomedical mapping of their bodies which does not sit well with them psychologically. They feel offended and cursed of the fatness and their obese body. To their knowledge, obesity is a discursively

produced term and not a simple biological condition, as is the meaning of the fat.

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Mechanics of Shame in the Process of Dehumanization: A Reading of Gisella Perl's *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*

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Abstract

Shame as a basic human emotion is intricately connected to the self of an individual. Holocaust memoirs offer an insight as to how shame plays a vital role in the process of dehumanization. Perl, a Jewish gynecologist has not only explored the authentic Jewish experience but also foregrounded a female physician's shame and dehumanization in the concentration camp. This paper mainly analyses the different ways of dishonouring and dehumanizing Jews before murdering them. This paper takes a closer look at disintegrative shaming faced by the inmates of the concentration camp. This article also discusses how the act of shaming is used as a tool to take social control over the Jewish masses based on Gisella Perl's memoir I was a Doctor at Auschwitz.

Keywords: *Holocaust, testimonial literature, dehumanization, shame and Gisella Perl.*

Shame is a complex and crucial emotion in the everyday life of an individual. *The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, 2nd edition defines shame as “master emotion” and also “key component in social relationships” (488). The Online Etymology Dictionary traces the root word of shame as derived from Old English 'Scamu' meaning “disgrace, dishonour, insult, loss of esteem or reputation.” (web). Shame is described as an irreversible feeling of being pushed to the status of lower in the social hierarchy.

In Germany, the newly elected government in 1933 under the headship of Hitler used antisemitism as the tool for their political benefits. Nazis went a step ahead in antisemitism and butchered nearly six million Jews within the short span of six years from 1939 to 1945. The 'Holocaust' is the term representing this mass racial genocide of Jews. In the goal of expanding his territorial areas, Hitler worked with the primary goal of 'divesting' the European nations from the Jewish population and the mechanics employed in the Holocaust was the evidence of human beings moving towards barbarism.

The mainstream history is largely hegemonic and Nazi government circulated only the hegemonic writings among the masses of Germany which distorted actuality and reality. Testimonial literature counters the hegemonic discourse by foregrounding the historical reality from the individual experience. These experiences were later corroborated by other testimonies, documents and camp locations. Rebuilding of self occurs in the process of writing testimonies, which actually supplement history and therefore survivors are encouraged to come up with personal stories. Life narratives take the responsibility of documenting the untold and hidden truth about the Nazi concentration camp. Through the process of remembering, survivors are united with their fellow community members.

Testimonial literature is a broad umbrella term that comprises autobiographies, memoirs, letters, journals and diaries. The Italian chemist and Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi's memoir *Survival in Auschwitz* documents the minute details of concentration camp.

Nobel Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night Trilogy* is pioneer in breaking the silence of the survivors. Victor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* suggests the ways to cope with life by finding a meaning for their life after surviving the camp. *The Diary of a Young Girl* is a heart-wrenching firsthand account of young Jewish girl Anne Frank. Child survivor Ruth Kluger's *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* talks extensively about her survival in Auschwitz- Birkenau camp.

The history of racial antisemitism advocated by Hitler for his political advantage would clearly illustrate the demarcation between the so-called superiority of Aryan race and inferiority of Jewish race. Racial hygienists of Hitler's regime advocated hierarchy of racial groups and arrived at the point that the so-called superior Aryan race would be provided living space (*lebensraum*) and denied living space to other races in Nazi Germany. Hitler thus succeeded in constructing Jews as an inferior race and they ought to be ruled by the dominant Aryan race. He also kindled race consciousness among the Aryan population of the country by implementing many laws including Law for the Protection of the Blood and Honour which prevented race mixing between Aryans and Non-Aryans. The people of the Aryan race used this situation of eliminating Jews from all mainstream opportunities as an advantage for them and supported this action against Jews.

Extremity of political violence such as displacing Jews from their hometown and transporting them to ghettos imposed shame on Jews. Nazis action of separating and segregating Jews from all public domain belongs to the category of 'disintegrative shaming,' a core concept introduced by John Braithwaite in his book *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Braithwaite says that the disintegrative shaming "divides the community by creating a class of outcasts" (55). Stigmatizing Jewish people based on their race falls under the category of disintegrative shaming. Racial segregation of Jews and Aryans and the long process of shaming began in the German classroom. Jewish children were allowed to attend only Jewish schools and they were slowly expelled from German schools because Aryans were ashamed to be seated next to a Jew. In fact, Jews were allotted separate benches in parks and other public places. The young Jewish children were addressed as garlic eaters in order to invoke shame amidst them.

Even before the deportation to the ghettos and camps, Jews had been ostracized by being forced to wear the yellow Star of David in their dress and to tie yellow star in Jewish business shops. The yellow star worn by the Jews acted as the shame symbol which spoiled their mental well-being as well as their business. Nazis were arresting almost all the Jews of the nation with the aim of creating a Nazi Utopian society. Every action taken against the Jews by the Nazis brought in a sense of shame and fear in the Jewish individual. Before deportation, Jews were stripped off all their possessions including their homes, jewels and properties and ghettoized at the outskirts of the city limits.

I was a Doctor in Auschwitz, published in 1948, offers a glimpse into the hospital of the Nazi concentration camp through the life of female physician Gisella Perl. She was not selected for the deportation by the Nazis because of her excellency in the medical field. Perl has depicted the authentic experience of being a female Jewish physician under the headship of the Nazis but she does not limit her writings by describing her own trauma and shame; rather she covers the vivid range of shame faced by her fellow female prisoners. Perl's

memoir, written within a few years of liberation, records the miseries of the young girls and pregnant women in the course of the experiments. Perl also highlights the techniques she had employed to save the lives of the pregnant women from the hands of SS men. Overall, Perl's memoir offers the lens for understanding the accounts of camp life, hospital setup and the research carried out on the innocent Jewish prisoner patients.

The centrality of shame lies in being deviant from the constructed norm. Shaming of Jews occurs by juxtaposing so-called Jewish racial traits such as hair, nose and eyes with Aryans. These racial traits showed the race orientation of the Nazis and they actually form the typecast by which they construct Jews as others. Nazis were choosing the young boys and girls with blond and blue-eyes for experimentation in the camp. Throughout this memoir, Perl was specific in describing the blue eyes of her fellow Jewish inmates. Jewish identity of the inmates acted as the agency for causing shamefulness.

"A person can assess himself only in terms of what the public thinks of him. The 'public' in this case constitutes an honour group" (Taylor 55). Nazis categorized the entire Aryan population as the honour group and placed the sense of shame over the so-called inferior Jewish race. Social image of the Jews was distorted at the moment they entered the camp. "So to be dishonoured it is necessary to belong to an honoured group in the first place" (Taylor 56).

Primarily, Jewish people were dishonoured as they failed to comply with the categorical demand of having Aryan blood. The very act of dishonouring Jews began during the election time when Hitler accused Jews for causing misfortunes to the Aryan community. In addition to that, Jews were stereotypically portrayed as parasites, pests, vermin of the earth and germs. All these types of negative stereotypes ruined the real image of the Jewish community. After they ascended to power, the act of dishonouring went to an extreme level of depriving Jews of their German citizenship with the implementation of the racist Nuremberg Law.

Transportation of Jews in trucks was carried out like transporting the cattle in the tram. The doors of the tram were nailed and the transportees were not provided food or water during their journey towards Auschwitz, the hell for the Jews. Jews were reduced to the status of animal by the treatment of Nazis and they felt very weak even to crawl. Denying them the basic necessities of food and water and treating Jews like animals formed the process in dishonouring the community. Many Nazis treated Jews without dignity and used them as guinea pigs. "Tell these animals to keep quiet or I'll have them all shot!" (Perl 29). Jewish lives did not have human worth in Nazi Germany and Perl also mentioned that the Jewish bodies were used to make soaps. The actions of SS guards stripped the Jewish population of their dignity much before they reached the camps.

The process of dehumanization began the moment Jews arrived in the concentration camps and prisoners were assigned numbers. The Nazis branded numbers into the arm of every individual at their arrival to the camp. The assigned number acted as a shame symbol throughout their lifetime. "Dr. Gisella Perl I had been before and to prisoner No. 25,404 I was now" (Perl 64). The feeling of shame was imposed on Perl and other inmates by deliberately identifying them by their numbers assigned by Nazis and not by their Jewish names.

American Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley propounded the concept of 'looking

glass self' in his book *Human Nature and the Social Order* which emphasized the notion of self. The primacy of shame lies in the subjective feeling of an individual. The notion of self plays an important role in evoking the sense of shame and it cannot be constructed in solitude rather it needs the presence of others. The intensity of shame will be high when the subject is displayed to public exposure. The looking glass self mainly includes three major elements. In Cooley's words, "the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self feeling, such as pride or mortification"(Cooley 96). Shame arises when the victims think of themselves seen through the eyes of the perpetrators. Nazi's ill treatment of Jews did not happen inside the four walls rather it happened in the open arena and in front of mixed group of victims and perpetrators.

After entering the camp, the inmates encountered the very first shame of nudity. Despite their age and gender, people were forced to undress, to take shower in an open area and made to wear prisoner garb. The problem of standing nude in front of their own kith and kin inflicted a huge shame over them. Sense of shame arises when Perl imagines how others would look at her Sometimes, victims' own eyes act as an agent in causing shame.

Gabriele Taylor remarks in her book *Pride, Shame and Guilt* "Shame requires a sophisticated type of self-consciousness" (67) Women inmates of the camp were open to the male gaze of S.S. men. Gazing at the female victims was possible because of the power they possessed. "They did everything in their power to push us into the bottomless depths of degradation" (Perl 75). S.S men, the guards of the camp were witnessing the nudity of Jewish women which disrupted the very self of the women individuals. Jewish women were dehumanized and stood as an exhibition for them. "We were undressed there before the laughing S.S. guards who showed their appreciation for some of the beautiful bodies by slashing them with whips" (Perl 29-30). The act of laughing by the S.S. guards on seeing the naked female bodies inflicted a collective shame on the female victims. The screams of the ashamed female Jews invoked a perverse pleasure among the S.S men. The negative image of shame elicited among the female population was due to their consciousness of their degradation.

Shame arises due to the tension between our actual identity and other's conception about identity. Nazis first targeted in destroying the outward appearance of the entering inmates thereby reducing them to a sub- human state. "Here I was only a shadow without Identity, alive only by the power of suffering" (Perl 56). Perl mentioned that the disinfection centre at Auschwitz worked with the aim of depriving the inmates of their last remnants of beauty, freshness and human appearance. The Nazi S.S. immediately disfigured the Jews who were selected as camp inmates. "When we entered the second room we had nothing left of our former identity except our naked bodies and disturbed souls" (Perl 44). In the concentration camp, Jews were deprived of their dignity of being a human in decent society.

The sufferings of the Jewish pregnant women were immeasurable in the camp. Being pregnant in the concentration camp was treated as shame. During childbirth, S.S. men had pleasure on seeing their pain and in fact they stamped them in their stomach with their heavy German boots and they were subjected to severe blows with whips. Throughout this memoir, Perl had quoted how the young girls and pregnant women were subjected to humiliation.

During their confinement in concentration camps, Perl and her fellow prisoners constantly thought of their past life which actually kept them alive. In their pre- Holocaust life, Jews enjoyed a well sophisticated bathroom with unlimited water facility. In the camp, Jews had only a very minimal washroom with a single faucet and there were also time restrictions to access those toilets. As they were not provided with enough drinking water, Jews used to drink that polluted water from toilets to sustain their life.

Charlotte Junger was a beautiful blue-eyed child from the long lineage of physicians. On knowing about treatment given to Jews, her father Dr. Junger injected poison to his entire family. Dr. Junger could not bear the pain of being arrested by the Nazis and therefore he chose death over shame whereas Charlotte was arrested and ghettoized in the camp and subjected to shaming pain. Deep seated feeling of shame compelled the victim to commit suicide. Even the author attempted suicide before being arrested by the guards.

Gisella Perl was appointed as the gynecologist of the newly established maternity ward. The newly established hospital at Auschwitz was a completely strange environment for both the Jewish doctors and the prisoners. She was robbed of her high possessions including the medical instruments and expensive drugs. She was also restricted to access the expensive medical instruments for the operations of female Jewish bodies.

Perl knew very well that the Jewish doctors were used as slave assistants in the hands of Nazi officers. Perl's head was shaved and she was provided with dirty dress which did not hide her weak health condition. Jewish doctors were heavily beaten before the patients for not maintaining the cleanliness of the hospital. It was the duty of a doctor to clean the floor with their hands as they were not provided with brooms. The shame of not being able to act independently as a doctor in the camp constantly pricked her heart but she knew very well that only her profession saved her from being gassed to death. However, she managed to overcome the shame by saving the lives of pregnant women with the least facilities available to her.

Quasi shame occurs by imagining and internalizing the shame of someone else and feeling ashamed of it. Lily, a great artist, actress and a singer with a beautiful voice and blue eyes was arrested in summer 1944 and transported to the distribution camp in Kistarcsa. She was moving from one block to another to save her life. "They cut her newly grown hair, they tear off all of her rags, till she stands naked in front of all the prisoners" (Perl 103). Lily was reduced to some features of herself which invokes a shrunken feeling in her. Incompetence to violate the atrocities done to her invokes the sense of shame to Lily. Her feeling of failure as a doctor and her helplessness to save the new lives induced formidable shame to the author.

Shame and trauma caused due to the tortures and experiments had a long-term effect on their memory. However they tried hard to bury the shameful incidents consciously, it resurfaces unconsciously at various points in their life. For the concentration camp inmates, the memory of the shame becomes traumatic in their future. After the liberation, survivors tend to recollect their past shaming experiences either intentionally or unintentionally. Perl was able to come up with a powerful testimony of her as driven by the shame that she faced as a Jewish physician in the Nazi camp.

Perl mentioned that she would never forget the rape victim Elizabeth who later turned out to be her housekeeper and more of a sister to her son. When she thought of her housekeeper Elizabeth, she did not stop describing her as Hungarian Protestant rather Perl added that she

was a rape victim which shows how the mind could not erase the shame caused to Elizabeth. Thus, incidents of shame are very much associative to the memory and become a deep seated trauma in the psyche of survivors. Throughout the memoir, the author did not follow a linear narrative structure; rather she shifted between past and present which showed how much her memory retains all the divergent shame she faced during the ghettoisation.

Incidents of shame faced by the Perl as a doctor mediates those traumatic memories of shame and created a prolonged distress feeling after the liberation. Post traumatic shame is a diagnostic criterion causing Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Every survivor could not efface the traumatic shame they underwent during their camp life. The inability to forget the shameful experience acted as a stressing agent leading to PTSD. Although Perl attained a good position after liberation, she still could not overcome the shame of being a victim in the Nazi concentration camp. People having Post traumatic shame do not need an audience in the process of recollecting the shameful experience. On seeing a beauty parlour in New York, Perl was reminded of the beauty parlour (disinfection centre) in Auschwitz which aimed at disfiguring the least human appearance of the inmates. This is what psychologists call Post Traumatic Shame- a condition wherein the survivors were disturbed in the present by the constant irrepressible shame memories of the past.

Despite the shame and trauma, Hitler could not succeed in achieving his dream of dishonouring and eliminating the Jewish community from Europe. Jews survived the catastrophic incident of the Holocaust and were resilient enough to cope up with the losses. Mediating through shame and pain, they tried to search meaning for their life by writing powerful testimonies. Jews tried to overcome the deeply ingrained shame and were able to attain a global recognition by receiving the highest number of Nobel Prize until today.

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“Another Nature of Things”: Relationships Between Characters and Things in Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name*

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Abstract

*This paper aims to examine two instances of relationships between black feminine characters and everyday things in Audre Lorde's biomythography, *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name*, for the changes they forge in the text's narrative structure. It argues that everyday things are not unproblematically controlled by and arbitrarily given meaning to by the characters to complete mundane activities. Rather, things and characters are in contentious relationships where things often disavow the meanings imposed on them by the characters. These contentious relationships often cause ruptures in the characters' everyday narratives of doing mundane activities. The characters have to resume these narratives in a rhizomatic fashion with the help of other things. This paper will examine Linda's relationship with new materials in New York City, and Audre's attempts at providing a mortar meaning based on her desire for her mother. The paper finally argues that things actively shape the characters' identities in daily life.*

Keywords: *Everyday narratives, everyday things, relationships, rhizomatic.*

Introduction

Audre Lorde was born to Grenadian parents who immigrated to New York City in the 1920s. Her identity as a black lesbian woman was shaped by various factors in her everyday childhood life. She inherited her ideas of her black identity from the various rites and customs brought by her mother from Grenadian women family members. Her black identity was also shaped by her everyday experience of anti-black racism and Jim Crow legislation in schools, restaurants, streets and other public places. She became aware of her lesbianism through her love for other women including her mother and her repulsion of heteronormative sexual experiences in school. Later, she also recorded her experiences from the lens of disability, particularly in *The Cancer Journals*. These experiences led her to develop a black feminist identity politics rooted in everyday intersectionality, widely discussed in seminal texts like *Sister Outsider*, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” *I am Your Sister*, *A Burst of Light* and *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* among others. This paper reads a few instances of her everyday life as described in her biomythography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* which were essential to her identity formation. Thus, examples of material things used by her and people around her in these instances of everyday life will be examined so as to map her identity position as a black lesbian woman.

This paper aims to read the relationships between everyday things and black feminine characters in Lorde's biomythography *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name* and demonstrate how these relationships affect the text's narrative structure. *Zami's* narrative structure is composed of a network of several everyday narratives. The paper defines “everyday narratives” as brief narrations of the steps taken by a character to perform a mundane activity

geared toward sustenance, maintenance of cleanliness, commute, and/or leisure. A single instance of an everyday narrative is linear, having a clear beginning, middle, and end. However, when the narrator brings together all instances of an everyday narrative, it gains a cyclical, repetitive quality. Any material or artefact made, used, consumed, or encountered by a character to complete these everyday narratives can be considered an "everyday thing." Ostensibly, these generally mass-produced, repetitively used, replaceable, and otherwise unremarkable things do not radically alter the linear-cum-cyclical plotlines of everyday narratives. However, this paper argues that, in *Zami*, the black women characters' relationships with everyday things are contentious instead of straightforward and unilaterally character-controlled. This contentiousness is because of the covert tendency of things to reveal their materiality and affect the characters' everyday plotlines. Everyday narratives in *Zami* are not unproblematically linear or cyclical narratives of characters using things to achieve a mundane aim but are peppered with ruptures caused by conflict. They become rhizomatic due to these ruptures. The paper bases its idea of a "rhizomatic narrative" on Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that a rhizome does not necessarily adhere to a fixed origin, and can be restarted from any point of rupture. The paper defines a rhizomatic narrative as having been ruptured from the point of origin, resumed from that point of rupture, and interlinked with other such narratives.

Audre Lorde's biomythography, *Zami*, narrates Lorde's childhood, her difficult relationship with her mother Linda, a Caribbean immigrant in New York, and Lorde's subsequent self-fashioning as a black lesbian woman. The text narrates Lorde's (as well as her family's) run-ins with daily racism, her explorations of her lesbian sexuality, her subsequent adult relationships with women, and her eventual dissociation from her family of origin. It is made out of several brief narratives of black women doing things for each other in a caregiving economy. This paper will examine two instances of character-thing relationships in *Zami*. First, it will analyze Linda's confrontation with material habitats vastly altered from the material habitats of her homeland when she first moved into New York City. Through her, the paper will show how black women's everyday narratives are regularly interrupted by new (Eurocentric) material environments and things demonstrating their thingness. Black women like Linda resume these narratives by resuming connections with old (Afrocentric) material environments and building African-American material habitats resulting from a synthesis of Afrocentric and Eurocentric material environments. Second, the paper will analyze the relationship between Audre and her mother's mortar. Through this relationship, it will examine how Audre attempts to inundate her everyday narrative of using the mortar with sentimental associations of her mother's homeland and erotic desires for her mother. It will then examine how the mortar's refusal to take on such associations ruptures Audre's everyday narrative and how she attempts to resume the interrupted narrative rhizomatically. Finally, the paper will read how the characters, through rhizomatically resuming interrupted narratives and interacting with everyday things, forge relationships with other Afrocentric people and communities, with things often acting as a proxy of these communities.

Linda's New Material Environments

In the first few chapters of the biomythography, Linda finds herself uprooted from

Carriacou after the birth of her first child and the fall of the stock market because she does not have the resources to go back and settle at home eventually. Her new home, New York City, throws up several material challenges for her everyday survival. According to Judith Attfield, things exist in "conglomerate clutters" (9) of indistinguishable objects, and together these clutters form what I call material habitats that house the characters and their narratives. Within these material habitats, the characters fashion themselves – their identities, everyday narratives, and how they perceive cultural phenomena. At the same time, these material habitats provide the environment in which the characters fashion relationships with other characters and their community. By creating material habitats in which everyday narratives take place in, everyday things become indirect causative actants in the narratives. Removing a character from material habitats can completely alter, rupture, or discard their everyday narratives.

In New York City, Linda encounters a material habitat hostile to her Caribbean identity and ways of living. She faces the lack of various everyday things essential to her existing everyday life narratives. She also finds new things which alter or threaten her everyday narratives. She additionally faces situations where available samples of certain apparently familiar things exhibit their thingness by refusing to work for her, exhibiting decay or dysfunctionality, and refusing the load of signification she wishes to place on them. Things can retaliate against characters with an acute awareness of their "thingness" exhibiting their materiality and rupturing everyday narratives with their refusal to work (Brown 4). Because of these reasons, Linda finds that she fails to generate several of her everyday narratives and finds a number of them interrupted by the things themselves, either through their absence or their "thingness." For example, Linda is confused about food in New York City and how to make meaning of the available ingredients. Lorde narrates:

She knew about food. But of what use was that to these crazy people she lived among, who cooked leg of lamb without washing the meat, and roasted even the toughest beef without water and a cover? Pumpkin was only a child's decoration to them... (10)

She finds her relationships with beef and pumpkin challenged for different reasons. She finds that this new land completely ignores her earlier narratives of taming a recalcitrant piece of beef, and it is the beef that gains the upper hand by retaining its toughness. Pumpkin signified food for her, but this signification and the cook-ingredient relationship is lost in this new land where people primarily use pumpkins as Halloween décor. She does not find black-elms or black-oaks in Harlem and the rest of New York City, which she had thought she could use in the event of anyone suffering from an open cut or wound. Articles like grapefruit exhibit their thingness when mostly available as decayed or overripe. Decayed grapefruits also challenge her position as a human subject. In Carriacou, she used to throw overripe grapefruit to the pigs, but in Harlem, she finds herself in the unsavoury position of becoming a possible substitute for a pig because grapefruit ceases to be available except in a state not fit for human consumption. Lorde recalls how Linda regularly faced "some new crisis or disaster – the icebox door breaking, the electricity being shut off..." (9). She was not familiar with electricity or electrical appliances considered a mainstay of New York City. With the electricity getting shut off, it is as if the material environment rejects her and troubles her with thingness by refusing to work, even more so because she does not know how to encounter the

object (electricity) on equal terms. This lopsided relationship between her and electricity/electronic goods where the things take the upper hand is dangerous for her in an anti-black society because it demonstrates her inability to control the things and thus take care of her household. Anti-black society often used black people's inability to take care of the household to demonstrate their backwardness and justify black segregation, poverty, and oppression.

In all these examples, the linear progression of the everyday narratives of cooking beef, cooking pumpkin, healing wounds with black-elm or black-oak, or preparing grapefruit, are ruptured. They do not repeat themselves in neat cyclical structures like Linda would like them to repeat. Any attempt at persisting with these ruptured narratives makes her face two unsavoury choices. She has to admit that she cannot survive in New York City and go back home (a choice that gets blocked off for her), or she has to follow Eurocentric everyday narratives using things from Eurocentric material environments and eventually lose out on her Afrocentric identity. In either choice, she faces the possibility of being dominated in everyday life by the material environment around her. Under such circumstances, the only possible way for Linda to restart these narratives is by rhizomatically resuming them, either by finding the missing things or their substitutes, or by rejecting those things which actively interrupt her everyday narratives. She, therefore, attempts to recreate the old material habitat she had been uprooted from in her new material habitat. This recreation is a rhizomatic resumption because, in Linda's case, she does not have to go back to the ultimate point of origin of her familiar material environment (and consequent everyday narratives), which is Carriacou, but can restart from the very point of rupture — New York City.

Linda finds small pockets of Afrocentric material environment in various out-of-the-way places in the predominantly anti-black New York City. For instance, she finds "tropical fruits 'under the bridge'" (8). This finding restarts her narrative of finding fresh fruits like grapefruit and ingredients like pumpkin. She puts this pocket of Afrocentric material environment as an essential narrative location for her everyday narratives of grocery shopping and food preparation and fashions a relationship between two material environments – her home and 'under the bridge'. This relationship between her and these material environments refashions home for her – a thriving Afrocentric community exists almost subterranean to the Eurocentric habitat of anti-blackness. She also keeps up her old, Caribbean everyday narratives using Afrocentric materials in the home: "her burning of kerosene lamps...her treadle machine and her fried bananas and her love of fish..." (8). She tames the material environment of her house by bringing in her established relationships with these objects and naturalizes her presence in New York City. Further, Linda attempts to make her children used to Afrocentric material environments. She introduces her children to West Indian "Paradise Plums." She repudiates Eurocentric material environments: she forbids her children to enter candy stores or buy penny gumballs in the subway. In her household, the presence of tropical fruits, treadle machines, kerosene lamps, and a tea-tin of food gifts from Carriacou every year reminds the inhabitants that their natural material environment is Carriacou and not New York City. Lorde narrates that New York City "was a space, some temporary abode, never to be considered forever nor totally binding nor defining, no matter how much it commanded in energy and attention" (11).

Audre and her mother's mortar

Users may convert everyday things from mere utility goods and artifacts to objects endowed with sentimental, traditional, biographical and private associations. They may invest in things with the quality of "mattering." This paper borrows this idea of "mattering" from Daniel Miller. In *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, Daniel Miller states that "matter" may refer to the sentimental associations given to things by humans, drawing attention to the identities and feelings of the humans to whom the things belong to. Things may refuse these associations, thus refusing to "matter" to the characters. Linda's mortar and pestle is an ordinary, mass-produced household article, technically replaceable by readily available Puerto Rican mortars and yet rendered irreplaceable by the "mattering" Audre endows on it. In the repetitive everyday narrative of pounding spice to flavour the meat for souse, she invests fantastical associations of home and sexual union with her mother. She endows the mortar's carvings with Carriacou's tropical exoticism by likening them to tropical fruit:

To my child eyes the outside was carved in an intricate and most enticing manner. There were rounded plums and oval indeterminate fruit, some long and fluted like a banana, others ovular and end-swollen like a ripe alligator pear. (81)

Her evocation of fruit suggests "visions of delicious feasts both once enjoyed and still to come" (82), a community working on these feasts and a gamut of everyday narratives generated in arranging them. For her, making souse results from such an everyday narrative of arranging a homely feast and enjoying the results. Audre states that "the anticipated taste of the soft spicy meat had become inseparable in my mind from the tactile pleasures of using my mother's mortar" (83).

Her enticement with the fruit on the mortar's carvings also suggests her attempts at imposing her psychosexual developmental narrative onto this kitchen implement. After menstruating, the everyday narrative of pulsing the spice mix for the souse becomes a spectacular narrative of her awareness of her sexuality. She imagines that "a vital connection seemed to establish itself between the muscles of [her] fingers curved tightly around the smooth pestle in its insistent downward motion" and likened that connection to "a clitoris exposed" (89). She creates a relationship between her menstruation and the object, manipulating the pestle until "its velvety surface almost seemed to caress the liquefying mash at the bottom of the mortar" and likened it to "the tidal basin [of blood] suspended between [her hips]" (90). The mortar becomes a participant in her awareness of becoming a woman, as far as she is concerned. At the same time, she also reads the mortar's material qualities as her mother's metonymy. She describes the mortar as having "a projected public view of [her mother's self]...It stood solid and elegant" (81). Audre, therefore, replaces the material object (the mortar) in her character/thing relationship with the metonymic object of desire, her mother. Further, through the mortar's participation in Audre's celebration of her sexuality, she tries to fantasize about a connection between herself and her mother. While taking down the mortar and pestle from the kitchen cabinet, Audre fantasizes that her mother is "looking down upon [her] lying on the couch, and then slowly, thoroughly . . . touching and caressing each other's most secret places" (88). The mortar here suggests anthropomorphic qualities in Bruno

Latour's sense. According to Ben Highmore's essay "Familiar Things," Latour states that everyday things often anthropomorphically become "delegates" that "permanently [occupy] the position of a human" in doing a specific function (70).

When Linda returns to the kitchen, she reasserts the everyday relation between herself and the mortar. For her, pounding the spices of the souse is simply a chore, and her arrival brings back the everyday narrative, overriding Audre's spectacular narrative of psychosexual development and the mortar's participation in the same. To assert that the mortar has nothing to do with the meaning Audre tries to impose upon it, Linda "brought the pestle down inside the bowl of the mortar with dispatch, crushing the last of the garlic" (90). The object asserts its allegiance to its owner (Linda) and the everyday – "Thump, thump, went the pestle, purposefully, up and down in the *old familiar way*" (91) (italics mine) – and ceases to work as a quasi-sexual signpost for Audre. Linda's actions result in Audre thinking that she cannot get ideal maternal love from her mother. Consequently, the mortar also loses all associations of maternal love and sexual desire and thus ceases to matter to her. Audre comments that that was the last time she used the mortar to pound the spice for souse. The everyday narrative becomes effectively ruptured, as is the spectacular narrative of homosexual-maternal plenitude.

Audre resumes the narrative of homosexual-maternal bliss not directly through the mortar but through fruit. She carries her enticement with the fruit carved onto the mortar's surface to her sexual communion with Afrekete "Kitty," the last of her partners in the text. Kitty stands for Afrekete, the pre-Yoruban mythological mother. Cassie Primo Steele writes that "Lorde's *Zami* ends with a final scene of reunion with the mythological, sexual/spiritual mother, Afrekete, through whom Lorde regains her connections to her sexual and spiritual motherland, Africa..." (7). Afrekete and Audre notably use fruit while having sex. Their sexual activities also involve mashing the fruit with their vulvas, an action reminiscent of Audre's past everyday narrative of using the mortar to mash spices:

I held you, lay between your brown legs...as the deep undulations and tidal motions of your strong body slowly mashed ripe banana into a beige cream that mixed with the juices of your electric flesh (296).

Interestingly, Afrekete sourced the fruit from Linda's preferred material environment – the Afrocentric markets "under the bridge." The market "under the bridge" resumes Audre's spectacular narrative of maternal and women-love and represents Linda in her homoerotic affections through the mother-figure of Afrekete. Even as Linda (and the mortar) refuse Audre's fantasies of feminine sexuality, the fruit represents both of them in the fantasy of "caressing each other's most secret places" (88) because of its proximity to Audre's and Afrekete's genitalia. The fruit ultimately reveals its everyday nature after the act of lovemaking because Audre states that the seeds and skins had to be disposed of by waste collectors. This indication of mundaneness shows how, once again, Audre manages to impose associations of fantastical lesbian-maternal love onto everyday narratives of lovemaking and consumption of fruit. Further, like the mortar, the fruit connects her to Carriacou, this time with the connotation of woman-love. According to Audre, "how Carriacou women love each other is legend in Grenada" (12). Through Afrekete and the fruit, Audre resumes the broken connections to her home, Carriacou.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates how *Zami* does not read everyday things simply for the meanings invested in them by the characters. Rather, the everyday things are either inundated by or reject the characters' associations, fashioning a dynamic, bilateral, and contentious relationship between them. Things like grapefruit or the mortar rejected the Afrocentric and/or feminine associations Linda or Audre tried to put on them, rupturing their everyday narratives, while material environments like the market under the bridge and tropical fruits accepted the associations. The characters responded to their things, readjusted and resumed their everyday narratives rhizomatically, and fashioned new identities in the process. This paper hopes to introduce a new way of reading material culture in *Zami* which shows how everyday things are not just carriers of identity politics, but are also shapers and makers of everyday identity through their contentious relationships with humans, where both parties respond to one another. In *Zami*, because of the influence of everyday things, Audre became an avowed lesbian, while Linda reasserted herself as a proud African-Caribbean-American. *Zami*, therefore, shows a more complicated but ultimately more dynamic material culture in marginalized communities.

Endnotes

¹ This paper borrows this understanding of things revealing their materiality and autonomy from the character from Bill Brown's seminal "Thing Theory."

² A Reconstruction-era pamphlet by I.W. Brinkerhoff titled *Advice to Freedom* stated that "With the enjoyment of a freedman's privileges, comes also a freedman's duties and responsibilities . . . unless you are prepared to meet them with a proper spirit . . . you are not worthy of being a freedman" (Hartman 135). According to him, a black woman must conduct her household labor well to retain her status and worth as a freedwoman and her identity as a mother to her children.

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Unlocking the Self in Nawal El Saadawi's *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*

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Abstract

*Women's writing is a struggle to reclaim language in a way that will empower them. Memoir form that is known to fuse the personal and political has been embraced by an unprecedented number of women writers from the Arab region in the last quarter of 20th century. As a result, writing is emerging from places where writing about certain matters like religion and sexuality is banned and punishable. The paper analyses Nawal El Saadawi's *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*. It proposes to show how her mind paradoxically liberates itself in the confines of the jail unlocking her individual self and her unmistakable feminist identity. Consequently, her narrative acts as a site for dialogue, social change and the possibility of saying "we" as well as "I". The memoir also acts as a type of manifesto or announcement of Saadawi's interpretation of the past on behalf of a large group and as a member of the group. Saadawi's writing disrupts boundaries of public-private and personal-political and is motivated by her desire to contest dominant discourses.*

Keywords: *Memoir, prison, women, self, feminist, relational, Arab*

Introduction

Prison narratives are tales of captivity written by a prisoner during incarceration. It is an autobiographical form of writing informed with the political history of the country and the personality of the author. The narratives are political in nature in the way they offer counter-discourses to the dominant official narrative in the repressive regimes, usually responsible for the author's captivity. At the same time, they are a great storehouse of memories and bring out the individual self of the author as he or she finds ample time to look inwards and contemplate.

The area of women's autobiography is under-researched and its recent intersection with feminism is continuously enriching the feminist epistemology. Rarer still is the research on Arab Muslim women's autobiography which is unearthing interesting intellectual leaps taken by the women of the region. According to Fadia Faqir, "The need to define their position in history and locate themselves vis-a-vis the male master narrative, and to explore and formulate a separate individual identity has urged Arab women writers to write their life stories" (8). Of them, Egyptian doctor and psychiatrist Nawal El Saadawi is a pioneer and a name to reckon with. She has been the most vocal of the feminists from Egypt, or more accurately, from the entire Arab region, and is a well-known figure in the West. She began practicing medicine and writing on taboo subjects at a time when women were supposed to be silent, obedient and docile. Uninhibited and fearless, she writes back to the authoritarian state and the patriarchal society of Egypt in the face of repression and risk to her life. She is a prolific writer and her writing consists of fictional as well as non-fictional narratives. Due to her radical views and bold writings, she got dismissed from her job in the Egyptian Ministry of Health and was imprisoned in 1981 for her outspokenness against the political corruption of

President Anwar Sadat. In her own country, she is blacklisted on television and on radio and censored in national newspapers.

Memoirs from the Women's Prison was written in 1981, the year Saadawi was arrested and released by the Sadat Anwar regime. Her memoirs record the daily struggle of Saadawi with the representatives of the regime and with her isolation and subhuman conditions of the jail. It also traces her emotional and spiritual journey as she bonds with other jail inmates including political prisoners like herself as well as marginalized women. She spent nearly three months in the women's prison at the Barrages north of Cairo. The state could not raise any charges against her, still she was released only after the assassination of President Sadat and assuming of power by Hosni Mubarak. Originally written in Arabic, *Memoirs* has been translated by Marilyn Booth. Nawar Al-Hassan Golley, in her seminal work *Reading Arab Women's Autobiographies*, holds the view that *Memoirs* is a leading book as Saadawi did not have any established tradition of Arab political memoir to look up to.

Writing for Survival

Writing is the best mode of self-realization for Saadawi. Though she is already a celebrated writer, this realisation strikes her with greater force in the solitude of the prison. It is integral to Saadawi's life and personality. The memoir explores Saadawi's relation with the act of writing. Writing is described as an activity which fully consumes the author. This aspect is foregrounded in the beginning of the memoir when Saadawi is seen working on a novel and her arrest is yet to happen.

“I have freed myself completely to write it, letting everything else go for its sake. It is intractable, like unattainable love. It wants me, my entire being, mind and body, and if it can't have that it will not give itself to me at all. It wants all or nothing – it's exactly like me” (Saadawi 1).

Saadawi is aware that writing is a means to empowerment. *Memoirs* is based on Saadawi's diaries secretly maintained during her incarceration. Pen and paper were strictly kept out of bounds for the prisoners. When an inmate asked for pen and paper to write a letter to her mother, her demand was immediately turned down by a senior cell administrator. His answer “easier to give you a pistol than a pen and paper” further establishes Saadawi's belief in the might of the pen and the threat perceived by the regime from those who wield pen. “One written word in the political cell is a more serious matter than having a pistol” (73).

Her desire to write, to express herself is earnest and irrepressible. She clings to life through her pen. In the absence of pen and paper, she writes probably with an eye-brow pencil on toilet paper, on cigarette packets procured from the prison canteen. Writing in the confines of a dark dirty toilet was a daunting task but it was what Sa'adawi looked forward to. She confesses in *Memoirs*, “The pen is the most valuable thing in my life. My words on paper are more valuable to me than my life itself. More valuable than my children, more than my husband, more than my freedom” (116).

Writing is a political act, an act of defiance, in an authoritarian regime. It is a highly subversive activity in regimes where communication is strictly censored and state-sponsored. Melissa Matthes says, “Having found a way to continue to do in prison the very thing for

which she is being confined, Nawal El Saadawi understands first-hand the inter-relation among politics, power and narration” (Matthes 78). Saadawi and other political prisoners were locked in as they had criticized the government in their writings. Undeterred by her detention, Saadawi challenges the authority and its false narrative.

Many feminist critics while analysing Muslim women's autobiographical writings draw parallels between women writers and Shahrazad, the narrator of *One Thousand and One Nights*, also known in the West as *Arabian Nights*. Pauline Homsy Vinson terms Arab women's autobiographical writing as a Shahrazadian gesture to ward off death. Shahrazad is a formidable maternal precursor in the writings of Muslim women who keep referring to and reinterpreting *One Thousand and One Nights* to get back at their patriarchal societies. Saadawi, like Shahrazad, is aware of the power of narration. “Death is conquered by narrative; silence is broken by discourse. Narrative becomes indispensable for life. Shahrazad's *cogito, ergo sum* becomes I narrate, therefore, I am” (Golley 80). Story telling proved to be a strategy of survival for Shahrazad who spent her wedding night telling stories to escape the death sentence issued by Shahryar, the King. She did not want to meet the same fate as did other virgins in *One Thousand and One Nights*. The king in this narrative stung by the treachery of an adulterous wife, married a virgin every night and gave orders to kill her in the morning. Shahryar is the epitome of political and sexual power whereas Shahrazad represents female vulnerability. She is at the mercy of the cruel monarch. But she changes the rules of the game by telling 1001 stories to the king. One story leads to another and she is able to survive through her magic art of storytelling as the king keeps postponing the death sentence out of curiosity. Similarly, Saadawi is able to wriggle out of her difficult circumstances because of her wit. As such she represents the new intellectual empowered Arab Muslim woman who can stand up to any injustice. Malti-Douglas refers to Shahrazad as a prototype of the intellectual woman. “She is an intellectual wonder, who has memorized books, poetry, wisdom and more. She is knowledgeable, intelligent, wise and an adiba” (Malti-Douglas 22).

Saadawi, in her autobiography *Daughter of Isis* (1999), describes the act of writing autobiography as a “struggle against death”. Women write to keep at bay death, not only physical death but death of collective memory. Their aim is to overcome the invisibility of women. In the words of Sidonie Smith, they resist “being a non-story, a silent space, a gap in patriarchal culture” (50). Women's autobiographical texts give them an opportunity to express themselves as 'subjects' with their own selfhood to become the centres of narration. Their journey from the margins to the centre can be described as the journey of a woman, trying to become the subject of her discourse, the teller of her own story. As the focus has shifted from “women's experience as a given to the complex construction of subjectivities, the field of autobiography has become a central preoccupation and testing-ground for feminism” (Coslett 2). The subjectivity experienced by women gives them a sense of personal autonomy, continuous identity, a history and agency in the world.

Saadawi is honest and sincere in her writing. She says, “I prefer my place in prison to writing something which has not originated in my mind. The sincere word demands a courage akin to that needed to kill – and perhaps more” (116). She is critical of a colleague who is using his pen to serve and please the authorities. She quips that fearing servility, people become

servile.

The memoir is political in nature. While it is aimed at reform and positive change for women within the Egyptian society, it also writes back to the authoritarian ruler. She vehemently condemns the lack of basic human rights including the freedom of speech. Saadawi continues to deflate and deconstruct the official narrative of freedom, justice and prosperity. During her conversation with her investigator, Saadawi asserts that she preferred Emergency Law to the Law of Values as the former was at least temporary.

Sadat, though, wanted to establish the despotism permanently rather than temporarily, so he has issued perpetual laws to maintain oppression and he has given them innocent titles which are in contradiction with their actual nature. The Law of Values is no more than an abuse and desecration of true human values. (162)

Apart from writing, physical exercise and gardening introduce her to her real self. She traces her love for growing plants to her peasant lineage. She has to summon all her strength and faculties to feel alive in the precincts of jail. In the process, her inner self is unlocked.

Feminist identity and Relational Self

Memoirs from the Women's Prison has a strong feminist voice. Saadawi through her memoir excavates those elements of the “female self” which have been buried under the cultural and “patriarchal” myths of selfhood. While doing so she is engaged in shaping her own self too.

Primarily written to reconcile with her life of confinement, Saadawi quite often dips into the past to refer to instances that consolidated her rebellious and feminist self. She is reminded of her aunt's words, “A woman's place is home, husband, and children. Why do you put on airs? Are you a man” (119)? Saadawi grew up listening to the prescriptions for a woman to live modestly in a male-dominated society. Saadawi's demeanor is far from that of a conformist. “Since childhood, I have detested having the name of my grandfather attached permanently to my name. I loved my mother, though, and I loved her name, Zaynab” (118). Saadawi is looking for a matriarchal tradition and wants to give invisible women a presence and a voice. An inmate Boduur, who swears by prayer and other Islamic rituals, has completely internalized the superior attitudes of patriarchy. “Woman is nearer to Satan than man – through Eve, Satan was able to reach Adam. Woman was created from a crooked rib and she becomes straightened only through blows which hurt. Her duty is to listen and obey without making any objections – even a blink or a scowl” (132). Saadawi challenges such notions and teases Boduur out of her wits. She is also opposed to the idea of terming the ruler's wife as Egypt's first lady. She ardently believes that “a woman should be honoured for her own efforts, not because she is the wife of a man who has influence and power” (78). Thus Saadawi, through her discourse, encourages women to empower themselves and not to gloat over the power borrowed from men.

While Saadawi belongs to a privileged class, she is able to relate to women from the margins of society. “Her experience thus supports the feminist argument that women and minority groups tend to forge collective rather than individualistic notions of identity”

(Vinson 82). Like Shahrazad, she can empathise with other women who are not as fortunate as her. There are sub-narratives of the less privileged women embedded within the main narrative. Saadawi makes room for women from the other cell. She articulates the protesting voices of such illiterate women as Dhouba, Sabah and Fathiyya. Fathiyya-the-Murderess is a peasant woman who is in jail for killing her husband. She found the man raping their daughter and killed him with a hoe. She utters one of the most feminist speeches in *Memoirs*, says Golley.

I killed my husband for the sake of myself, in order to save myself from living with a man who was oppressing me. He wronged me all my life, and I served him like a slave serves a master. He never in his life said one pleasant word to me. My life with him was black from the first day to the last. Every day, I'd think, "I'll kill him", until I saw him with my daughter Haniyya. A person can't kill easily, or in a single day or night. The whole time I lived with him I thought about killing him. (*Memoirs* 115)

Saadawi identifies with Fathiyya in terms of both physical appearance and the rage that a woman feels in a patriarchal set up. "My heart beats as if with the same force which powers her heart. My eyes shine with the very same lightning sparkle. My hand as it grips the pen, is like her hand when she took hold of the hoe and struck the blow" (116). Women project a relational self while they write as members of a group, community or nation. They celebrate the sense of solidarity and collectivity in their autobiographical works. "El-Sadaawi's text of her memoirs from jail emphasizes the community spirit and the interpersonal exchanges among the women" (Grace 196). The prison represents a community of women who are repressed and victimised by the system. They laugh and cry together. To lift the ebbing spirits of her fellow political prisoners Awatif, Latifa, Amina and Safinaz, Saadawi would at times break into the slogan, "We will not die, or if we are to die we won't die silently, we won't go off in the night without a row, we must rage and rage, we must beat the ground and make it shudder. We won't die without a revolution" (36).

The focus of the memoirs is not solely the individual self but a relational self which derives its power from the community. Golley points out that the title *Memoirs* also reflects the polyphonous nature of the narrative. It is not meant to heroize Saadawi only. The work brings to attention the term relational autobiography proposed by Susan Stanford Friedman in 1985 to describe the kind of self constructed by women, a subject who is interdependent and identifies with the community in contrast to the autonomous individual subject of men's autobiographies. Saadawi's memoirs show women bonding successfully and meaningfully across ethnicities, classes, nations and races.

Conclusion

On the surface, *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* documents the travails of Saadawi in a women's prison. On a deeper level, it explores how her individual self and relational self-alternate with and fuse into each other to give rise to her composite self. Wielding a pen and writing down words lend her a formidable and assertive identity. Given that she was detained for writing against the state, her pen is her power. Her wit, command over words, her opinions and outspokenness cement her identity as unique, indomitable and independent. But as she

extends her “self” to other jail mates by including their stories in the narrative and speaking for them, she projects a collective identity, a common strategy of feminist writers. Golley aptly describes the nature of the memoir, “Saadawi's narrative fluctuates between a desire to identify her individual self, on the one hand, and the need to relate this self to the community of women on the other” (153). Undoubtedly, Saadawi's memoir is a clarion call for revolution in a repressive political and social system.

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A Feminist Perspective on Dystopia: Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*

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Abstract

*In contemporary times, where the gulf between speculative fiction and political reality continues to straiten, feminist dystopian fiction has gained immense popularity. The postmodern dystopian fiction by feminist writers not only offers new insights but demands new ways of seeing from its readers. In recent years, there has been a growing wave of female-centred dystopian novels, raising uncomfortable questions about pervasive gender inequality, misogyny, and violence against women. This paper aims to analyse Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* within the theoretical framework of feminist dystopia. It demonstrates how Butler challenges the predominantly white and masculinist discourse of dystopia by depicting a strong black female protagonist who embodies hope and who strives toward maintaining a utopian impulse within an otherwise bleak dystopian society.*

Keywords: *feminist dystopia, gendered violence, hope, Earthseed, Acorn*

Feminist dystopian fiction is a doubly oppositional genre that challenges both the patriarchal mindset of the culture and the potently patriarchal assumptions and traditions of the dystopian genre itself. The dystopian genre was traditionally dominated by male writers who depicted an imaginative society almost exclusively inhabited by men. Even if they portrayed any female characters, they were moulded “in the stereotypical feminine role of accessories ... [and] remain[ed] flat cardboard characters, entirely taken in by the system or, at the most, initiate[d] the hero's rebellion, before receding to the background” (Mohr 34). It was only with the beginnings of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s that women writers somewhat revitalised this male-dominated genre by challenging the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. The second wave of feminism, prompted by classics such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), and Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), contributed to the radical intellectual energy of the period through its disruptive revelations about women's sexuality and reproduction. This stimulated feminist writers such as Marge Piercy, Ursula K. Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Octavia E. Butler and the like, to create dystopian worlds in which they more forcefully addressed issues such as reproduction, sexual violence against women, and women's agency.

Through their works, these feminist writers sought to modify the stock conventions of dystopia — patriarchy, technological advances, exploitation, extreme collectivism, by presenting them from a “feminist angle,” and by exposing their “interrelation with questions of gender hierarchy, biological reproduction, and women's rights; in short, with sexual politics” (Mohr 36). They contributed to the “exploration and subsequent breakdown” of universalist assumptions and stereotypes “about gendered identities by addressing, in a dialectical engagement with tradition, themes such as the representation of women and their bodies, reproduction and sexuality, and language and its relation to identity” (Baccolini, “Persistence” 520). Their works incorporate issues such as

sexual polarization, restrictive gender roles, female textual/actual absence, the cult of (superior) masculinity and the essential inferiority of femininity, lesbianism/homosexuality, misogyny, patriarchy, patriarchal views of

femininity, the male gaze, patrilinearity, male violence against women, female complicity, and sexism inherent in phallogocentric language. (Mohr 36)

Ildney Cavalcanti applies the term feminist dystopia to those texts which envisage “imaginary spaces” that one would characterise as unpleasant for women, marked “by the suppression of female desire ... and by the institution of gender-inflected oppressive orders” (49). In discussing the feminist dystopias of 1990s, Jane Donawerth identifies two chief characteristics of these texts:

- a) the urban apocalyptic spaces, repressive governments, dysfunctional families problematic sex, prominent machines, and liberated gender roles that are “symbols for the dangers and possibilities of women's freedom”; and
- b) a nonlinear, fragmented, postmodern form that is often modelled on the slave narrative. (qtd. in Baccolini, “Useful” 129).

She further suggests that feminist dystopias exhibit “a place of birth” for hope and “political renewal” (Donawerth, “Feminist” 62). The “presence of memory” is also identified as a distinguishing feature of feminist dystopias. The “[r]ecovering of history ... and individual and collective memory,” Raffaella Baccolini argues, operate as potent tools of resistance for the protagonists of these texts (“Useful” 130).

In an endeavour to subvert the notion of “a superior larger-than-life heroism,” feminist dystopian writers “relocate heroism in smaller, individual, and harder to recognize courageous deeds” which would not conventionally be considered as heroic (Mohr 272). They portray imaginary worlds in which the female heroes engage in a quest that focuses “on the self in relation to communal goals” and strive to “achieve societal transformation only as members of and with the help of their ... community” (Mohr 273). Rejecting the traditional sexist classification of women in terms of their reproductive or sexual capacity, feminist dystopias construct a narrative space in which the female body can be transformed from a static object of representation to a potent subject of the text. These texts are “triggered by the author's desire for an elsewhere,” where women, rather than passively conforming to their assigned roles in society, try to assert autonomy over their bodies and their lives (Cavalcanti “Writing” 62). In doing so, they present a scenario where women, irrespective of the attempts to suppress them, “have begun to break silences, to find their individual and collective voices” (Jones 7).

The “struggle to retain a place and voice in discourse” is also an important characteristic of many feminist dystopias, in which the socio-political resistance of the protagonist is often “mirrored by a battle for expression and control” over language (Mahoney 51). Feminist dystopian writers demonstrate language as a powerful tool and a potent medium “to achieve power and subjectivity” (qtd. in Donawerth, “Genre” 43). Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan argue that feminist dystopian texts also demonstrate what could be termed as “genre blurring,” thereby opposing the essentialism of hegemonic ideology (7). This notion of an “*impure*” text with “permeable borders that allow contamination from other genres” enables these texts to renovate “the resisting nature of science fiction” and make it “multi-oppositional” (Baccolini, “Gender” 18). Traditionally viewed as a bleak, depressing genre with little or no scope for hope within the story, feminist dystopias also allow protagonists and, by extension, readers to hope through their “ambiguous, open endings” and their resistance to closure (Baccolini and Moylan 7).

Initially, dystopian fiction was primarily dominated by white authors who paid “little more than token obeisance to the plurality of society” and “hardly addressed questions of

racial or ethnic discrimination” (Rutledge 243). Dunja Mohr states that the appeal of the “women of colour” for “an aesthetic representation of human diversity” was “anticipated and answered” by the African American writer Octavia Butler who introduced “strong black, female characters” to the genre of speculative fiction (26). Butler “initiated the Black feminist phase of African-American” science fiction and rejuvenated the genre by writing stories where the protagonists are both female and black (Rutledge 244). She challenged the traditional portrayal of women as “rewards” or “terrible villainesses,” giving black women characters a voice and an integral role in the plot (Butler, “Black” 14).

The novel *Parable of the Sower* (1993) is a part of an unfinished trilogy, the Earthseed series, written by Octavia E. Butler. “As the clarion work in the oeuvre of the first African American woman to be lauded in the science fiction genre,” the novel is widely acclaimed and won the *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year Award in the year 1994 (Stanley 150). In one of her speeches at MIT on February 19, 1998, Butler suggested that the novel was contemplated as a “cautionary tale,” “an if-this-goes-on story” to warn readers that if the future situation of the book is “anywhere near true, we’re all in trouble.” The future dystopian Californian society depicted by Butler in the novel is on the brink of utter destruction. Drought, frequent storms, and tornadoes are obliterating a large portion of the population. There are scores of “illiterate, jobless, homeless” people who lack access to basic food supplies, and “decent sanitation or clean water” (53). With a state infrastructure that has almost utterly failed, America has devolved into an “oozing sore,” “a carcass covered with too many maggots,” and is “barely a nation at all anymore” (109, 9, 21). Multinational corporations and unconstrained free-market capitalism rule the country, eventuating in everything being “privatized sold off” (27).

Parable of the Sower follows Cavalcanti's classification of feminist dystopias by portraying an unpleasant dystopian world for women, characterised by the “suppression of female desire ... the institution of gender-inflected oppressive orders,” “restrictive gender roles ... misogyny, patriarchy ... [and] male violence against women” (49; Mohr 36). In the dystopian world of the novel, women are subjected to perpetual violence not only by society but also within their respective households. Rape has become a social norm, a potent tool for exploiting and dominating women. The protagonist of the novel Lauren Olamina enunciates the pathetic condition of women on the streets in one of her diary entries, where she mentions how during one of her trips outside her walled community, she came across “a little girl, naked, maybe seven years old with blood running down her bare thighs” and a young, filthy, and naked woman who appeared so disoriented that it felt as if “she had been raped so much that she was crazy” (13, 9). Later on her journey to the North, Lauren meets two white sisters, Allison and Jillian Gilchrist, who had bruises all over their bodies and were “running away from a life of prostitution” into which their father was forcing them (237).

The walled community of Robledo, where Lauren resides in the first part of the novel, too, is a male supremacist society where women are restricted to their traditional roles of “tak[ing] care of babies and cook[ing]” (53). All the girls are expected to “get married, have babies” once they grow up a little – a “dream ... [which] for [a] woman [is] only a dead-end of greater responsibility and fewer possibilities” (87; Stillman 20). Clara Escoda Agusti asserts that in “social signification,” a woman is always “produced ... as the 'other' on which the very existence of man depends, as much as other asymmetrical relations: that of exploitation, privilege, and patriarchy” (353). Butler projects this chauvinistic attitude through the character Richard Moss who “has put together his own religion – a combination of the Old Testament and historical West African practices” and who proudly claims that “God

wants men to be patriarchs, rulers and protectors of women, and fathers of as many children as possible" (36). Moss openly practices polygamy, has taken three wives, and even bullies his own daughters, prohibiting them from participating in any community activity.

In "The Feminist Dystopia of the 1990s: Record of Failure, Midwife of Hope," Jane Donawerth argues that "[t]he slave narrative is often a model for 1990s [feminist] dystopias" (49). In *Parable of the Sower*, Butler follows the narrative pattern of traditional slave narratives by portraying Lauren and her group of followers - most of whom are ex-slaves - as undertaking a journey from south to north in search of a safe haven. This "crew of a modern underground railroad," as Lauren calls them, travelling to the North in search of possibilities and freedom echoes the "African American slave myth that the path to freedom lay in following the North Star" (292; Allen 1363). The novel also evokes the classic storyline of slave narratives in which "the slave learns to read and write despite the master's prohibition" (Dubey 120). One of Lauren's converts, Travis Charles Douglas, narrates how his mother used to "sneak" some books from her master's library for him because the master would not "let [him] near them" (218). Sandra Govan recognises many parallels between the novel and the emerging body of neo-slave narratives, such as the use of "first-person voice; one person records both his/her personal history, his/her reflections on the horrific conditions of slavery, and the larger history of other enslaved people in the immediate community or ... in a given region" which she argues that Lauren's diary certainly addresses.

In *Parable of the Sower*, Butler employs the notion of "genre blurring," identified by Baccolini and Moylan as a key characteristic of feminist dystopias, by combining "survivalist science fiction with the diary and the slave narrative" (7; Baccolini, "Gender" 18). Through Lauren's diary, Butler illustrates the efforts undertaken by people to survive in the violent and harsh circumstances of this dystopian society and simultaneously invites readers to engage in Lauren's process of self-awakening. Donna Spalding Andréolle asserts that the novel describes "the ascent to divine status of a young, half African-American, half Mexican-American woman" and consequently "falls into the category of the female *bildungsroman*, or female novel of self-awakening and self-fulfillment" (119). It chronicles Lauren's transformation from a young adolescent living within the boundaries of a walled community under her father's supervision to a strong-willed, independent woman who forms her own community based on the principles of her new belief system. Tom Moylan states that through the blurring of genres, Butler "generates a counter-narrative in which a diverse group of individuals develops through struggle into a political collective that ... constitutes a historically and theologically informed utopian alternative to the economic and political power that barely controls this broken society" (223).

According to Baccolini, the "[r]ecover of history ... and individual and collective memory" create "awareness and [a sense of] responsibility" within the protagonists of feminist dystopias and serve as a "part of a social project of hope" (Baccolini, "Useful" 130; Baccolini, "Persistence" 521). Through several allusions to African-American history in the novel, Butler aims to recover "the 'nightmare of history' whose memory has been erased from the everyday life of the privileged" (Canavan 4). She "conceptualises time as a cycle ... a 'boomerang,' to denote the violent nature of the spiraling of history" (Allen 1354). On hearing the horrendous accounts of their fellow travellers who have endured varied forms of slavery, from debt slavery and sexual slavery to indentured servitude, one of the characters, Bankole, observes how history is repeating itself in modern times. He recollects "the early 1990s while [he] was in college ... [and had] heard about cases of growers doing some of this holding people against their wills and forcing them to work without pay. Latins in California, blacks

and Latins in the south” (292). By establishing parallels between old and new forms of slavery, Butler foregrounds the need to embrace the past and “never forget the lessons [it] has to teach us” lest we will be doomed “to repeat its mistakes” (Allen 1364). According to Marlene D. Allen, Lauren “stands as an antidote to history” as she is eager “to learn the lessons of the past” without being trapped in it and is determined to utilise “these lessons as survival tools” (1358). She aspires to acquire practical knowledge and, therefore, avidly reads books on survival, guns and shooting and handling medical emergencies, in fact, “whatever [she] can that might help [her] survive” in the outside world (58). In “Brave New Worlds: A Few Rules for Predicting the Future,” Butler staunchly maintains that “the one thing that [she] and [her] main characters never do when contemplating the future is give up on hope. The very act of trying to look ahead to discern possibilities and offer warnings is in itself an act of hope” for her protagonists (165).

Feminist dystopias challenge patriarchal stereotypes by portraying strong female characters who reject society's ascribed feminine roles and aspire to exercise autonomy over their bodies. Lauren condemns the prevailing conservative gender roles of her society that confine women to domestic duties and prevent them from learning any self-defence techniques because it is believed that the responsibility to protect women lies in the hands of their fathers and husbands. In order to increase her chances of survival and protect herself from rape and violence perpetrated against women, Lauren decides to cross-dress so that she can pass as a man on her northward journey. By resorting to gender passing, Lauren “does not surrender to the invisibility or vulnerability of her sex, but she demonstrates her ability to understand gender not as essential, but as performative She understands her body as a site of political discourses and as a fluid space where gender categories are not mutually exclusive” (Agusti 355). Butler also depicts Lauren as suffering from hyperempathy syndrome, “an 'organic delusional syndrome'” as doctors call it, which makes her “feel what [she] see[s] others feeling or what [she] believe[s] they feel” (12). Patricia Melzer asserts that hyperempathy “blurs and shifts boundaries and discloses a stable, autonomous identity to be a myth [it] becomes a symbol against the binary construction of self and other and thus constitutes a crucial metaphor for re-defining social relations” (45).

In the novel, Butler adheres to Dunja Mohr's notion of female heroes of feminist dystopias who reject “larger-than-life heroism,” and embark on a quest that focuses “on the self in relation to communal goals” by portraying Lauren as an “ordinary Every woman who develops ... into a 'reluctant hero' who values survival as a crucial heroic act” (272). She is unfailingly considerate not only of her own survival but that of her entire community. She dismisses the inertia and apathy that orthodox Christianity propagates and firmly upholds the belief that “[w]orship is no good without action. With action, it's only useful if it steadies you, focuses your efforts, eases your mind” (219). Contrary to the elders in her community who believe that “a big-daddy-God or a big-cop-God or a big-king-God” will deliver them from their miserable condition, Lauren contends that “[i]t isn't enough for [people] to just survive, limping along, playing business as usual while things get worse and worse. If that's the shape [they] give to God, then someday [they] must become too weak ... to defend [them]selves ... and [eventually they]ll be wiped out” (15, 76).

To counteract institutional Christianity, Lauren establishes her own belief system, Earthseed, based on the central premise: “God is Change.” Earthseed emerges as a “psychological and spiritual coping device,” which Lauren practises “to resolve spiritual contradictions between her emerging faith and the chaotic politics of the outside world” (Tweedy). While talking to one of her converts Lauren postulates that “[t]he Destiny of

Earthseed is to take root among the stars It's a destiny we'd better pursue if we hope to be anything other than smooth-skinned dinosaurs here today, gone tomorrow, our bones mixed with the bones and ashes of our cities" (222). She believes that this concept of Destiny will provide humanity with "[a] unifying, purposeful life" on Earth, and the prospect of heaven, "[a] real heaven, not mythology or philosophy" for themselves and their offspring (261). Michael Brandon McCormack states that through Earthseed, Lauren offers "a resignification of eschatological hope that is simultaneously committed to building a community of collaboration that works toward both collective survival and the mending of creation, while at the same time casting a vision for new beginnings beyond the present world" (22-3). Along her journey to the North, Lauren focuses on integrating more potential allies into her group to create her first Earthseed community once they arrive at a safer place. Marlene D. Allen describes Lauren as a "Community-Reliant Individual" who "formulates a world view whose primary tenet is to 'embrace diversity'" and who establishes a society which includes "black, white, Asian, and Latino, rich and poor, gay and straight" members (1359; Phillips 308). She even convinces her lover Bankole to take her group along with her to his farm where she can "begin something purposeful and constructive" in a world which is otherwise "falling apart" (275).

The novel follows the vein of feminist dystopian texts which illustrate the protagonist's socio-political resistance and her "struggle to retain identity through a private language or text" (Mahoney 75). Lauren discerns how people reach back to religious texts in times of crisis and, therefore, compiles the doctrines of her belief system in a notebook which she later calls *Earthseed: The Book of the Living*. Through this text, Lauren aims to assist people "in the[ir] immediate and earthly needs of . . . survival" and lead them towards enacting social change and realising their dream of settling in the stars (Tweedy). Lauren, thus, emerges as "the new American black prophetess who creates her own interracial text so that following generations can look up to her as the new Moses" (Manuel 120). This "philosophical-ethical meta-narrative" empowers her to gain "control over the means of language, over representation and interpellation," which is a pivotal weapon in the resistance of the protagonists of feminist dystopias (Thaler 69; Moylan 149).

The narrative further echoes the tradition of feminist dystopias that maintain "a utopian impulse" or a speck of hope within the text by virtue of their "ambiguous, open endings" (Baccolini, "Gender" 18). At the close of the novel, Butler not only portrays Lauren and her group as surviving the social and political upheaval but also envisions Lauren as sowing the seeds of the first Earthseed community Acorn. The novel, therefore, "resists closure and opens a space for hope" with the establishment of Acorn, which is based on values, such as "learn[ing] to shape God with forethought, care, and work; to educate and benefit their community, their families, and themselves" (Baccolini, "Gender" 27; 261). By closing the novel with Jesus's parable of the sower, Butler establishes Lauren as "a new Christ, the sower of the new seeds of Christianity, after the Armageddon which destroys the wicked civilization that has abandoned the founding beliefs of the nation" (Andreolle 120). Moylan suggests that through the novel, Butler

offers an overtly collective narrative of political development and creates an evident utopian horizon in her critical dystopian contribution [Her] willingness to explore the empowering force of a spiritually motivated but materially transcendent vision that is rooted in difficulty and difference allows her to posit a politicizing process that produces a vulnerable but viable utopian alternative by the end of this first book in the series. (237)

Instead of depicting Acorn as an ideal utopia, Butler concludes the novel ambiguously by offering only a “vague blueprint of what, ideally, ought to be” (Phillips 307). Since she staunchly believed that imperfect humans could never create a perfect society, she uses Acorn as an emblematic representation of the “most logical way to halt the damage we're doing to the Earth and to ourselves as humans” (Butler et al. 75). Through this feminist dystopia, she challenges the readers to question and consider the issues of their present world, while also highlighting a possible vision of the future that could be valuable in guiding humanity. Further, by using a black female protagonist who takes the reins of the society into her own hands and steers humanity towards a possibly better future, Butler introduces “the isms of race and sex” into the dystopian genre, thereby “incorporat[ing] and re-affirm[ing] the Black experience, while articulating visions of a future that addresse[s] both hopes and concerns of the Black community” (Foster 38; Tweedy).

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**Landscape and Seascape: A New Ecological Paradigm in Tim Winton's
*An Open Swimmer***

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Abstract

*Australian literature emerges after the white settlers bring their language to the country. It became popular later in the eighteenth century. The geography and language of Australia are reflected in almost all Australian fiction. The most appropriate topic for discussion in Australian fiction is landscape and seascape ecology. Ethnoecology is the study of society and its relationships with one another. It is kinship, or the intertwined expressions of humans and the natural world. This ethnoecology deals with science to form an interdisciplinary concept called ethnobiology (ethnobotany + ethnozoology). Ethnozoology is the study of “faunistic and cultural diversity, which reflects the range of interactions between people and animals” (Alves and Souto 209). Tim Winton is a well-known novelist of contemporary Australian fiction. His debut novel was *An Open Swimmer*, which was published in 1981. The novel dealing with both the landscape and seascape of Western Australia, revolves around the relationship among Jerra, his friend Sean, and an old man. Jerra's search for a pearl from the head of a king-sized fish (whale) was the novel's central theme. This study provides an ethnographic representation of the human-animal connection. The researcher aims to provide insight into man's relationship with the natural world and how ethnological connections are applicable to both landscape and seascape in terms of human emotions and their knowledge of nature and the environment.*

Keywords: *Ethnoecology, Tim Winton, Fish, Pearl, Nature, Landscape, Seascape*

Australian literature in English language originated in 1788, and it has covered the duration till now. This literature commences with the emotions and interpretations of Australian-born aborigines just after European settlement. However, most Australian literature reflects the country's scenery and language. There are two types of writers in Australia: aborigines and non-English speakers. Both groups of individuals have lost their homelands and write in an alien language. The works are about their loss of language and culture, as well as their identity and alienation from their birthplace. The present-day Australian literature reflects “a continuing opposition between the interests of country-dwellers and those of city-dwellers” (Goodwin 03). Contemporary Australian writers write about the people, culture, and social injustices that are currently influencing the country. Every novel has a landscape or waterscape as its backdrop. As an outcome, the most appropriate topics to be explored in Australian fiction are landscape and seascape ecology. Ecocriticism aims to examine the interaction between human life and the natural world. Ecocriticism gives rise to a wide interdisciplinary scientific field. According to Cheryl Glotfelty, “Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical

environment” (Glotfelty xviii). In literature, eco-critics discover the fact of natural exploitation and how people are attracted towards nature in terms of natural interaction.

The word “ethno” is derived from the Greek term “ethnos,” which signifies nation. The word “ethnoecology” was used to describe the study of people in connection with ecology. Harold Conklin coined the term in 1954. According to Julio A. Hurrell, “Ethnoecology must be considered an ethnoscience that studies the knowledge systems of local people about their own relationships with their environment” (Hurrell, Stampella and Doumecq 169). From then till today, ecology has engulfed the whole of life and been immersed in literature. Ecology's inspiration has led to ecocriticism, and the consequence has been eco-consciousness. Eco is the antithesis of ego in terms of an individual perspective. The human mind, which includes thought and will, is separated from the natural world. Anthropocentric and biocentric are terms used to describe the phenomenon. Anthropocentric studies are ego-centered, whereas biocentric studies are eco-centered. Human beings are part of biomes, yet humans frequently fail to recognize ecology in favour of ego. Ecocriticism echoes this optimistic view. A comprehensive study of ecocriticism will engage a person in environmental knowledge and lead to eco-consciousness. Eco-consciousness is a love for the environment, which is expressed through the ethnological idea in Tim Winton's *An Open Swimmer*.

Tim Winton is an Australian aboriginal author who writes both adult and children's fiction. He was born in 1960 in Karrinyup, Western Australia, and attended the Western Australian Institute of Technology for his education. Tim had a desire to write stories. During his studies, he penned a few short stories. At the age of 21, he was awarded the Australian/Vogel Literary Award (1981) for his unpublished novel, *An Open Swimmer*, for an Australian author younger than 35 years of age. In 1982, he published his debut novel. Winton was known for winning the Miles Franklin Award four times for his well-received work. “Tim believes that nature is a part of everybody and we need to look after it, even the mean and the ugly animals” (Lorrie). He is concerned about society and the environment, which is reflected in almost all of his works. In 2003, the Australian Society of Authors gave him the medal for his environmental concerns.

The first novel by Winton was *An Open Swimmer*. The background of this novel is set in the south-east of Western Australia. Almost every novel by Winton features the Australian environment. This novel also depicts the landscape and the seascape. The tale is set in the coastal region for over half the time. The central theme of this novel is the individual's interaction with nature. Jerra Nilsam, the protagonist, is at the heart of the action. Sean (Jerra's friend) and the old man are the two other major characters. Jerra and Sean went on a camping excursion to the sea, where they set up camp and enjoyed their vacation. Sean isn't interested in fishing, but Jerra is. Jerra recalls his fishing trips with his father in the past. His ultimate goal is to obtain a pearl from a colossal fish. This indicates Jerra's affinity for the sea. At their camping site, Jerra and Sean met an old man who was living in a shack on the beach. The old man approached them and struck up a discussion with them. Jerra was eager to converse with the elderly man about fishing. Jerra, Sean, and the old man conversed about the variety of fish they had seen. Their debate progressed to fishing and hunting, and they discussed how a large fish dies. “Hard silver and black, flat against the boards, laced with salty pearls, glistening.

The gills lifting ponderously, straining, lifting, falling. A fingertip on the smooth eye. Short, guttural death grunts. Tears of blood tracking the deck. The sleek silver of scales, sinews in the tail wearing to a feeble spasm” (Winton 23). In this work, Winton vividly depicts the mortality of whales as well as human feelings toward these creatures. Jerra's quest for a pearl in the fish head is a metaphor for his quest for purpose in his life.

Jerra and the old man discussed the variety of fish in the ocean. They both enjoy fishing and have shared their fishing experiences. They swapped fish names beginning with the letter A. This demonstrates the importance of fish in a man's life. When compared to living in the city, Jerra's life at sea is quite different. He loved fishing, but he couldn't afford to live in the city and work a full-time job. His mother wished for him to work and marry. On the other hand, he had a different kind of fascination. His affinity for the ocean and rough sea creatures stems from his concern for the environment. The novel is a reflection on nature and the domestic world. The human emotion towards nature is reflected through the character Jerra. The novel is set both in the landscape and the seascape. Once Jerra is in Nedland in his two-storey house, he recollects his past memory of being in North Beach. When Jerra was up in the middle of the night, he'd, “lie listening to the tide coming in at Cottesloe; it was six miles away, his father said, but he could hear it, anyway. Now all he heard was the traffic on Stirling Highway and the long breath of the downstairs air conditioner” (Winton 67). This illustrates how the natural world alters as culture progresses. Jerra wanted to leave the city and return to the western shore, where he could enjoy the cool breeze and the approaching ocean tides while doing his favourite fishing job.

The rise of civilization and human avarice have resulted in a significant flaw in the ecological process. Natural resources are viewed as a tangible product and are utilized as a byproduct for the development of culture. According to Peter Barry, nature is categorized into four types. “The first area is known as the 'wilderness' (deserts, oceans, uninhabited continents). The second is 'the scenic sublime' (forests, lakes, mountains, cliffs, waterfalls). The third area is 'the countryside' (hills, fields, woods). The last and final area is 'the domestic picturesque' (parks, gardens, lanes)” (Barry 246). The wilderness refers to areas of the continent that are unconstrained. The seascape is referred to as a wilderness area since it is 'pure' nature. It plainly shifts to 'culture' when it travels to the fourth stage the domestic picturesque. The middle areas the scenic sublime and the countryside are rich in both culture and nature. It portrays the development of culture and modernity. People change their minds when they are in need of shelter and provisions for life. Here, the scenic sublime is about the people's need to live. Fishermen are in desperate need of fish, so they go deep into the ocean in search of it, which is a need for them to economically live a stable life. In this novel, Jerra's search for fish refers to the area of the scenic sublime.

The development of greed in human, leads to the countryside. Here, there is almost culture and a little nature. Jeera's greed to get a pearl from the fish is the only use of Jerra's fishing expenditure. The cultural changes thus portray how humans harm nature. When exploring the fourth stage, the domestic picturesque, there is only culture. Jerra hunts sea creatures for his greed, and there is a culture behind it. But it shifts when human emotions arise. People reconstruct nature when they realise that nature is necessary for human life. Here, Jerra leaves the fish in the ocean after realising the fact. The struggle of the fish at the

edge of her death makes Jerra eco-conscious. Humans have colonized the ocean as a result of cultural progress and population growth. People use advanced tools to make artificial islands in the water, which has an impact on the ocean's wilderness. People also hunt marine creatures for their own greed and economic gain, resulting in the extinction of pure nature.

There is modernity in the landscape and nature in the seascape. Jerra was drawn to the sea's natural beauty and desired to return to it; he shuns city life. Thus, the concept of seascape originates from landscape ecology. Jerra's recollection of the sea elicits human emotion towards nature. "Seascapes are defined as spatially heterogeneous and dynamic spaces that can be delineated at a wide range of scales in time and space" (Pittman 06). This novel demonstrates this assertion by focusing on the seascape and landscape. Even though he is in the city, Jerra recalls his time at sea. Both the landscape and the seascape shared similar characteristics. But the creatures of the sea are more distinct than those of the land. This novel is about biotic species, both aquatic and terrestrial. The main character in this tale is a fish, as well as certain biotic plants found in the water, such as coral reefs, phytoplankton, and other algae and bacteria. As a matter of fact, the work is regarded as an ethnological fiction. The novel explores the relationship between humanity and ocean creatures.

Jerra's ultimate mission is to obtain a pearl from a giant fish. It's a metaphor for Jerra's quest for meaning in his life. A pearl is a hard stone that surrounds and protects the brain of a fish. Jerra's connection to the sea and the surrounding environment is evident throughout the novel, as "he walked out over the dry reef, over the rocks soft with algae and kelp. . . He picked off a couple of small abalone and sliced the white meat from the little ear-shaped shells" (Winton 160). This describes how he coexists with nature. He enjoys being near the water and deep-sea fishing. The environment is vast, providing opportunities for both humans and animals to thrive. According to ethnoecology, "in both urban and rural areas, there is a great diversity of interactions between people and animals" (Alves and Souto 209). The environment can only survive because of these interactions. If there is a loss of interaction between humans and animals in the environment, the ecosystem will suffer immensely.

In this novel, Jerra had a healthy interaction with sea animals (fish, gulls, etc.). His enjoyment is fishing, and his relationship with these natural creatures explores the integration between human and nature. Thus, these interactions provide an ethnological connection which is focused through this literary study. Jerra's ethnographic connection can be found on both land and sea. Jerra's friendship with Sean and his care for Sean's mentally ill mother is revealed in the land, and Jerra's love for his father and family helps to establish the ethnological connection. His relationship with fish and his affection for the old man can be found in the seascape. Ethnoecology is thus defined as a local understanding of the land, water, and people who live there.

According to the first ecological law proposed by Barry Commoner, "Everything is connected to everything else" (Glotfelty xix). This law is immersed as there is a long fight between Jeera and the fish. This is a place where Jerra and the fish start to integrate. He went fishing with his father in the hopes of catching a king-sized fish and extracting a pearl from it. He was successful in catching the largest gunwhale. He fell upon the fish by holding it tightly. The fin spikes scratched his chest to a great extent. But his hold was so tight that finally he caught the fish and wanted to open it for a pearl located in the head of the fish. His inner

sensations and emotions hit him like a sack of rocks. When Jerra saw this massive fish, he didn't want to hack it up for pearls. He wished that the fish would be alive again. Naturally, with emotion, he left the fish unharmed. This depicts a human's true feelings and emotions about these sea species. Thus, the integration between Jerra and the fish highlights how humans, particularly those who live in natural surroundings, have a strong relationship with the environment. This is an example of integrated living as an ecological phenomenon.

While fishing, Jeera saw several ruthless whalers and longed to catch the same fish on his own. Because humans are inherently drawn to nature, their feelings for animals grow naturally. Thus, Jerra's feelings and attraction towards these species change. Jerra catches a massive turrum “that time as a child in the boat, not letting it be cut up. A turrum should have one, his father said, but Jerra said no, seeing the eye staring again and the stricken mate diving at the moment of death” (Winton 43). This demonstrates how these aquatic creatures affect human emotions.

To be environmentally conscious, the ethnoecological paradigm is used, in which humans can integrate with nature either via their own emotional intention or through the application of some coercive regulations. According to this study, the ecological viewpoint of humanity is strengthened when they encounter a shift in nature. People should adapt to nature rather than let nature adapt to them. Ecology thus emphasizes “the complex set of relationships between organisms and their environments” (Hurrell, Stampella and Doumecq 164). There is enough space on the planet for humans, but due to population expansion, people are encroaching into animal habitats, posing a serious threat to natural resources. When they are disturbed, they retaliate by attacking humans, whom they perceive as a threat. As a consequence, human forces retaliate against animals, resulting in hunting.

For commercial reasons of economic expansion, people kill or hunt animals and huge species. This process causes destruction in nature. Due to this effect, nature changes its character and expresses its rage towards humans. This is the moment when the human conscience awakens and they take action to defend the environment. Two sorts of alterations are discussed in this study. Self-change is the first step. When they perceive nature's deterioration, they experience human emotions. For example, as Jerra catches the fish in the novel *An Open Swimmer*, we can notice a shift in human behaviour. Jerra's emotions were evoked when he hunted a fish and witnessed the fish battling with pain on the verge of death, so he left the fish alive in the ocean. Here everyone can witness how Jerra's longing shifts and he feels compassion for the speechless creatures.

People get connected to nature and have a mutual understanding of various species because of the ethnoecological relationship. Nature should be saved and protected for future generations because, without it, humanity would perish. Nature is essential for human existence. Therefore, this study envisions nature's voice exposing the necessity for a healthy ecosystem. Humans must have an integrated relationship with nature in order for it to remain stable. Thus, it is apparent that nature is the primary source of life and that it should be preserved for future generations. There should be a seamless connection between humans and nature. Human beings should be conscious of the natural world and maintain a kinship with it. According to Nirmal Selvamony, “the Kith and Kin relationship states that nature and humans are in a vertical and horizontal relationship, indicating that they are in an equal relationship.”

(Selvamony 02). The significant matter of fact is that human beings are equal to nature and vice-versa. The landscape and seascape are both crucial to the ecosystem. This study thus explores how ethnoecology is applied to both landscape and seascape in terms of human emotions and understanding of nature and the environment.

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**East-West Encounter and Protean Identities in Orhan Pamuk's
The Museum of Innocence and *The White Castle***

Dr. Jasleen Kaur Sahota*

Abstract

*The question of identity and a need to understand it in relation to changing political and cultural scenario has acquired a great urgency in today's world. The quest for identity becomes more pertinent in a country like Turkey, which forms a cusp between Europe and Asia. From the Ottoman Empire ruled by aristocratic Sultans to the formation of the Republic of Turkey, individual and cultural identity in this country has seen a world of change. Keeping the political scenario in perspective the article attempts to unearth the ramifications of the encounter between the east and the west in two novels namely *The White Castle* and *The Museum of Innocence*. The author confronts the themes of identity, the modernisation of Turkey and the ensuing conflict both at interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. The two novels are symbolic of the effect of the coming together of the east and the west. Whereas the former depicts the collaboration and positive aspects of this encounter, the latter portrays a crisis of identity for the Turkish people.*

Keywords: *Identity, Crisis, East, West, Clash, Turkey, Europe*

Orhan Pamuk, Turkey's first Nobel Laureate delves in to the intricacies of protean identities and the question of east and west, tradition versus modernity through his artfully crafted novels. The process of secularization in Turkey began around the 1840s during the Ottoman Empire. These policy reforms included legal equality for all subjects of the empire, extension of private property rights, reform of the educational system, and the restructuring of the military and bureaucracy. Following Ataturk's coronation as the first President of the Republic, he followed a model of extreme modernization, with "staunch secularism as its mainstay where religion controls the inner aspect of the individual and secularism controls the outer aspect" (Ozel 20). Along with the changes in the religious realm, Turkey replaced its alphabet from Turkish to English, it made changes in civil law and its style of dressing was also reformed as it outlawed the fez, a traditional cap worn by Turkish people.

In an essay titled "Institutionalising Nationalism" Zoltan Kantor stresses that the nation state received a legitimation after the institutionalization of nationalism and due to modernization, states have set agendas to "ethnically homogenize their societies" (Kantor, 60). However, the Turkish modernising process has never been an organic process as Ozel argues, "Turkish modernity, long a top-down phenomenon directed by the heirs of Ataturk, is being reshaped and redefined at the societal level" (20). Further, this process has not produced individuals who are completely regressive or completely westernised. This very in-betweenness has been the point of debate and discussion in Pamuk's two novels, namely *The White Castle* and *The Museum of Innocence*. "In Pamuk's fictional world, East and West are not static categories of thought. Rather, they are provisional concepts that are constituted differently throughout his works, each of which explores the idea of difference in terms of a

specific historical context” (Erol, 7).

His novel *The Museum of Innocence* (2009) portrays the nature of romantic love sustained over a lifetime. Paying homage to Nabokov, the novel narrates the love affair of Kemal, a member of the elite society, with an eighteen-year-old shop girl named Fusun. At the time the affair begins, Kemal is betrothed to a beautiful girl, belonging to the same elite class as Kemal. The affair begins in 1975 and throughout the long narrative, Pamuk's longest so far, a sprawling 728 pages, it manifests the various emotions which Kemal goes through: love, passion, jealousy, revulsion, anger, frustration, resignation and withdrawal. But he never truly gives up on Fusun and her memories. Many years afterwards, he gathers all the objects associated with their courtship “...a porcelain saltshaker, a tape measure in the form of a dog, a can opener that looked like an instrument of torture, a bottle of the Batanay sunflower oil that the Keskin kitchen never lacked” (589). All these objects are a monument to their love and the place which fosters it.

Just before his engagement, Kemal runs into his eighteen-year-old niece who works at a boutique. The two are besotted with each other and they start meeting regularly at Kemal's Merhamet apartments. However, he cannot have a normal relationship with Fusun because he is betrothed to Sibel. Only way forward is to keep his affair with Fusun under wraps from society. Once Kemal is officially engaged to Sibel, Fusun decides to put an end to their affair and withdraws from Kemal's life. However, Kemal on the other hand is unable to get over Fusun, even after the engagement. After repeated attempts to salvage his relationship with his fiancée, he tells her of his affair with Fusun. Thereafter, begins his obsession with Fusun and all the things associated with her.

After Fusun's disappearance, Kemal becomes obsessed with things that Fusun touched, things which remind him of her. He would visit the Merhamet apartments every two or three days just to touch those things which Fusun had touched. He says at one point: “To find them was to see all the memories attached to each thing parade before my eyes, and so my collection loomed ever larger” (246). After he comes clean and confesses to Sibel about his affair with Fusun, Sibel calls it a “passing obsession” (266). Kemal feels that only Sibel's love would deliver him from this miserable condition. Their decision to live together before marriage in a Bosphorous mansion becomes a fodder for gossip for the people of Istanbul. But for Kemal there is no turning back. After Sibel realises that Kemal can never come out of his obsession, she returns his engagement ring and the two do not see each other for thirty-one years.

When Kemal finally discovers the whereabouts of Fusun, to his dismay, he finds out that she is now a married woman whose husband Feridun is also living with her parents. Feridun is a scriptwriter who wants to make a movie and needs money and Fusun wants to be a movie star. Kemal feigns interest in the script and comes across as a potential investor for this project, only to be near Fusun, “Happiness is being close to the one you love, that's all” (353). Kemal never gives up hope. With the connivance of Fusun's parents, he becomes a daily visitor to their house. However, after it is discovered that Feridun has a dalliance with another actress, Fusun decides to divorce him. Kemal and Fusun decide to take a holiday in Europe. Only at the end of the novel, during their road trip to Europe, Fusun expresses her lifelong desire to become an actress. Angered at Kemal for stifling Fusun, she rams the car she is

driving in to a tree. The tragic death of Fusun is described in detail. Kemal spends the rest of his life creating a museum in her memory referring to the objects collected "...not as real things in the present moment, but as memories" (577).

The families shown are rich, educated elite people, but their attitudes to sex, love and marriage are different from the Western society, thereby leading to a conflict between the established age-old traditions of yore and the new openness which was a result of the society's interaction with the west. This struggle is between "the local tradition and the imported new" (Iyer). Honour and shame concern a person's private conduct. A woman's virginity becomes a dominant motif in the novel. The characters are torn between a desire for sexual freedom and a reluctance to let go of their habitual notions. Iyer points out that Pamuk's men are shy. Kemal, a thirty-year-old has never seen an on-screen kiss in Turkey, but he goes to brothels where girls dress up as western movie stars. The women go off to Paris to study and for regular shopping trips, while at the same time adhere to the rule of being a virgin on their wedding day. It is pertinent to point out that despite the elite society's modern approach towards everything else, the question of virginity holds much importance as is pointed out by James Lasdun: "I doubt whether the subject of a woman's virginity has been so firmly in the forefront of a significant novel since Richardson's *Clarissa*" (Lasdun).

The two female characters Fusun and Sibel are juxtaposed against the background of a society on the verge of change. Western values and attitudes pertaining to premarital sex are considered a taboo in the 1970s Istanbul society. Kemal is engaged to Sibel, who as Kemal describes, has agreed to sleep with him before marriage only when she saw that Kemal's "intentions were serious" (12). Sibel who boasted of being one of those "brave girls, had first slept with me eleven months earlier. But she judged this arrangement to have gone on long enough, and thought it was about time we married" (13).

Kemal says, "before long, this heavy responsibility cast a shadow over common ground between us of which we were so proud- the illusion of being "free and modern" (though of course we would never use such words for ourselves) on account of having made love before marriage" (13). This seems all a façade as we later discover that however free Sibel calls herself, she is fazed by public opinion. For an unmarried woman to stay openly with a man was considered a taboo. Sibel says: "I don't even know if there is any girl out there who can enjoy it for what it is and damn the consequences" (164). Deeply ingratiated in to the social mores, she cannot totally be free like Europe, neither can she stick to the rules of Istanbul society as Kemal points out: "what I couldn't stop thinking about, what perturbed me was not just that Fusun had given me her virginity; it was that she had shown such resolve in doing so" (44).

At their engagement party, Sibel tries to set up her best friend Nurichan with Kemal's friend Mehmet. Mehmet's character is quite promiscuous according to the standard set by their contemporary society. Being born in Istanbul and so near to European influence has created a schism in his identity. The society including both men and women are quick to pass a judgment on sexual escapades of women, the onus is only on girls to take rational decisions regarding safeguarding their chastity. Sibel argues, "the girls are right to be careful. What happens to them if they have slept with a man and he doesn't matter them? If the word gets out and she's left in the lurch, what is she to do?" (165). Her statement proves to be prophetic

because she is faced with the same situation, she is left in the lurch by Kemal, which ultimately forces Sibel to call off the engagement.

“But the idea of making love before marriage still makes her uncomfortable...I understand this. She's studied in Europe, but she's not as modern and courageous as you are...” (67) says Kemal. He holds the view that while Sibel slept with him because of love and trust, the reason Fusun did so because she was modern and European and like European women, she did not have any qualms about sleeping with someone before marriage. Zaim a socialite and a good friend of Kemal, would have dalliances with actresses and models, “whom he knew of course he would never marry on account of being known to have had sex” (33). While talking to Zaim, Kemal questions his attitude regarding sex and says, “if we insist virginity is still so important, how can we say we are modern and European?” (572).

Caught in the crossfire between tradition and modernity, all this while, the characters can only harp on the same issue, but they are unable to find solutions to it. Women go for arranged marriage, and Sibel points out the reason for it: “men like him from the heart of Anatolia...girls would rather marry him through a matchmaker because they know if they go gallivanting about town with him too much, a man like him will secretly begin to think of them as whores” (154). Pamuk evokes the society of his times, amidst flux when European ideas of progress were making huge inroads into the life of the Istanbul elite. The people of the high society go on skiing trips and bring back parasols. He describes how families in Istanbul boasted of being the first ones to own an electric blender, or a can opener or an electric shaver. But these things had to be discarded when they stopped working as no spare parts were available in Turkey. One person dismisses others by calling them “too 'a la Turca” (245).

Kemal's best friend Zaim is the first one to introduce locally made soft drink to Turkey, and for its advertisement campaign he hires a blond German model Inge and uses the slogan “you deserve it all” (359). Some Muslims buy Christmas trees “to decorate and display their windows the way Christians did in films” (446), cunning entrepreneurs acquired bottles of the trendy new drink and fill them with a much cheaper equivalent. Some Turks wore “east-west” watches, with Arabic numerals on one face and roman on another. The one thing Europe has that Turkey can never have, Pamuk shows us, is indifference to what Europe does or thinks. Sibel says at one climactic moment, “in Europe the rich are refined enough to act as if they're not wealthy” (567).

Pamuk throughout the novel stresses that people of Turkey spend a lot of time discussing fashions and perceived habits of Europe, when they know that Europe is spending very less time thinking their habits and customs. This duality in characters is nowhere more prominent than in this novel. Heavily modernised characters such as Zaim, Sibel, Nurichan, Mehmet and Kemal all belong to elite society. They have European tastes in clothes, watch European movies and go for holidays to France; some of the members also celebrate Christmas like Europeans do. And yet their ideas about sex, marriage remain the same. In a way, this book shows the effect of westernisation in a subtle way. Like his other works, Pamuk closes the narrative by stressing the paramount importance of love. He makes us feel that Kemal carried on with this lifelong obsession because he was happy. Kemal's last words to Orhan Pamuk, the narrator of the story were “let everyone know I lived a very happy life” (728).

National identity in the context of the perceived westernisation of Turkey has been a point of contention in civil society. Whereas *The Museum of Innocence* is set in a contemporary milieu, *The White Castle* (1990) goes back to the seventeenth century Ottoman life to glean the story and its characters. A fable of identity, it concerns the fortunes of an unnamed narrator who is captured by Turkish pirates while travelling from Venice to Naples. Afterwards he is brought to Istanbul and imprisoned. Fearing for his life, he convinces his captors that he was trained as a doctor in Italy. Subsequently, he is called upon first to treat his fellow prisoners and then to the Pasha himself. Although he has little knowledge of anatomy, he makes up for it by his intelligence and common sense through which he cures the patients.

When he cures the Pasha for his shortness of breath, he wins the latter's admiration and taken to a man named Hoja with whom he shares an uncanny resemblance. He is to work with him as his slave and his numerous requests for freedom fall on deaf ears. Since the Pasha remembered that the narrator had knowledge of astronomy, engineering and science, the first task that is given to the duo is to work on a firework display for the wedding of Pasha's son. Hoja in Turkish means master and the narrator assumed that "there was nothing I would be able to teach him. But apparently his knowledge was no greater than mine" (14). Hoja was a determined and erudite character who wanted to know the ways of the west especially the latest knowledge in sciences. Thus, the coming together of the two represents the initial encounter of the two great civilisations. There is a clear knowledge gap as the slave teaches his master everything he knows about astronomy, physics, mathematics and medical science.

Over the course of time the narrator learns that by using his knowledge of astronomy as well as other developments in Italy, he wants to engage the Sultan and ultimately convince him of his ability to hold the position of the court astrologer. Time and again, the narrator mentions the likeness between the two of them, "as Hoja gradually ceased to use the word 'teach': we were going to search together, discover together, progress together" (23). The narrator spends a lot of time with the Hoja and gradually the two discover each other's character traits. The Hoja becomes very inquisitive about the narrator's past and they have epistemological debates about who they are. The Hoja exploits the narrator's knowledge to improve his standing in the Sultan's court. One day the bubonic plague overwhelms Istanbul. The Hoja after discussions with the narrator introduces cats in the city to get rid of the rats as was done in the west to improve the city's hygiene. The Sultan however thinks that these rats are Satan in disguise. It is in fact the Hoja who implants pseudo-scientific stories in his head. This episode is symbolic of the knowledge gap and the subsequent perception of natural occurrences. Hoja construes the plague as divine punishment for the sins of man whereas the slave's approach to the disease is scientific and rational. The scheme works and the Hoja gains favour with the Sultan and is elevated to the status of Imperial Astrologer. The Turks are able to dispel their ignorance using the knowledge of science provided by the narrator. The novel represents the diverse viewpoints on cultural aspects of the eastern and western people in the same situation. Whereas the west stands for scientific rationality, the east abides by the ideals of religion and spirituality.

Thereafter, Hoja and the narrator start working on a war engine which will eventually be used to destroy the enemies of the Sultan. While the two are engrossed in the construction of the weapon for the next six years, the narrator wonders about the amount of personal

information Hoja has about him. He can even imitate his mannerisms which lead to a crisis as he constantly feels a loss of identity. However, when a war breaks out between the Turks and the Poles, this weapon fails to achieve its promised ask. The assault on a fortress called the white castle fails. Realising that this will only incur the ire of the Sultan, Hoja escapes into the fog. Thereafter, he goes to Venice and assumes the life of the narrator and the narrator takes over Hoja's life as an astrologer. The relationship and the shifting dynamic of power between the narrator and the master is a recurring theme in this novel. Many a times, the master tries to exert his superiority over the narrator by either ridiculing him for his childhood or for his lower status as a slave. However, one recognises that this show of superiority is a façade as the Hoja depends on the narrator's knowledge of western science to pursue his projects for the Sultan. This dynamic is finally transformed when at the end of the novel, they switch identities.

Hoja is able to live this double life as a scholar in Italy because of his likeness to the narrator. Hoja becomes a symbol of eastern mindset which craves the scientific knowledge of the west. Although these characters are situated in the seventeenth century yet the tensions they portray are representative of the political crisis in Turkey over the permanent membership of EU. Thus, over the course of time this initial encounter and collision is transformed into a healthy collaboration. Thus, the two novels describe the effects of the western influence on the Turkish society and culture. As they are set in very different cultural milieus and centuries apart, they are representative of the varied effects on Turkish identity as a result of the coming together of the two great civilisations.

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War and Gender Performativity in Afghanistan: An Analysis of Nadia Hashimi's *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* and *One Half from the East*

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Abstract

*Afghanistan has suffered four decades of turmoil under different autocratic regimes and Afghan society has traditionally had a patriarchal setup. The injustices towards women have escalated because of the civil wars and the rule of authoritarian forces like the Taliban and the Mujahideen. This paper would analyse the writings of Afghan authors in English, particularly the novels of Nadia Hashimi namely *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* and *One Half from the East*. These novels introduce us to the practise of *Bacha Posh* that has been a part of the country's culture for centuries. It is a practise in which the families who are bereft of male protection or lack a male child, dress and raise their young daughters as boys. This paper would include a close textual analysis of the aforementioned novels and would explore the reasons behind this change in the norms of gender performativity.*

Keywords: *Afghan women, War, Trauma, Bacha Posh, Gender.*

Afghanistan has been a war-torn country for the past four decades where the patriarchal structure of the society is considered to be stringent. Afghan men tend to overtly enjoy more freedom and respect than their women counterparts in the community. As such, women not only suffer from cultural and societal oppression but also due to the lack of basic amenities. Their sufferings have been exacerbated due to war as most of the country lies in ruins. This paper will focus on one of the cross-dressing customs of Afghanistan known as *Bacha Posh* to explore gender inequality within Afghan society which has increased due to war and the presence of misogynist rulers such as the *Mujahideens* and the *Taliban*. It will attempt a close analysis of two novels namely *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* and *One Half from the East* by Nadia Hashimi to elucidate the oppressive conditions that Afghan women have to face while residing in a conflict-stricken nation.

Bacha Posh is a custom in which a family lacking sons or an active male member, dresses and raises their youngest female member (youngest daughter) as a boy. According to Nadia Hashimi, this practice is widespread in Afghanistan. However, one does not know when it started or how many *Bacha Posh* children are there or have been there in the country. There is a lack of information in this regard as there has not been any documentation of this practice. Also, the families try to keep the identity of the *Bacha Posh* hidden or known to only immediate family members for the ruse to work. Furthermore, the girls who are interchanged into a boy in their early childhood are made to change back into a girl before the onset of puberty. After this transformation, the former *Bacha Posh* has to carry herself as a respectable woman in the society, marry when their elders find a suitable husband for them and start a family of their own like any other Afghan girl. The transformation into a *Bacha Posh* is temporary and the disguise allows the girl to do things that others are not permitted to perform under normal circumstances, such as hanging out with boys, taking up a job or roaming

around unattended. As such, to maintain the respect and honour of herself and her family, the girl involved in it and the people who know about it never talk about this duration of the girl's life.

The question here arises as to why certain Afghan families opt for this temporary transformation given that the gender roles in Afghanistan are stringent. Rahima and Obayda, the protagonists of the novels, *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* and *One Half from the East*, who are transformed into *Bacha Posh*, keep dangling in the spectrum of the gender divide. Both the novels underline various reasons behind this practice. One of the major reasons is the ongoing conflict which has engulfed the country for the past four decades. War has created many dysfunctional families in Afghanistan. The Afghan society considers gender as a heterosexual binary where male and female members have designated roles. Male members take care of most of the activities that are outside the security and privacy of one's household. He financially provides for his family and also imparts protection to his female family members by escorting them to different places. The security of a male member is not based on physical strength, of which Shekiba (Rahima's great-grandmother), Rahima and Obayada were as capable as their male counterparts as could be seen through various instances in the novels. However, it is the authority provided to the male member of a family, irrespective of their age, by the society that guarantees the security of the womenfolk of that household.

Rahima's father was an active participant in *jihad* as a *Mujahideen*, who fought under the warlord Abdul Khaliq since his teenage years. Once the war with the Russians was over and he was back, it was difficult for him to adjust to society. As mentioned in the novel, he was not capable of any constructive work as he had been indulged in destruction for much of his growing years. Furthermore, he could not tolerate the jarring voice of heavy machinery in his father's wood shop. His condition could be compared to various other soldiers who suffer from shell shock when they return to their day-to-day life after facing the brutality of war. In *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, the character Septimus Warren Smith, a soldier who returned from WWI is seen suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. His suffering gets exacerbated when people around him are unable to understand it. Rahima's father, like many other war returnees, suffered from mental trauma which his family could not comprehend. As Afghanistan was a war-torn country where people lacked basic amenities, so acceptability of mental illness and proper treatment for it was also unavailable there. Instead of helping him recuperate he was burdened with more responsibilities through his marriage to a young girl (Raisa; Rahima's mother). As a result, he took to opium to numb his trauma as it provided him an easy escape (Afghanistan is one of the largest producers of opium in the world). Opium addiction made him a listless individual who was prone to sudden violent outbursts and domestic violence. Raisa struggled to maintain the household as Rahima's father could not earn much and she had no one to depend upon for the chores that required venturing out of the house, due to lack of a son.

Obayda's father lost his leg in a bomb explosion. Her story is set in Afghanistan in the reconstruction era i.e., after the US intervention. Even when US soldiers and NATO forces were present in the country it did not cease to be a violent place. During this period, the US forces and the newly formed Afghan forces were in constant conflict with the *Taliban* which was striving to gain control over Afghanistan again (We at present know that it has finally

succeeded in its endeavour). In this tussle between the armed forces and the *Taliban*, bomb explosions became a common occurrence in Kabul. This accident, also the result of the ongoing conflict within the country, made Obayda's family dysfunctional as Obayda did not have a brother. In addition to the physical injury, Obayda's father also suffered from mental trauma. He considered himself incapable of protecting and providing for his family; two major tasks that an Afghan man is supposed to perform. Rahima and Obayda's households depict the stories of various other Afghan families which became maladjusted due to the loss of an active male member.

The *Mujahideen* and the *Taliban* forbade women to venture out of their houses without a male companion (*Mehram*). In Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Laila and Mariam, the two protagonists of the novel, were sent to jail when they were trying to travel outside Kabul without a *Mehram*. During the regime of the *Taliban*, Laila got beaten every time she went out of her house without her husband. At the beginning of the novel, *The Pearl that Broke its Shell*, Rahima and her sisters are removed from the school by their father because some boys were seen chasing them. This undue attention, while not undertaken by boys with a malicious intention, provoked some people to raise fingers at the character of these girls. This situation would not have occurred if Rahima and her sisters had a brother to escort them to school. In the twentieth century, in Shekiba's village, a woman going alone could lead to condemnation from unknown menfolk of the village. They could take upon themselves the authority to escort and even scold the woman for wandering without a male escort. When Shekiba went to the *Hakim-sahib* with the deed of her house she was violently beaten on the road by Azizullah (Shekiba's employer) for defaming his reputation by venturing out of the house unchaperoned. All these incidents point to the restrictions which Afghan women have been subjected to concerning their mobility. However, during peaceful times women in Kabul and other major cities of Afghanistan worked in offices and did not need male companions to go out of their houses. Although this was prevalent only in the capital and other major cities of Afghanistan, it does provide a glimpse of what the country could have been if it did not tumble into chaos.

As the war created many broken families and there were restrictions on the mobility of women, many parents were forced to adopt the practice of *Bacha Posh*. In the case of Rahima, the male attire provided her the freedom to attend school, provide for her family by taking up a job and live her childhood without any hindrance. This custom asserts the fact that gender is a construct as well as a performance. Rahima's mother just shortened her hair and made her wear the clothes of her male cousin. Obayda's mother also did the same for her. The neighbours, teachers in the school and other people in the village accepted this cross-dressing and treated the girl as a boy because of her attire. Here, the male clothing becomes the symbol of being masculine which in turn symbolizes strength and respect. The charade is not restricted to looks alone; the name of the person goes along with it. According to Shakespeare, 'a rose' even when called by a different name will smell as sweet. However, in this scenario, the drop of one syllable from their names changed the world for these children. Rahima became Rahim and Obayda became Obayd to complement their change of gender. Gender becomes an act and the girl who performs the part well can live her life to the fullest for those few years until she is changed back.

Rahima on her first trip to the market notices the different manners of behaviour assigned to people belonging to different genders. A male is supposed to be more confident; he could walk leisurely and look the other person into their eyes without anyone questioning his sense of shame. Their attire is also free from limitations as the pants allow more mobility than the skirt and a male does not require a burqa or a chadri that would inhibit his vision. In other words, being a man meant being free. Rahima trained Obayda as well in this performance. She asserts that you cannot be a girl dressed in a boy's clothes but a "boy dressed in his own clothes" (Hashimi, "One Half" 71). The family members also reinforce this new identity through various acts. The members correct each other constantly when any one of them calls the *Bacha Posh* with their old female name and they also scold the *Bacha Posh* if she responds to her earlier name or indulges in any activity that might give away the fact that she used to be a girl before. Khala Aziza, the aunt of Obayda, advised Obayda's mother to "tell her (Obayda) she's a boy with every bite of food you feed her, with every word you speak to her, with every pass you give her on her boyish trouble making" (Hashimi, "One Half" 16). Judith Butler writes in *Undoing Gender*

If Gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is the practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not do one's gender alone. One is always "doing" with or for another, if the other is only imaginary. (Butler 11)

Aziza's advice to Obayda's mother frames the notions of gender as discussed by Butler. The mothers of both Rahima and Obayda followed the same principles when they converted them to a *Bacha Posh*. They treated them as a boy. They took away all the household chores from them, never scolded them for playing around and fed them as a boy i.e., giving them the largest and the most nutritious part of the meat. This preferential treatment points to the inherent discrimination in a patriarchal society where women reside as second-class citizens. The incessant practise of these acts finally makes the *Bacha Posh* believe that they are actually a boy.

Apart from the need for a male member to carry on the daily household chores which concerns going out, there are other reasons for which people practise this custom. In the case of Obayda, her mother converts her on the instruction of her sister-in-law, Aziza. According to her and the common belief among Afghans, "Having a *bacha posh* at home brings boy energy into your household. The next baby that comes will be a boy" (Hashimi, "One Half" 15). Many households which only have daughters decide to perform this custom to attain this good luck. A male figure provides security to a family while they live in a war-torn country. Also, women alone are not blamed for giving birth to only daughters, male members also have to face ridicule. They are assigned the derogatory term *meraat*, which defines someone who could never father a male child. All families want to earn respect in the community to which they belong and a son provides them with that. According to Alisa Tang, there are upward to one million widows in the country whose average age is thirty-five. Many survive by begging on the streets along with their children or by engaging in illicit sex work (Heath 14). Many widows also practise this custom to ensure mobility and have some source of income through the *Bacha Posh* if they do not have a son.

Rahima and Obayda never wanted to return to living as a girl. Their desire to live as a person of other gender cannot be compared to the transsexuals or the intersexed individuals as the psychological makeup of all these people is different from each other. In the case of *Bacha Posh*, they are reluctant to turn back into a girl because of the discriminatory behaviour that a female has to face perennially in society, which becomes more evident to them after having lived as a boy. Rahima wanted to remain being a boy because according to her experience in Afghan society she felt that girls were weak creatures who were incapable of having any hold on their life's decisions. She wanted to continue her education and live her life freely as every thirteen-year-old child should be allowed to. Similarly, Obayda is scared after seeing the fate of Rahima and did not want to end up in the same manner. Once her parents assured her that they love her regardless of the gender she is born into and would allow her to continue her education, she no longer despises being a girl. Though it is tough for Obayda to transform back into a girl, however, when she gains acceptance and love from her parents and other family members, the process of transformation becomes less painful.

In Afghanistan, the need for a boy or a male figure is dominant to the extent that even a made-up one is better than having none. This entails the birth of the practice of *Bacha Posh*. The situation has worsened because of war as it has led to the rise of misogynist rulers and broken families. However, Afghanistan is not the only country where gender change with the help of cross-dressing takes place. In Albania, there used to be 'sworn virgins' who were converted from a girl into a boy following the same principle for transformation i.e., the need of a boy in the family for various economic or social reasons. In addition to the other differences between the two traditions, one of the significant difference is that while transformation into a sworn virgin is permanent, the transition into a *Bacha Posh* is a temporary one. The variation in the period of this change leads to different experiences and psychological makeup of the participants. A temporary transformation may confuse the participant regarding their identity as seen in various cases reported by Jenny Nordberg in her book *The Underground Girls of Kabul*. One of the participants, Zahra wanted to go for permanent gender transformation with surgery while the other, a married woman, Shukria, found difficulty in having physical attraction towards her husband. Even after marriage, Shukria felt that she was a man on the inside and it was wrong for two men to sleep together. The transformation takes place at a younger age and when the *Bacha Posh* is made to turn back, they are at the onset of puberty. Puberty is an age that is already considered to be difficult for children because of the various physical and hormonal changes that their body is undergoing. However, Afghan's view of sexuality is different from that of western nations. According to them, anything related to sexuality does not exist in children. For them, sexuality is only related to procreation and children are considered to be asexual beings. So, when Afghans practise this custom, they fail to take into consideration the psychological disturbance that it will cause among the participants.

Women have cross-dressed for centuries into male attire and have undertaken the role of a man for safety and recognition. In several Shakespearean dramas, we find cross-dressed characters such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night*. Even though both of them are princesses and belong to the upper echelons of society, they have to don male attire to ensure their safety. Various female novelists till the nineteenth century such as the Bronte

sisters took male pseudonyms to hide their female identity. Their novels would not have garnered the same acclaim if the critics knew the author to be a female. These transformations have certain positives for the women as they get to gain respect and equal treatment as received by a man. However, it becomes one of the examples of how women bargain with patriarchy to earn liberty and power for themselves (Kandiyoti). By turning themselves into a boy, women reinstate the place of males as the superior ones on the societal ladder. Sworn Virgins disappeared from Albania post-1991 as the status of women in the household changed with social and economic progress. As women could get education and earn a living, there was no use for them to dress as men to gain the respect and liberty designated to only the male members of the society. The same applies to European countries where technological development is prevalent and sound law and order have made women's mobility comparatively comfortable and safer. Also, overt forms of gender discrimination no longer take place in many developed societies and even elsewhere they are condemned with severe outrage. Discontinuation of these practices provide us with hope that the same could happen in Afghanistan when the country becomes politically stable and women could get equal opportunities as men in all the fields.

Afghan practice of *Bacha Posh* raises questions about the heteronormative gender divide in society. It also presents a cross-dressing practice that takes a form of gender variation when seen through western eyes, however, it should not be analysed under the category of transsexuals, transvestites, cross-dressers, or transgenders. The reasons behind this cross-dressing practice and the identity crisis that the girls face due to it can be better understood through intersectionality. One needs to understand their experiences in the context of their geographical location and the political climate of their place of residence. Similarly, the sufferings of Afghan women cannot be blamed on the social structure alone. We need to place their difficulties in the political context of Afghanistan as well to get the complete picture.

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Writing as Political Intervention: Andre Brink's *A Dry White Season* in Context

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Abstract

*Andre Philippus Brink's conception of art is inextricably tied to social commitment. He talks of the impossibility of writing apolitically in a state like South Africa, plagued by the evils of authoritarianism. In many of his nonfictional writings, Brink promotes the role of literature in countering state silence and as a site of resistance. Violence is the regime's language; language is the writer's violence, or to put it more aptly, counter-violence. The very act of writing a truth into existence is an ethico-political act. The present paper looks at dissident writing in South Africa through a reading of Brink's *A Dry White Season* and argues that through the narrative representation of violence, the writer questions the legitimacy of the use of force by the State.*

Keywords: *Violence, Censorship, Dissidence, Authoritarianism*

Introduction

Violence has existed throughout the span of human civilisation. The different categories of violence are not isolated but interlinked. Human understanding of morality and ethics is informed by concerns of violence. Some forms of violence are sanctioned, even vindicated, be it religious or legal. Studies of theology and philosophy are inherently fascinated with the idea of violence. The available scholarship on violence encompasses thinkers across cultures and time frames who have made attempts at reading and philosophizing upon violence. The literature on violence is more often than not a philosophical treatment of the subject of violence, and the relationship between violence and philosophy is well established. At other times it tends to be cross-disciplinary in nature, traversing the territories of history, politics, psychoanalysis and literature among others.

Political historiography documents the existence of a continuous discourse advocating the necessity of violence or coercive mechanisms for governing any political community. In the writings of political philosopher and theorists, like Hobbes and later on Max Weber, violence and control form the core of politics and the role of the state as opposed to the ancient Greek ideals of virtue and justice. According to Weber, the legitimization of violence of the state in the context of modern state structures can be deemed measures through which any internal conflict among the participants of the state can be managed. There exists a school of thought which deems the presence of violence obligatory for state's self affirmation. These assertions of state sponsored hegemonic containment and control machinery are an integral part of the discourse encompassing censorship and police brutality.

South Africa during apartheid was the Kafkaesque penal colony whose apparatus was guided by one principle: "Guilt is never to be doubted" (Kafka 145). In South Africa the dissident writer wages a war against his own tribe as intensely as he does against the system, at his own peril. Andre Brink, J. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, though writing from different subject positions themselves, may be said to have produced what might be called a literature of the liberal conscience, where acute social observation is combined with a fearless critique

of the government. The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between literature and moral commitment and the inherently political nature of writing. In this relation, the concomitant issue of censorship in South Africa and the role of the dissident writer have been explored with particular reference to Brink's *A Dry White Season*.

Censorship

The Oxford Dictionary defines censorship as “the suppression or prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc. that are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.” In the case of South Africa, censorship is a political tool to curb dissent, and the censor is backed by the state and more so, is the State itself. One may ask what is censored. The answer is- anything that is 'politically unacceptable' to the State and 'a threat to its security'. The South African state apparatus adopts different corrective measures to hide its genocidal tendencies under the veneer of law. A dissenting writer intervenes in the state-spun narrative of lies. The censor obstructs the writer's narrative of truth, and to achieve this he deploys violence in all its available forms. Censorship is the most palpable form of violence against written words.

Andre Brink's conception of art is inextricably tied to social commitment as he makes clear in *Mapmakers* and numerous other nonfictional writings. Brink enumerates various roles for the writer – the writer as witness, the writer as historian, the writer as reporter, the writer as diagnoser. The writer is a witness to the evils of society which it is his task to record and report as historian. Since the repressive environment during apartheid made certain areas of knowledge forbidden to any media, since the entry of language into such areas was prohibited, the writer had to trespass into forbidden territory to sneak truth out. Brink arguably talked about looking at individual experiences of witnessing history, perspectives which didn't adhere to the official narratives. The reach and relevance of a writer needed to be largely defined by reporting and representing the reality and the spatial lived experiences. The very act of writing is the creation of records that did not exist prior to it. “The writer as diagnoser of the society's ills, as witness to the truths of its evils, as – to put him in his traditional Afrikaner role – the occasionally reluctant but always dutiful poet-prophet of the recalcitrant tribe” (The Brinkian Witness to Violence 25). Brink repeatedly uses metaphors of madness and sickness to refer to the South African body politic, calling it a “demented world”, “an insane structure” (*Mapmakers* 201). The writer can only diagnose, put his finger on the sick organ, but cannot heal. Healing is possible only when the writer's words are heeded. A sick society cannot bring itself to terms with the writer's diagnosis and tries to turn a blind eye to its sickness, to hide it behind a façade of good health. Censorship is one such mechanism of the state apparatus to keep its sick elements from reaching the public eye. It bans the truth from reaching people, and bars people's ways to truth. All authoritarian states are founded on lies, and try to obliterate truth. Censorship “represents the protective mechanisms and the processes of the social organism in a state of excessive, cancerous development” (*Mapmakers* 248). The writer's responsibility is to bring truth out from invisibility into the public gaze, from the realm of silence to the written word.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the deployment of a comprehensive censorship

apparatus in South Africa. The novelist Andre Brink led this resistance from the front. While Andre Brink was steeped in the traditions of Afrikaan storytelling in the early stage of his creative career, he gradually moved towards dissident writing, and vehemently rejected the tutelage of a pro-Africaner government. Brink takes the figure of Antigone as the guiding force – one of the earliest instances of an individual pitted against the State, a rebel who obeys nothing but her own conscience. Brink talks in an interview of how he was constantly under surveillance by the government's watchdogs, “I'm followed, even abroad, my mail is opened; my house searched; my typewriter confiscated. If writing means not an escape from action, but an immersion into action, then you accept these things” (*Worldview* interview 19).

Violence is the regime's language; language is the writer's violence, or to put it more aptly, counter-violence. The very act of writing a truth into existence is an ethico-political act. The word “ceases to be 'merely' a word and enters the world as an act in its own right” (*Giving Offense* 208). The writer and the state share a permanent antagonism. “Let this be a warning to our authorities, in the struggle between authority and artist it is always the artist, in the end, who wins. Because his voice continues to speak long after the members of the relevant government... have been laid to rest” (*Interrogating Silence* 67).

Looking on Darkness was the first Afrikaans novel which was eventually banned by the censors. The censors had so long exhibited their partisan attitudes by banning literature by Black writers, while backing the Afrikaners. Brink's use of sexual explicitness was a severe onslaught on Calvinist sexual morality, an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the censors. He, however, deliberately defied all kinds of moral policing that aimed to stifle creativity.

History

Literature is the fictional refutation of official history, which is often the voice of an authoritarian regime that is brought to the fore after the strangulation of all other voices. History is supposedly based on empiricity but literature makes no overt claims to veritable truths. Yet history often falls short in telling truths when compared to literature. Talking of how the word intervenes into silence Brink says that it would be audacious to assert that the written word or fiction for that matter 'corrects' the years of forced silence. But he believes in the possibility that written word possesses the possibility of examining these gaps in representation/history. He says, “Not that I'm sure language inevitably corrects silence: there would be in such a claim an arrogance I hesitate to endorse; but that the word interminably and indefatigably strives to interrogate silence, of that I have no doubt” (*Interrogating Silence*, 14).

Andre Brink makes a call for rewriting and revisioning of the past. He has stressed on the need for post-apartheid literature to articulate the voices that have been silenced in the past: Since South African history has canonized the white writers and their perspectives on the history of the land, the other voices of the territory has been stifled or erased for the longest time. Even the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's emphasis on the need to narrativise the past is an effort at making the future – unlike the past – bearable. Narratives are needed to make sense of trauma. The victims and survivors of trauma exhibit a desire for knowledge more than a desire for compensation or reparation, because only knowledge would fill in the

gaps in their narratives, so that they can grasp their own stories. Brink hints at the impossibility in South Africa, for South African writers, to write about ordinary human situations that are not overtly or covertly political. Mere aesthetics or textuality without historicity would be a shameful and irresponsible act of self-indulgence that no writer with a conscience should give way to. One, writing in South Africa, should inevitably write about situations steeped in the history and politics of the land. In their introduction to *Writing South Africa: literature, apartheid, and democracy, 1970-1995* Rosemary Jolly and Derek Attridge speak of how the systematic and strategic racism through Apartheid demands strategic opposition. They advocate for a literature of resistance as one such strategy of opposition.

Police Brutality and *A Dry White Season*

During the very brief period of the renaissance of Black Writing which ended abruptly in 1965 many of the black writers were coerced into exile and even death. Keeping these historical formulations in mind one can argue that the literature of South Africa is one of protest against the layers of violence and discrimination. In these contexts the white writers' political intentions were under constant scrutiny. They struggled to retain association with their own race, while having to justify their staunch critique of it. There is a literature of resistance. With the copious amount of texts written under the wider framework of this protest literature, the whole idea of counter-cultural-political discourse has come to be associated with an all too familiar trope of literature of dissent.

One of the most significant dissident topics in apartheid literature is police brutality. Especially, in socially committed apartheid fiction police brutality, and its many indices, need to be read as symptoms of a deep-rooted disease — an oppressive and coercive authoritarian regime. In the state-backed unleashing of violence, the South African police came as a handy tool in brutalising not just anti-apartheid protestors and activists but even the common man on the streets. In this curious prism of racial hierarchies and interracial violence, not only the Blacks but even the coloured people were victimised. South African coloured writer Alex La Guma's long novella *A Walk in the Night* is a case in point. Set in District Six, a suburb in Cape Town, the plot revolves around the murder of Doughty, an Irish old man by the protagonist Michael Adonis. Fresh with rage after being fired from service for answering back to his White foreman, Michael walks the night aimlessly, from one place of the suburb to the other encountering and getting involved in disparate situations, finally killing the Irish man in a 'spur of the moment' act, without a hint of remorse though, 'well he didn't have no right to be here with us coloreds' (La Guma 28). Police brutality gets introduced quite early in the novel as two policemen, their pistols shining, stop Michael to question him for no reason. The police behaviour betrayed an itch to pick up a fight with and harass the public. Michael speaks to the police with downcast eyes because they are not to be looked in the eye, "for that would be taken as an affront by them. It was only the very brave, or the very stupid, who dared look straight into the law's eyes' (La Guma 10). Later in the story, the same pistol will be used to shoot down an innocent. Constable Raalt brutally shoots down Willieboy on mere suspicion for a murder that he did not commit. The police is portrayed in the text as unfriendly, unconscientious, undisciplined, and completely unaccountable. The text reveals various

instances where the police, the supposed custodians of law and order in the state, indulge in serious breaches of law. From torture, extortion, unlawful detention to extra-judicial killings, the state police do it all.

Brink's *A Dry White Season* (1979) is one of the most appropriate novels to discuss this police brutality issue and the offense that the dissident writer gives by talking about it. South Africa is a country of burgeoning prisons. Death in police custody is an everyday reality. However, the state tries to hide these truths under lies and ridiculous excuses. Death caused by extreme forms of police brutality and torture are given the name of suicides and accidental deaths. Postmortems are carried out in the most superficial manner, all evidence of police brutality is destroyed, no light is ever thrown as to the real cause of death. The question remains in what kind of an ethical matrix do the police live or operate? Brink's *A Dry White Season* engages with these questions. The title itself is a metaphor for the arid political environment of the land. The writing of the novel was triggered by the incident where a detainee hanged himself near King William's town. The rest was taken care of by the author's imagination. Brink has always spoken in favour of the imagination, which according to him is the very thing that can fill up gaps in history, and narrative silence. Speaking about the accusations that he has had to face throughout his writing career for wrongly attempting to write about the blacks (one needs to remember that white writing and white liberalism were seen with suspicion; especially after Soweto, the credibility of the white gaze to sympathise with, penetrate and understand black subjectivity came to be seriously contested), he defends himself saying that "a writer must have the freedom to imagine what someone else is like" (*Worldview* Interview 18). In a similar vein, Coetzee talks about representing the violence situation in South Africa, particularly of torture room scenes, which often crosses over the border to fetishism or crude spectacle: "the true challenge is: how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority, how to *imagine* (italics mine) torture and death on one's own terms" (*Into the Dark Chamber* 362). Coetzee further argues that the proceedings of the state through the secret police is so shrouded in mystery, and the prisons or dark chambers of police brutality are so inaccessible to the public, that the lack of material compels the writer to take recourse to fantasy or imagination. Though they, by this, run the risk of falling into the pitfalls of misrepresentation, such imagination retelling of the darkest truths (yes, truths not fictions) is the only way out, or let us say, only way into the dark secrets of the South African state.

A Dry White Season also marks its author's move away from existentialism that was his forte up to this point, influenced by his sojourn in Paris. The move from the universal to the particular occurred when he confronted the issues at home once he was back from Paris, add to it the realization that South Africa had its own unique experience and material waiting to be explored. The novel exposes the workings of the secret police, their secret killings. The entire revelation is driven through the point of view of Ben du Toit, the Afrikaner. As he sets out to find the truth behind the shady deaths of the father-son duo Gordon and Jonathan, he and the reader by implication, are unsettled by the emerging monster that is state machinery. Jonathan dies in custody "of natural causes", Gordon too dies in detention (*Dry White Season* 47). While Ben gathers sufficient evidence against the state police, he too is "knocked down by a hit-and-run driver" (*Dry White Season* 6). Anticipating that his life was in danger, Ben keeps

the evidence safe in the custody of the man in the forms of documents. It is from those documents that the narrator now builds the narrative of this novel. The narrator, who until this point had made money only by writing pulp fiction turning a blind eye to the matters of the state, suddenly feels this strong moral obligation to tell the truth, and this is where a parallel is drawn between him and the novelist himself, Andre Brink.

The novel records Ben's journey from political ignorance to awareness and involvement, his political conversion from being a blind supporter of the government to his complete disillusionment with it, followed by nonconformity and collection of evidence against it. According to Brink, the experience of reading the novel could bring about a similar conversion among its readers. Such spectacles of torture are infernal, that do not belong to the realm of the human. Therefore, they go beyond the scope of ethics and cannot be judged by the normal parameters of morality. That world has to come back at least to the realm of the human from its present state of damnation.

While the censor is the hypothetical law-abiding ideal citizen, the dissident writer is the aberrant organ in the state's body politic. By exposing the state machinery of violence through such apparatuses as censorship and police torture in custody, the writer of fiction sears the consciences of readers, opens their eyes towards an unjust and erring legal system. Brink, in an interview with *Worldview*, has said that mere change in policies and the political sphere is not enough "...unless there is a change in the sensibilities of the people who must live in that society. This is where I am working – in the minds of individuals" (19).

Conclusion

The above sections have dealt with issues of censorship, state violence, and the role of the dissident writer with particular reference to Andre Brink's *A Dry White Season*. In extensively dealing with torture as experienced by innocent Blacks in police custody, Brink exposes the genocidal state machinery; the torture room becomes a microcosm of the state, the relationship between the police and the prisoner becomes a metaphor for the relationship between an authoritarian state and its victims. It brings us to the conclusion that literature remains one of the most articulate modes of resistance to state oppression, to the perpetuation of racial injustices. If censorship is the worst kind of violence against the written word, writing is the worst kind of offense against the state. By speaking the unspeakable, dissident writers like Andre Brink rescue truth from obscurity and insert it into the collective memory of a people.

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Interface with History: A Reading of J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*

Padumi Singha

Abstract

This paper explores J. M. Coetzee's Age of Iron and Disgrace by shedding light on the historical interface in the novels. For a writer notable for his allegorical representations of life and time, what is conspicuous in these novels is an element of 'historical specificity.' Age of Iron focuses on the apartheid body politic in South Africa under the emergency in the 1980s while metaphorically connecting the affairs of the state to the cancer-ridden body of the elderly protagonist. Set in the post-apartheid South Africa, Disgrace narrates the white professor David Lurie's fall from 'grace' due to a sexual misconduct with a native student while alluding to the workings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the 1990s. History in/forms the creation of these significant fictions while the historical consciousness induces a complex ethical sense and responsibility.

Keywords: *Coetzee, South Africa, apartheid, complicity, the TRC.*

Being born and brought up as a white person in South Africa, racial segregation and the apartheid intimately mark J. M. Coetzee's various works. He carefully examines the complex historical and political situations of the South African society while conveying a sense of resistance towards discursive power. The challenge for an author living and writing under an authoritative regime, he opines, is to unflinchingly investigate and represent the surrounding sordid reality. He regards 'the true challenge' for an author as "how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority, how to imagine torture and death on one's own terms" (*Doubling* 364).

Multiethnic communities of black ancestry constitute the major portion of the population in South Africa. Descendants of English, Dutch and Asians who arrived under colonial rule, constitute the rest of the population. The country's colonial history spans from the seventeenth to twentieth century having the Dutch and English as the rulers. Institutionalized racial segregation became the harsh reality throughout the 20th century. Robert C. Cottrell opines that shortly after the World War II, South Africa instituted apartheid — a system rooted in longstanding historical, cultural, economic, and racial barriers (83). The natives were at the receiving end. According to Nelson Mandela, "The often haphazard segregation of the past three hundred years was to be consolidated into a monolithic system . . . The premise of apartheid was that whites were superior to Africans, Coloureds and Indians" (104).

The segregating Acts like the Population Registration Act classified all South Africans as white, black and coloured which at times resulted in tragic cases where members of the same family were classified differently, depending on a child's complexion. The Group Areas Act initiated a time of 'residential apartheid' and forced removals by keeping the white landowners privileged over other groups. Interracial marriages was criminalized, a symptom of embedded "fear and denial" in the white man's psyche (*Doubling* 97). In socio-political domain, African communities were portrayed as traditional and unchanging, an idea Homi K.

Bhabha calls “the concept of fixity” (66) in the projection of the colonized others by the colonizer.

Franz Fanon opines that exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations and others 'objectify' the natives (35). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 advocated separate institutional systems and the natives were denied educational opportunities. It also disparaged the native culture by promoting prejudiced notions in text books. Many were killed/injured during the Sharpeville protest in 1960 against the Pass Laws. A new resistance evolved in the 1960s onwards. The South African Student's Organization of 1969 and the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s were influential developments. In 1976 Black students rose against the imposition of Afrikaans since it was considered the oppressors' language. The issue flared a youth uprising in Soweto. Many generations of the country's people were raised without proper education during the years of unrest. Until 1989 the states of emergency continued sporadically. Thousands of people died in custody, while many were sentenced to death, banishment or life imprisonment.

During the South African anti-apartheid movements the African National Congress (ANC) led by Nelson Mandela, played the most prominent role. Although slavery was abolished in South Africa in 1838, apartheid was only lifted in 1994 after years of bloodshed. The South African authors have criticized the authoritative regime's imposition on their intellectual and creative freedom. Personal world is often influenced by political scenarios. Books are censored/banned, authors face imprisonment for political activism. Against all odds, literature as an art and critical discourse has sustained itself and has inculcated solidarity. Nadine Gordimer talks to Jannika Hurwitz: “Literature is one of the few areas left where black and white feel some identity of purpose; we all struggle under censorship, and most white writers feel a strong sense of responsibility to promote, defend, and help black writers where possible” (“Nadine Gordimer”).

Apartheid has prohibited the ideas of freedom and reciprocal association in the country. Coetzee feels that the “love” of South Africa, not just the riches of the land but the people too, could be the solution of the dilemma. He describes the fatal repercussion of apartheid laws:

The deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life. All expressions of that inner life, no matter how intense, no matter how pierced with exultation or despair, suffer from the same stuntedness and deformity . . . it applies to myself and my own writing as much as to anyone else. (*Doubling* 98)

While scrutinizing an oppressive regime, Coetzee's earlier novels employ an apolitical view point that surpasses geographical/social boundaries with the use of literary devices like allegory, unreliable narrator or symbolic setting. Magda of *In the Heart of the Country* is a lonely spinster engaged in acute self-critique of her situation as a white woman in a colonial society. *Waiting for the Barbarians* presents the irrational fear and oppression of the empire over the natives in an unspecified settlement. *Life & Times of Michael K* projects the disenfranchised coloured people in a country under civil war. According to Tlhalo Raditlhalo, though the greater part of Coetzee's work is inspired by South African contexts, the

relationship between literature and the writer's immediate world is “more oblique” and there is “exploration of postmodernist concerns and efforts to leave open the possibility of multiple interpretations of his work” (594).

Gareth Cornwell et al observe an element of “historical specificity” in *Age of Iron* (73); it is also discernible in *Disgrace*. The former work presents Elizabeth Curren, a retired university professor diagnosed with cancer whose physical deterioration is symbolic of life under apartheid. She writes letters to her only daughter who lives in America. She reflects on her ignorance of how things are and questions the situation of a white woman in compliance with the regime. *Disgrace* features David Lurie, an elderly university professor who loses his job due to a sexual misconduct with a black student. His transformation from a “Casanova” to a “dog-man” charts the changes in the life of Lucy who is robbed and raped by three black persons. The novel examines the post-apartheid scenario and change in socio-political power.

In 1990, *Age of Iron* came out voicing an angry denunciation of the apartheid. David Attwell finds in the novel the contest between people and the state (120). The police are seen with a free hand under emergency to dispense casual injury/death while the revolutionaries have resorted to a “hardened rhetoric of absolutes.” Dominic Head believes that the political context in the novel is precisely evoked (133). There are scenes of township violence, black resistance, government control of media, school boycotts, torture and detention of revolutionaries. The novel projects a historical situation dominated by two competing forms of politics: the apartheid and the resistance. Elizabeth stands alone against this duality. She ponders on her relation with apartheid: “A crime was committed long ago . . . So long ago that I was born into it. It is part of my inheritance” (*Age* 149). She considers the politicians as “a plague of black locusts infesting the country” (25). She finds “the great divide” between the deprived natives and privileged whites. Harsh life has taught the native children to scorn ‘childhood.’ They are taken into the prisons and executed. Very poignantly the root cause of life's sordidness is mouthed by Bheki who replies to Elizabeth about his reason for not going to school — “What is school for? It is to make us fit into the apartheid system” (62).

Elizabeth relates her unlikely confession to Vercueil — an alcoholic of unspecified race. She is affronted by the otherness of Vercueil and the members of black community. The black voices in the novel are very articulate: from Bheki and John's uncompromising declarations to Florence's self-assertion and Thabane's steely attitude. The hard times have reversed the traditional parents-children relationship. Florence says, “It is all changed today. There are no more mothers and fathers” (*Age* 36). For Elizabeth the manifestation of the 'age of iron' damages the future that children traditionally represent. Seeing the youngsters deep into the struggle, she asks for Thabane's interference. He remarks that as an old, white academic, she cannot understand the ground of the youths' involvement. The dismal picture of revolution is palpable in her view: “comradeship is nothing but a mystique of death, of killing and dying, masquerading as what you call a bond . . . I have no sympathy with this comradeship. You are wrong, you and Florence and everyone else, to be taken by it and, worse, to encourage it in children” (137).

Coetzee opines, “Elizabeth Curren ruminates a great deal about what would constitute heroism in contemporary South Africa” (*Doubling* 340). Bheki and John's commitment to their activism makes her redefine the idea of heroism, honour, freedom or

goodness. Bheki's death evokes in her mind an image of resurrection of black power: "Now that child is buried and we walk upon him . . . I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces . . . They lie there heavy and obdurate, waiting for my feet to pass, waiting for me to go, waiting to be raised up again" (*Age* 115). Her love for her daughter becomes more encompassing, taking in its fold Vercueil, Florence, Bheki, John and the "plenty of good people in this country" (*Age* 165).

Coetzee says that one would find the contest of interpretations: 'the political versus ethical' played out in his novels (*Doubling* 338). In *Age of Iron* the ethical cannot be reduced to the moral injunctions espoused by Elizabeth's inherited value system. Whereas the political cannot be reduced to the need for solidarity and generalization (e.g. Thabane's opinions of comradeship and activism) or for fixed readings of people and happenings — it needs to be revalued by the demands of the ethical. Derek Attridge thinks, "it is the political that is to be corrected by the ethical, and not vice versa" because the ethical involves a responsiveness and responsibility to the other and the future (104-5). Coetzee believes, to live as an 'ethical community' people need to share an awareness and acceptance of a common justice that transcends laws and lawmaking (*Doubling* 340).

In 1994 the Nationalist Government and apartheid regime was abolished and Mandela became the first black President of South Africa. The new constitution was passed in 1995 with promises to give men and women equal rights regardless of their sexual orientation. The country was geared up for a new beginning. However, life in post-apartheid scenario was not idyllic. Leonard Thompson opines: "Racism survives in the new South Africa; full reconciliation was not to be expected before the remnants of apartheid attitudes and practices were dismantled" (287). Coetzee brings out *Disgrace* in 1999. If it talks about the catharsis of people subjected for centuries and their reaction to the transformation of power, it also criticizes the exploitative and indifferent attitude fostered under the banner of western liberalism.

Disgrace brings into discussion the violation of a woman's body while treating carefully the racial aspect. It projects David, a university professor in Cape Town and his young lesbian daughter, Lucy. Raised in a home of two academics, Lucy chooses to be a farmer. David has existed "in an anxious flurry of promiscuity." When his weekly sexual relationship with a prostitute (the "honey-brown" Muslim Soraya) ends, he starts "an affair" with a student thirty years younger, Melanie (the "dark one"). David admits that his sexual act is "undesired" by Melanie yet maintains it is "not rape, not quite that." His abuse exposes power operating at levels of gender, race and institution. *Disgrace* offers a subversion of 'black-peril' — social anxiety about rape of white women by black men) by simultaneously scripting a narrative of 'white-peril' — sexual exploitation of black women by white men (Graham 237). After dismissal from the university David retreats to Lucy's smallholding at Salem. He is catapulted into a rural South Africa of poverty and crime. He is attacked; Lucy is robbed and raped by three black persons. Lucy considers her rape as a "private matter," decides to keep the baby she has conceived and negotiates with her black assistant Petrus in order to have "peace" — all of which bear marks of unique ethical and moral stance.

One would argue that Lucy takes the incident as an atonement for the historical guilt. David asks if she is working out a "private salvation" but she negates such ideas. She sees her

attackers as debt/tax collectors. He considers the rape as a manifestation of 'a history of wrong.' Mike Marais opines that David's association with the blacks, specifically the rapists, is defined by a discursively-constructed opposition of race and as he strikes Pollux (a rapist of Lucy), history speaks through him too (81). In spite of David's advice, Lucy escapes nowhere, nor aborts the child she has conceived. Significantly she remarks to David: "I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing . . . No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity" (205).

The official enquiry of David's sexual harassment has resonance with the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Demonstrating a firm desire of overcoming the arbitrary barriers associated with racism, segregation and apartheid, Mandela named the Commission in 1995 (Cottrell 115). According to Jacques Derrida, the Statute of TRC has elements of ambiguity which oscillates between a non-penal and non-reparative logic of 'forgiveness' and judicial logic of amnesty. The representative of the State can judge, but forgiveness has nothing to do with this judgment or with the public/political sphere or even with judicial justice/law for which the courts of justice are there (42-3).

Leonard Thompson finds: "the TRC did not advance the cause of racial reconciliation . . . race continued to be the basic line of division in South African society, with class becoming increasingly significant among blacks" (278). During official enquiry, David "freely" admits his guilt but rejects public defence of private actions. In his and Lucy's attack he sees a crime to be punished, oblivious of his own sexual misbehaviour. Lucy is a figure of the other for David. She allows new arrangements; aware of the huge price she would pay, even deciding to become Petrus's third wife. Gayatri Spivak opines, "He (David) is staged as unable to touch either the racial or the gendered other" (22).

Attridge believes that the negative shade in which the black characters are drawn in *Disgrace* has enraged readers concerned with the image of post-apartheid South Africa (170). Gordimer regrets, "I find it difficult to believe . . . that the black family protects the rapist because he's one of them" (qtd. in Mardorossian 72). Elleke Boehmer critically opines that the flawed, highly subjectivized and gendered process of coming to terms, of reduced secular atonement, is focused in *Disgrace* (343). However, Attwell laments the novel's negative reception that Lucy's emergence into the public sphere in South Africa has been restricted to such crude readings as the 'Lucy-syndrome' — the notion that one must pay up in order to live as a white African ("Race" 11).

Coetzee shows David realizing Lucy's personal integrity at the cost of everything that has created the person that she is. André Brink too rejects the idea of personal/communal guilt as a paralyzing force that cancels history. He believes: "Surely another route is possible — that of not only acknowledging complicity but also of a commitment to *responsibility*, a position from which one can move in a much more creative way towards new beginnings" (13). David's turning into a "a dog-man" or "a harijan" and Lucy's "becoming a peasant" reverberates Simone Drichel's "ethical sociality" which entails "approaching the other in their irreducible singularity rather than as part of an abstract category such as race, gender, class or even species" and may facilitate "the possibility for justice in postapartheid South Africa" (152). A South Africa trying to build hope amid social confusion becomes clear as David asks Lucy if she loves her child and she replies in the positive: "Love will grow — one can trust

Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. You should try to be a good person too” (*Disgrace* 216).

As someone who has observed people under the most socially extreme circumstances of racism and civil war, Coetzee tries to find the grounding of a civil society. In this regard Coetzee comments that: “I believe one has a duty (an ethical duty? — perhaps) not to submit to powers of discourse without question” (*Doubling* 200). As a writer he would not want “the feminine subject, the colonial subject” or the marginalized subject, to be “robbed of power by the skeptical processes of textualization” (*Doubling* 248). Many a time we find the oppressed and the marginalized in their subjugation or exploitation, nevertheless they are invested with acts and words of resistance and challenge against the dominant discourse and power-play.

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Global Warming to Climate Change: A Preoccupation of Scholars of Humanities and Literature

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Abstract

*A lot has been written on global warming and climate change but still many academic disciplines do not consider it a big problem and leave it untreated in the scope of their expertise. Literary studies per se remained unresponsive to these issues for quite a long time. Climate change is and will be severely affecting ecosystems and disturbing ecological balance. But institutional literature remained for a long time indifferent to the environmental crisis as if oil spills, toxic waste contamination, extinction of species at an unprecedented rate, protests over nuclear waste were not the preoccupations of the literary profession. Literature writers and philosophers like Henri Michaux (1899-1984), Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), Fernand Braudel (1902-1985) talked about the nonsensical height that human acts led to, but they worked in silos. In the 90's 'ecocriticism' as a literary theory emerged with its revolutionary agenda and gave a collective platform to the eco-critics for the first time. Nevertheless, this remained largely dominated by the White writers. In India, this field attracted many thinkers as well but still the awareness among the youth is very limited. The present paper wishes to problematize this lacuna and put forward solutions by sensitizing the Indian readership regarding the need to contribute to the growing environmental crisis that is looming large in the horizon and if allowed to continue it may lead to the doom of the humankind. The fields of literature and humanities studies have a big role to play in this direction as has been put forth in the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ideology* edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm through various essays. This study aims to explore select discourses from this book and other resources in a bid to understand how humanities scholars and in particular, literary scholars can respond to climate change.*

Keywords: *Global warming, The Ecocriticism Reader, literary studies, unresponsive, doom of the mankind*

Introduction

This paper plans to discuss through a reading of the path-making book on environmental criticism, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* published in 1996. It attempts to understand how literary studies can contribute to forestall the environmental doom. Strangely, oil spills, toxic waste contamination, extinction of species at an unprecedented rate, protests over nuclear waste dumps have been issues for the scientists, and the non-science domains never took cognizance of them; rather they washed their hands off it. This mindset was transformed when ecocriticism as a literary theory emerged with its nature friendly agenda. Thus, ecocritical studies came to the fore in the nineties. While at its inception it was a field dominated by the Whites, gradually many non-western authors across the globe participated in this movement. In India many scholars were also drawn into eco-

criticism, but still the field remained closed and confined to the elite intellectuals even to this day. Awareness among the common run of people is very limited even when we are already experiencing some of the disastrous effects of global warming and the pandemic Covid-19 as an offshoot of the same process. So, the present paper wishes to explore how literary and humanities scholars can respond to the growing environmental crisis.

Definition of Environmental Literature and Theory

According to Derek Gladwin's article, "Ecocriticism" in oxfordbibliographies.com "ecocriticism is a broad way for literary and cultural scholars to investigate the global ecological crisis through the intersection of literature, culture, and the physical environment." The website points to the significant contribution of the American environmental anarchist, Murray Bookchin, an important proponent of social ecology. Bookchin traced the cause of environmental degradation to the existence of unjust, hierarchical relationships in our society, in the large-scale social structures of modern capitalist states. He states that the most environmentally sympathetic form of political and social organization is the one based on decentralized small-scale societies and systems of production. Another website, Wikipedia defines eco criticism as "the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyse texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature." In short "ecocriticism" is a broad literary and cultural theory. It takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies. It is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Eco-critics or eco-theorists endeavour to understand how nature is represented in the literary text or how the physical setting contributes to the vision of the novel or the short story; or whether the moral values delineated in the text go hand in hand with ecological wisdom. Thus, ecocritical theory intends to understand the interconnection between nature and culture in terms of form and content. As Cheryll Glotfelty characterises it in the introductory essay "Literary Studies in the Age of Environmental Crisis" in *Ecocriticism Reader* "As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a thematic discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman." (xix)

Historical Background

However, the genesis of this study did not happen in void. It was the culmination of many developments in cognitive and societal fields. New conceptual developments in philosophy and religion deserve mention here. The concept of "the great chain of being" or *scala naturae* is derived from Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* that was further developed during the Middle Ages. As per this theory, "The chain of being hierarchy" placed God at the top, above angels (immortals); beneath them are humans, perishable and essentially impermanent; lower still are animals and plants. At the bottom are the mineral materials of the earth itself. Thus, the higher the being is in the chain, the more attributes it has, including all the attributes of the beings below it. God has created all other beings and is therefore, outside creation, time, and space. He has all the spiritual attributes found in humans and angels, and

uniquely has His own attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. He is the model of perfection for all lower beings. Animals have senses, can move, and have physical appetites. The highest animal, the lion, the king of beasts, can move vigorously, and has powerful senses such as excellent eyesight and the ability to smell its prey, while lower animals have lesser capacities, and the lowest like oysters are sessile, attached to the seabed.

The set nature of species, and thus the absoluteness of creatures' places in the great chain, made men powerful than nature whereas earlier when there was subsistence economy, there was parity in the status of man and nature. Historian, Lynn White Jr. in the chapter entitled "Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crises" (3) in *Ecocriticism Reader* has discussed how in early times, men had been part of the nature and later became exploiter of the same. In agriculture from subsistence farming there was a change over to technology-driven farming with the advent of modern technology which was ruthless towards nature. He has further pointed out that Christianity inherited from Judaism a concept of time as non-repetitive and a linear story of creation that explains its anthropocentric bias as in *scala naturae*. This, according to him may explain the origin of the ecological crisis of contemporary times. By gradual stages God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. At the end, He had created Adam and then Eve to give him company. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his rule over them. God planned everything for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any other purpose but to serve man's purposes. Man is not simply part of nature; he is made in God's image. This perception of man as a supreme being resulted in his alienation from the rest of creation of nature and gave him a fake feeling that he could control the world. Radical thinkers like Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Charles Darwin saw a progression of life forms from the simplest creatures striving towards complexity and perfection, a scheme accepted by Henri de Blainville, a zoologist by profession. The very idea of an ordering of organisms, even if supposedly fixed, laid the basis for the idea of transmutation of species, whether progressive goal-directed orthogenesis or Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

The eighteenth century Enlightenment literary and philosophical movement in Europe challenged this theory of the divine plan, and fought the last vestiges of feudal hierarchy, by creating secular governmental structures that vested power into the hands of ordinary citizens, rather than in those of divinely ordained monarchs. These developments led to the establishment of human supremacy. The ancient *Ancien Regime* or the feudal Bourbon Absolute Monarchy in France crumbled as a result of the French Revolution and the First Republic was created there. Even before this, the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century or the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century gave the Western technology and science a triumphant position and hitherto it has had a dominant influence over the whole world.

Interestingly, the 18th century belief of the triumph of science and rationality over moral degradation and greed of mankind was criticised by the notable enlightened philosopher and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778) in his notable essay, "*Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*" (Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts) which raised a lot of hue and cry in the French intellectual circle of the period leading to his rift with another important voice of the period, Voltaire. Like Rousseau many literary intellectuals of the following centuries like

the 20th century author, Henri Michaux talked against the supremacy of mankind and how civilization has taken a toll on the morality of the people. In a YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJfwVXWP6X4>) the eco-historian, Donald Worster asserted his belief that historians, literary scholars, philosophers and anthropologists could not bring about reforms in the system, but they could help in the better understanding of the environmental crisis. Worster strongly feels that our history should not be confined to the history of ideas or to the history of human affairs, but that humankind's history should be inclusive of the non-human world. with the history of the planet earth. We should see the past as one with the past of the other: history of ocean, biosphere, climate, micro-organisms; with our species' long struggle for health etc. One may cite the instance of using pesticides that is adding toxic elements to the nature and harming it, which in turn is affecting our health.

Drawing from this consciousness and the environmental havocs around, Cheryll Glotfelty underlines in “Literary Studies in the Age of Environmental Crisis” (xv) in *Ecocriticism Reader* that we have reached the age of environmental limits; human actions damaged the earth's support systems. Either we should change our ways, or face global catastrophe and the pandemic situation in which we are right now, points to this issue more than ever. Humanities Scholars are trying to answer the call by finding ways to contribute to the solution by adding an environmental dimension to their disciplines. While environmental historians are studying the reciprocal relationship between humans and the land, the latter being conceived not just as the stage of human action but as an actor in the drama, they interlink environmental conditions, eco modes of production and cultural ideas. On the other hand, anthropologists are bridging culture and geography. In this regard, their research on primal cultures is noteworthy: they help people respect their ethics and value systems that sustain these cultures till today. Psychologists review in their field the link between environmental conditions and mental health. According to them man's alienation from nature forms the basis of all sociological and psychological ills. Philosophy in this regard made progress by leaps and bounds by adding subfields to it like environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism and social ecology in a bid to understand the origin of environmental degradation and putting forward an alternative view of existence that will provide an ethical and conceptual foundation for right relations with the earth. Recognition of the eco crisis also came from the Theologians like Pope John Paul II who talked of reinventing God as immanent in creation and of viewing earth itself as sacred in his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace. (“The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility”) https://www.vatican.va/content/johnpaul/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jpii_mes_1989_1208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html)

Inference and conclusion

So, an ecologically focused criticism needs to be written extensively, and humanities, particularly literary studies cannot turn a deaf ear to it. Consciousness raising regarding the present eco-crisis, global warming and climate change is the need of the hour and professors of literature should play an active role in teaching literature keeping this focus in mind.

Curriculum should include texts on Eco-literature. Interdisciplinarity has already made its way. Now connecting environment with the social, health and mental wellness is an imperative. Literature departments can invite guest speakers from a wide range of disciplines and organize conferences on environment topics. Students opting the literature and language programmes need to be made to think seriously about the relationship of humans to nature, about the ethical problems posed by the environmental crisis, and made conscious about how literature transmits values that have deep ecological implications.

Ecocritical literature also takes cognizance of the subfields such as ecofeminism, social ecology, deep ecology and animal rights. The ecofeminists claim that androcentrism or male-centredness, rather than anthropocentrism (concept that humans are superior to all other species) is the root cause of the degradation of nature. They maintain that androcentrism as seen in patriarchal societies is responsible for the striving to dominate nature. Just as males have always tried to be superior to women, so too have they tried to make nature subservient and bend to their will.

In contrast, social ecologists hold that the problems of environmentalism are due to an authoritarian hierarchy that is also responsible for such ills as racism, sexism, and classism. As per the website of *Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/deep-ecology>), the problems such as global warming or species extinction are caused in the same way as social problems like poverty and crime and all this can attribute to a social structure in which only some enjoy real power, while the majority remain powerless. They claim that environmental degradation will continue until such social conditions are addressed. The Wikipedia website (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_ecology) defines “deep ecology” as another branch of study that argues that the natural world is a compound of relationships in which “the existence of organisms is dependent on the existence of others within ecosystems. It argues that non-vital human interference with or destruction of the natural world poses a threat therefore not only to humans but to all organisms constituting the natural order.” Our living environment should be inclusive where every being has a basic moral and legal right to live and flourish, independent of its instrumental benefits for human use. Deep ecology values diverse communities of life on Earth as more than just resources. It is described as “deep” as it proposes to look more deeply into the reality of our relationship with the other living world, arriving at more profound philosophical conclusions than those of mainstream environmentalists

Thus, awareness among the youth regarding the significance of ecology will be of great relevance to make the earth a better place to live in. The aforesaid discussion on the developments in the field of literature and humanities studies can contribute to the holistic development of mankind with a go green approach to save the environment.

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Critiquing Urdu Literature

Dr. Sadaf Fareed*

Aal-e-Ahmad Suroor (Ale Ahmad Suroor) was born in Badaun (Uttar Pradesh) on 9th September 1911 and passed away in 2002 in Delhi. He was a renowned poet and critic of Urdu language/literature who was honoured with Sahitya Akadami Award for his literary critical works. One of the specific qualities of Aal-e-Ahmad Suroor is that he expressed himself at times in short, isolated sentences wherein the context is not fully explicated. This had to be supplied while translating him, thus leading to 'elaborate' translation.

The impact of the West has brought many pleasant changes to Urdu, one of these is in Literary Criticism. But it does not mean that prior to the impact of the west, no one was conscious about Literary Criticism or there were no discussions about poetry and literature, no commentary on the poets and no arguments about the accountability of language and discourse being made in Urdu literature. Remarkable creative works cannot exist without critical consciousness. Creative essence gets misled in the absence of critical consciousness. Similarly, critical consciousness becomes lifeless without creative capacity. In Urdu literature, from Mulla Vajhi to Hasrat Mohani, every good poet has a noticeable and useful critical cognizance too. Then, a considerable body of journals, descriptions, prefaces and letters have been there since the very beginning. There is a regular and continuous discussion and commentary on poetry, and art in Mushairas and other literary gatherings. Along with it, there are regular discussions and commentaries on writing poetry and prose. Meer was apprehensive of sensual depictions of Jurr'at, while Khan Arzoo called Sauda's poetry *Hadees e Qudsi'*. Aatish considered the Marsiyas (elegies) of Dabeer as the *Tales of Landhoor bin Sa'ad*² whereas Shefta considered the works of Nazeer 'vulgar' because he was such a staunch advocate of solemnity that whatever be the meaning, he considered that unacceptable. To Ghalib, poetry was to play with words rather than about rhyming schemes. He had also discussed the use of some other issues relating to poetry and had found the satire of Atish sharper than that of Nasikh's. This critical wisdom of his was a propagator of many good traditions. With him there was a consideration for the intricacies of Art and an arrangement to practice the same. This view was quite conservative and traditional, also advocated restraint and order. He wanted to smoothen all the vicissitudes and to mould every mind in the same form. He used to speak in symbols, and was not an advocate of explanation, specification or elaboration. There was either praise or criticism with less emphasis on literary but more on artistic quality. There is no doubt that criticism originated with Hali. Prior to Hali, the poets acknowledged the teachers but not the critics. If there is anyone more competent in criticism than Hali, it was Shefta, without whose approval/liking even Ghalib didn't consider *Ghazal* to be worthy. However, he too believed in physical form of captivating beauty but couldn't visualize beauty in the abstract. Hali raised some ideological questions regarding poetry,

literature, life, manners and mannerisms, society, *ghazal* and *nazm*. He tried to develop a certain standard for poetry and tried to evaluate our literary investments against it. While, he got influenced by the west, his values and standards were not purely western. In doing that, he gave due consideration to the practice of art, he did not let go of the traditional wisdom. He criticized certain conventions but did not neglect the tradition of literature fully. This method of Hali proved beneficial and it paved the way for the discussion on Criticism and its fundamentals. Therefore, there are many such essays, magazines, journals and books available in Urdu that discuss the fundamentals of Criticism. There are also discussions about some writers, literary movements, or there is an explanation and commentary of some literary principles. In the West, literary criticism has gone through many phases and its impact is felt in the East too. It is a fact that there are even today many persistent misconceptions regarding the meaning, functionality, requirement, fundamental conditions, domains and the specialties of Criticism. Thus, there is still an ample need for clarifying the concepts of Criticism (what criticism is?) and their importance in life and in literature.

Coleridge once spoke of a man and a woman, who were watching a waterfall. The man said, "What a splendor it is!" The woman replied, "Yes, it's very beautiful." It is not the case that the poor woman did not have a feeling for beauty. She had, but without an aesthetic taste. She had wisdom, but that wisdom was neither trained nor cultured. Thus, she could not differentiate between various kinds of beauty and couldn't understand the difference between affection and obsession; or if she knew, she couldn't express that. This issue with sensibility was not only true of common people but of experts as well. Many a scholar is not concerned with sceneries but with taste and a sense of aesthetic pleasure; they don't look at the outer beauty of things. They look for special inner beauty. Many recognise beauty by a definite appearance and perceive it by its exterior only, whereas, many others are admirers of traditions and still some others are flag-bearers of revolution (rebellion). There are a few like Fani and Jigar who consider *Ghazal* a form of platonic poetry but consider *Nazm* a mere rhyming scheme. Some of them like Kaleemuddin called *Ghazal*, a semi-barbarian (*Wahshiyana*) type of poetry. Some like Krishan Chander, who despite finding escapism and sensual skepticism in Rashid's poetry, insists on its progressive outlook. Other poets consider revolutionary poetry as rebellion and bloodshed. Still others like Akhtar Raipuri call the works of Akbar enthusiastically, 'a sarcastic rhyming scheme' (*Tukbandi*). Some want to make Literature a sort of propaganda while others make it a set of principles but they themselves don't follow these. Many of them can portray individual pictures that are appealing but cannot visualize the complete picture. The reason behind this ebb and tide of opinions is that our literature has been made to be either imaginative and philosophical or it has been used as propaganda but not letting it to be just literature. The worshippers of appearance (*zahir parast*) didn't notice Iqbal's inner self in his language and considered it a mere skill. They ignored the workmanship behind his florid style while the others attempted to neglect the art of his wit. Therefore, they lost the significance of their own words. Many remarkable works of criticism were written in Urdu, but a real criticism which is like a tight rope, could not be produced. Various groups used the faculty of criticism for their personal purposes but did not practice it for its own sake. There is no other critic after Hali who could have what T. S. Eliot called universal intelligence. Universal Intelligence, however, does not

mean international or inter-continental knowledge. Many a critic forgot their real function and indulged in a contest to praise the courage of the critics. Numerous critics got disgraced due to their philosophical rantings while others became dictatorial in their attitudes. Some other schools of criticism became advocates of one era and one tradition only. While there were scores of incisive perspectives, none helped the readers to understand the poetry from the past, the present and the future simultaneously. It is sad that we do not have an Aristotle in Urdu. Hali's oriental decency makes him, sometimes, soften his remarks about his contemporaries. According to Bernard Shaw, a scholar ought to focus on literariness and style first and on decency and empathy afterwards. This is the difference between the Hali of Treaties and the Hali of Prefaces.

The biggest reason behind the lack of criticism in Urdu is that it has always been considered secondary. I have a patron in Aligarh, who while reading any essay of mine, says, 'What's this? You quote some couplets, explain those, add some introductory remarks, extend some observations, and the critical evaluation is ready'. There is no doubt that we find such criticism in literary journals extensively, but these are not the only forms of Criticism. In his comparisons of Anees and Dabeer, Shibli has made detailed observations underlining that the beauty of *Marsiya* (elegy) cannot be understood by reading a few poets only. Many of Iqbal's critics have rewritten his poetry instead of critiquing it.

Selection is not criticism, but it reflects a critical sensibility. While deciding about a work, representation of the poet is more important than the critic's own preference. Inclusion of a poet (in an anthology) is not an easy task. Those, who get offended by excessive quotations, should think that criticism cannot take place in a vacuum. Quotes keep criticism healthy. Those who look at the quotes only, they ignore the effort and desire that has gone into the search of these; they don't have any significant apprehension of literature. Nor can we make a good impression about their mental faculties. Still, there are some people who believe that creative literature reflects manners and mannerisms of life while critical literature, which is a translation of creativity, performs the duty of analysis or explication. Therefore, criticism cannot compete with the original. For them, criticism which is more bookish than creative is rather insignificant. Some people believe that since critics themselves are rarely poets and if at all, they are of low quality and their opinions cannot be trusted. After all, how can these ordinary creators understand the grandeur of creativity and how can they explain it? Thus, it is our duty to ponder over these two diverse views.

Yusuf Hussain wrote *Rooh-e-Iqbal* based on Iqbal's poetry, where he attempted to interpret his works. Someone criticized *Rooh-e-Iqbal* and challenged the views of Yusuf Hussain. Afterwards, someone else challenged that challenge. As a result, an excessive number of interpretations resulted in spoiling the poet's imagination. Therefore, an excessive amount of criticism spoils the beauty of art. A similar incident also happened with Tagore. Once, he read out a new poem to a group of his friends. One of them explained it in his peculiar way while the other one disagreed with that explanation. Another came forward with a still newer explanation of that same poem. This started a pointless debate amongst them and Tagore left. In our old education system, there was a tradition of assigning more importance to the comprehension of footnotes, annotations, commentaries and this focus on marginal and irrelevant things diverted the attention from the original and resulted in a narrow

understanding of the text. Thus, a subjective and autocratic approach to the text may carry such flaws. Sometimes, the reader gets overwhelmed by the influential personality of a critic, his finely coined rules, and fascinating phrases and he starts looking at the text from the critic's perspective. (However, it is better for an ordinary reader to be influenced by a critic, than to be devoid completely of any critical evaluation, *Suo-motu.*) But an excellent critique is a precursor to innovative and creative literature; it seems to be creative in itself, and it does not seal the mind of the reader, rather it mentally liberates him. No criticism of creative literature can rob it of creativity. There is no contradiction between the two. The art of criticism elaborates creative writing. While criticism is not an act of summarizing or deprecating a text, it must touch the central idea of the text. In common parlance, Criticism is synonymous with surgery but it works in a poetic fashion and operates within its specific space.

People, who are not accustomed to explaining the depth of a literary text, often, suspect its criticism. They only want entertainment or in the words of Iqbal, search for the taste of opium in poetry. If they reflect over it and ignore some superficial differences, they would realize that the presence of criticism is essential for the existence of creative literature. Sometimes, the differences in critical approaches which are found in the Prefaces, Forewords, Analyses, Introductions, and Prologues arouse the suspicion of the readers. In fact, they all are different from one another. The Foreword introduces a book or its writer and outlines its importance. It does not determine the value of the book, rather helps in determining it. On the other hand, the Preface goes a step further and determines the value and worth of a work and also offers a final verdict about it too. Analysis or Review describes some salient features and characteristics of a text. Generally, Prefaces tend to focus on politeness instead of on perfection. However, many Prefaces are tricky and misleading. An incomprehensive piece of criticism may not do much harm, but a piece of criticism that is narrow and yet claims to be comprehensive, is deceptive and illusionary. I admit that in subjective criticism this is inevitable and this deception is very common in the East as well as in the West. Therefore, I consider subjective criticism imperfect as it comes under 'appreciation'. It has its own place and position yet it cannot be given the stature of higher form of criticism. The higher form of criticism is no less significant than creative literature and it is creative in itself.

Then there is this view that the critics who are not poets themselves cannot comment on poetry or those who are not novelists are not competent to formulate an opinion regarding a novel. This observation is based on an erroneous understanding. It is well known that Maulvi Abdul Haq was not a poet, but this fact had not deterred him from being a good critic. Jigar was an excellent poet, but he cannot be considered a skilled critic. While poetry requires some kind of a craze, criticism needs serene solemnity; Arnold called it 'High Seriousness.' Sometimes both qualities are present in the same person. Every good poet has an artistic sense too, but it does not enable him to determine the value of various literary genres; rather, it results in restricting his ability to evaluate. The strength of one specific field often becomes a weakness in another.

The poets of Ghazals are often unable to figure out the constructive aspects of the *Nazm*. Due to their fondness for allusions, they are unable to sense the beauty of clarity and transparency. Criticism has to emerge from the depth and devotion essential for creativity. Every artist has two dimensions to his personality: while one is concerned with gaining

experience, the other deals with viewing the pains and the reliefs from them in life from an elevated perspective and defines its value too. Thus, it seems reasonable to understand the inability of a critic to perceive worldly pleasures and sorrows from an elevated perspective, but this in no way belittles the significance of a critic; instead, it further asserts and consolidates it. The selection of poems by Meer Hasan is superior to the poems chosen by Meer in his *Nikatush Shu'ara*.

The selection made by the poets for the January 1941 issue of '*Nigaar*', was certainly not the best choice of works. Hence, it is clear that a critic without being a poet or a skilled poet can be an excellent critic but he must be able to comprehend the poem and grab the essence of poetry. He should be able to have that same soul which the poet has. He must own a broader sympathy, a flexible mind, and a versatile nature that can keep pace with the poet but sometimes can outpace him as well. An artist gives birth to experiences, and a good critic moulds the artists and transforms them into genuine ones. T.S Eliot has observed rightly, "When one creative mind is better than another, it is often due to better critical abilities one has than the other". Hudson elucidates it more clearly, "A true critique derives its content and passion from life, and so, it is also creative in its own way". Therefore, it is unfair to be hostile towards literary criticism merely for its bookish properties. Good Criticism is in no way inferior to good Creative Literature. Sometimes it is even superior to it.

It is a grave mistake to consider criticism as something secondary. An excellent critique of a text not only gives information, but it also functions like a historian, psychologist, poet, and prophet. Criticism endows the mind with a light that is essential for the critical essence of writing. The beginning of the 19th century was conducive to the extraordinary creativity in England. But to Arnold, poetry was not so creative and abreast with knowledge. Great poets had either inadequate knowledge or it was overshadowed by ambiguity. They lacked variety and colorfulness. To a great extent, the same applies to our poetry. Our ancient literature lacks meaningful content and diversity. But it is not ambiguous because of its particular artistic sense. Comparatively, our modern literature is rich with useful content, value, and diversity but then it is more ambiguous. Earlier, relish and pleasure were of crucial significance but now the focus has shifted to the effects of thrill and frenzy. It is because the intellect is overshadowed by emotion, or the intellect is blurred or is anxious. (This anxiousness is not because of criticism but is due to other reasons.) Psychologists may feel amused at the difference between emotion and intellect, but here I have referred to them in an elementary sense. Like Herus, some people may define poetry as a mere reflection of emotions, but I find it a combination of emotion and intellect. The lack of knowledge (education) and orderliness in literature stems from the absence of critical sense and the lack of an absolute literary taste. (Here, education not only refers to the knowledge gained from books but the knowledge of life and the world).

Every human being has some ability to get influenced by beauty and absorb the effect of aesthetic. But not every individual has the optimal, superlative, and perfect taste for beauty. Some people do not develop mentally with their age. Sometimes the mental growth of some people is hampered by the harsh circumstances of their lives. Sometimes, the harsh circumstances of life do not let people grow and evolve, whereas some others find their cheap thrills (intoxicants) in Literature. Some look for superficial joy in literature and feel satisfied

with it. Many lead a life of ease and leave pain, sorrow, happiness, longing and desire to the Satan as observed by Iqbal in his poetry. That is the reason behind the popularity of *Beeswi Sadi*, *Kahkashan*, *Mast-Qalandar*³ and several such magazines. But here, I am not concerned with those who look for non-literariness in literature, but am more concerned with those who not only make literature a tool to ease the pains of life but who also make it a source of motivation to fight the adversities of life and for the upliftment of human values and life possibilities. Such critics enjoy quality literature and feel overwhelmed on getting acquainted with a literary personality, hail literary achievements and successes and a tint of appreciation and admiration permeates throughout this pleasure. Such appreciation keeps on moving from one literary text to the other. This appreciation, however, lacks balance at times and becomes misleading too. Therefore, it is imperative to give every innovation its due importance, to mould every new truth in the patterns of the realities of life, and to recognize what is fake when it appears disguised as truth. Hence, Criticism is a beacon of guidance for mentors of literature, admirers of literature and for the literature itself. Criticism transforms the joy of reading good literature into a source of vitality and it accentuates the real sense of beauty against the illusionary beauty of materialistic life. Thus, it becomes a force of life. Having established the dignity of Criticism, it becomes essential now to find out, 'what is the role of Criticism?' Here too we find hundreds of observations and thousands of different opinions and trends in terms of western and eastern approaches.

The primary function of the Criticism is to judge. It carries out a comprehensive assessment of good and bad elements in writing. It is an act of elaboration, analysis, and evaluation which sets parameters for life and literature. It does justice to a text and sets the standards for low and high, truth and lies as well as for the best and the worst. Criticism points to the eternity of every era and at the same time to the modernity of eternity. It performs the roles of inventor as well as of the preservers of literature. It constructs and deconstructs at the same time. Literature without Criticism is like a dense jungle, which has an irregular, uneven but abundant produce. Many such things can be said about the role of criticism and none would be wrong. If we look at the list of good critics, we find that some critics are inclined towards judgment, and some others insist on analysis and explanation. Some have been neutral and have tried to interpret the text in itself. However, it is nearly impossible to be completely neutral in literature. The function of criticism is not just to present both dimensions of an image. A critic is neither supposed to compromise with the flaws nor be concerned with faults only. But, after scrutinizing both sides it is necessary to acknowledge the significant one. Stylistic criticism is also a kind of criticism. The fervor of art hidden within words and the sense of life and creativity within art are also of utmost importance. Only the explication of rhythm and rhyme is not criticism. But it doesn't mean that a skilled critic can afford to be indifferent to the principles and rules of prosody. He not only knows the rules of prosody and everyday proverbs, but he is also aware of the fact that fine and good poetry can be composed even without the knowledge of Prosody. In fiction writing, some people still look for Romanticism. And that is why, the extra ordinary artistic stature of Bedi is denied, which, certainly, is not correct. Even in poetry, the poets from Rumi to Iqbal consider it derogatory to be mentioned only as poets.

By mere poetry, probably they meant merely a specific form of art. After having a

command on the nuances of language, a command on style is also essential for a critic. A critic must be able to sense the essence of sincerity, distinction, and the beauty of depiction in writing. Beautiful depiction and diction can add color to writing but it cannot add spirit and essence. The exactness of events and the precision of information are also of utmost importance. If a critic is ignorant of the precision of details, then his foundation is unstable and incomplete. That is why most of the errors in modern criticism are either due to the lack of knowledge or are because of misunderstanding. A critic's job is not to describe events alone and thus, he is not obliged to be a mere record keeper. While criticism is not a just a filing or compiling of events, but without a correct narration of events and the right feelings, that is, without an accurate historical sense, he would go off track. It is important for a critic to delve deep into the past while analyzing any past event. Turning away from the past is not right under any circumstances. The first weakness of modern criticism is that it, at times, disregards the events or distorts them and does not brook any opposition. The other weakness is that it lacks the real sense of the past. Although, our literature has often been past-centric, for many years, poets and writers have preferred the conformity over the innovation, traditional style over novelty, and art over the literature. But it does not mean that we are totally unaffected by the past. In the beginning of progressive criticism, there was more preaching and less criticism, because it had not learnt to value the past till then. But, recent pieces of criticism are rich in historical consciousness in relation to continuity and understanding of the past. Exceptional criticism cannot be obsessed with the classical and romantic classification of a text. It cannot, therefore, be divided into independent sections. So many critics still evaluate poets and writers in terms of their distinctiveness from their predecessors. It is fine but not sufficient. To what extent they are the custodians of that asset, the reflectors of tradition and the manifestation of the temperament which is conferred upon them by the culture and civilization should also be taken into consideration. They should also be examined in terms of their antiquity and novelty. They should be evaluated not only by their innovation and uniqueness but by their literary caliber also. The literary caliber here refers to that quality which is characteristic of the day. An example from Iqbal would clarify this further. We find new thoughts in the *Gazals* of Iqbal's *Bal-e-Jibril* and *Shama-o- Shayar*. But these new thoughts come along with a form of poetry that is familiar and is according to the defined structures. Iqbal is a modern poet, but his modernity does not take him away from the classical essence of poetry. With the symbolic representation of wine and the wine glass, he observes the truth of life. Despite the modernity, Iqbal is not a rebel poet; nor is Hali. They set new trends and traditions, but these traditions are more about authority, legislation and expansion than about constraint and exclusion. Hali and Iqbal are superior to Bijnauri and Azmatullah Khan because despite being leading voice of their times, they are neither ignorant of the past nor are they extremists and restricted. Kalimuddin is a more creative, profound thinker and innovative as compared to other critics. If he had not diverted himself from the Classics, his criticism would have been more influential and superior. His historical and literary sense would have been more prominent as well as vivid and his criticism would not have received negative assessment.

A feeling of the past and adherence to the past are two different things. If a critic only values the tradition and tries to take the 20th century wisdom back to the 17th century, he

actually degrades himself. A feeling and a constant literary permanence from the faint memories of the past cannot deprive him of the uniqueness, innovation, and the latest experiences. What is the need for Free-Verse? *Nazm* alone will suffice. The answer to this question is as to where be the need for *Nazm*. Prose has no vices; it is sufficient in itself and there is no need for poetry even. If there is no single method for designing a room, when beauty can be revealed in circles as well as in straight lines, when an artist can often draw his mind on paper in hundreds of ways, then why should there be a particular frame and structure for the arrangement of the words? Why is it necessary for every idea and imagination to follow the rhythmic structure and why one needs to adhere to rhyming schemes when he intends to present a specific thought? Even a poet like Hali has acknowledged that not only *Radeef and Qaafiya*⁴ but also weight is unnecessary for poetry. Thus, it is not correct to question every new experience. Experience shows that people are discontented with the prevailing and preexisting structures, and it-the *nazm*-liberates the beauty from the shackles of limitations. It widens the mental horizon by exposing it to a fresh and unique kind of beauty. Experiences are necessary for every literature. However, it is not necessary that the experience reveals itself in the new form only. It should also appear in new themes, new concepts and new imaginations. An excellent critic must respect the newness along with antiquity. He should not let his passion for knowledge die. In *Mudawa*⁵, new forms of poetry were criticized. The most objectionable point there was the disapproval of newness and a blind advocacy of traditions as well as the superficiality of such advocacy. A critic and a priest are two different creatures and a critic can neither be a censor nor a policeman. The poetry or the stories of that era were objected to for their unpleasantness. Why isn't there hopefulness and joy? Why are the authors succumbing to temptations of sexuality? Why do they wail and are cynical instead of laughing? Such questions show that the opponents of new forms of literature do not try to understand the typical issues of that era. Here, I would like to discuss one of the specific issues of that time through an illustration.

In the past, only professional soldiers fought the war, or their chiefs grappled with each other. The battle was decided on the defeat of the chief or the armies. All and sundry were not supposed to fight. Similarly, not everyone was supposed to enjoy beauty. People had their own worries and concerns. Only some were passionate about women and beauty and were enchanted by moonlight, while some others were destined to plough the land, pay off the debts, and spend their lives like sheep or goat. But now, the parameters of war have changed. Everyone fights the battle or gets the benefits of truce. Churchill was the saviour of England, but following the end of war, people discarded him. War has shown that every dream can be realized and that every hut can be transformed into a palace. It has made dreams vivid and colorful and failures even more bitter. It has changed the parameters of both construction and destruction. Unsatisfied desires and unfulfilled wishes are graver. All this has also influenced literature-naturally-and no critic can remain unaffected by it.

Classical criticism looked at poets from a different perspective and assigned to each of them various titles such as the 'poet of politics', 'pioneer of optimism', 'Sufi Poet', and 'worldly poet' according to the kind of poetry they wrote. It also dealt with the experiences and circumstances of the poets. There was an impact of their personality too. But it was unaware of the degree or the extent to which the environment impacted their creative work? How did it

manifest itself in the personality of the writer and how did it find its way in art through unknown routes? Modern criticism has accommodated objectivism, realism, social awareness, and geo-criticism, and it has given ideological radiance to emotional shadows. Literature needed this insight. Such things were required in literature. If we look at the poetry of Hali, independent of the *Gadar*⁶ and the Sir Sayed Movement, it would seem without any essence and spirit, and the secret of its virtue and sublimity would remain incomprehensible. We cannot figure out the difference between Chakbast and Iqbal, Prem Chand and his followers, and Iqbal and his contemporary progressive poets without looking at the environmental aspects. This makes the task of criticism even more difficult. The work of criticism becomes even more challenging, for it has to understand the personality of an artist and appraise his experiences, followed by its evaluation in the backdrop of the environmental elements. Then only can one get a real literary insight and it is only through this insight that the pain, despair, austerity, and the pessimism of Fani, as also the modern poets' yearning for death can be understood.

Even if a critic understands his time and is familiar with his predeceasing one too, yet he is susceptible to the danger of diversion into the domains of philosophy, politics, and psychology. Arnold had to join issues with the ignorants of his time while trying to categorize the standards and the values of literature. We don't know whether that struggle was successful or not but Arnold's work became customary of such propaganda. Such danger as this is not only for moral reformers but politicians also face similar problems. Criticism should not be a slave to Politics; rather, it should support it and accompany it. It shouldn't fall prey to psychology as well. Though the knowledge of Psychology is very beneficial for us, it is like a mirror that distorts. It changes the shape and size of things: small objects are enlarged and the large ones are dwarfed, sometimes it flattens or broadens a face unusually. It makes a mountain of a mole-hill. It exaggerates and makes things highly complicated. Psychological criticism is more of a pretender. It claims to be a Science and borrows some elements from it, but it has not yet achieved the stature of an actual Science. That is why I consider superficial psychological criticism a misleading one. However, I approve of the significance of the psychological insights. but, so far, efforts to fit in psychological insights into literature are like containing the ocean into a jar. While, Psychology has tried to define things, most of its terminology is not appropriately coined as yet. Although it has a sound foundation, the skyscraper which stands on it is still unstable.

A critic is not only a philosopher, preacher, or psychologist, but he is also a seer. As Richards said, "A critic treats the Human mind in the same way as a doctor treats human body." He is a creator of values, who creates them and expands them. As a creator, he perceives the display of values from a vantage position and as a practitioner he is superior to a mere teacher or a preacher. Thus, his preaching is more effective than that of others. It is more lasting and we can rely on it for a long period of time.

After clarifying that a critic has to maintain the balance between tradition and revolution (rebellion), present and past, environment and individuality, art and philosophy, it is essential to make it known that some critics despite sacrificing this balance did not lose their importance. Shefta was an excellent critic of his time. He believed in the classical norms and values, and considered literature a noble art. But he had nothing to do with the people. Although, by ignoring Nazeer, he devalued and harmed himself yet his importance must be

acknowledged. He had the best critical wisdom amongst all the predecessors of Hali and his *Gulshan-e-Bekhaar* (Thornless Garden) is an outstanding work of his time. In the over-excitement for newness, Azmatullah Khan went to the extent of demanding the very end of Ghazal. Because of such an antagonistic attitude, he could not be considered a major critic. However, he holds a high position amongst the modernists. He understands the quintessence of poetry and identifies its beauty. Nevertheless, those who successfully maintained their mental balance and kept pace with the past as well as the present are more valued and esteemed because they belonged to their own time and also to the earlier eras simultaneously and possessed a universal intelligence.

Now, the only question that remains to be considered is whether a single comprehensive term for Criticism can be coined. I think the word *Parakh* (screening and examining) is the most pertinent one as it comprises introductions, elucidations, and decisions. The word 'examining' is associated with a parameter or a scale. A critic must have such a criterion for testing. It is necessary to interpret and analyze before examining any work. An analyst or an examiner never imposes his decision on others. All critics agree that a critic should not be authoritarian. Eliot says, "A critic should neither be inflexible about the important issues nor should he decide immediately about the virtue and vice of anything. He should only explain (the concepts) and the reader himself would reach the right conclusion." When a critic introduces someone, his introduction is not the call of a leader, but it is the discovery of a voyager. A critic is the Columbus of his world. He takes the reader to a new environment where the beauty is revealed by him. Every criticism is a prologue to an intellectual journey. Introduction should neither be a declaration nor should interpretation be a philosophy. A critic should insist on objectivity to facilitate the interpretation precisely. Some people consider objectivity as a foundation to ethics. If a critic allows a writer to speak through his voice, to write with his pen, and even for a while dissolve himself in the critic's identity, then he becomes an excellent critic. To a great extent, Science teaches us this objectivity. Therefore, a critic should seek help from the principles of Science.

Sometimes a critic has to speak against himself for interpreting a text. He has to postpone the possibility of something for a while to ensure certainty. After passing through this phase, a critic is entitled to debate about various possibilities. For example, many short stories of Ismat Chughtai have instances of not only sexual inclination but also of sexual perversion. In the words of Patras Bukhari, her stories are an appeal to the carnal desires. Despite its unprecedented realism, her sketch "Dozakhi" (belonging to the hell) seems to be morbid. Ismat's literary authority, her realistic presentation as well as characterization, creative and artistic maturity, along with her command over language is truly indisputable. After acknowledging all these qualities of hers, a critic has the right to criticize her. A critic is supposed to be a guide and a judge. But, in reality he is not only a moral guide and a judge but also an analyst and an examiner. Criticism also requires enthusiasm and excitement, but bad Criticism is only enthusiastic and emotional. A good criticism bestows emotions with a mature, delicate and polite feeling.

That's why good criticism is neither destructive nor does it notice the flaws and limitations alone. It also focuses on the height of significance of a literary work and discovers the processes involved in reaching that height. In the words of Hali, good criticism discovers amazing wonders. It may have a sense of inferiority but in reality, it is not that. Even if

criticism comes across homosexual connotations in the poetry of Meer, yet it does not lose its way into the temperament and subconscious of the poet. It keeps an eye on the development and progress of the poet too. A good critic takes his readers from the poet to the poetry while an ordinary critic gets stuck with the poet only. In Urdu Literature, both, ordinary and extraordinary scholars, rely on the opinions of others. They blindly accept every pronouncement. They do not try to look at both dimensions of an image, for they are mentally lazy and blind followers of champions and pioneers. They get satisfied with only one aspect, one judgment, and one formula. They do not want to struggle to examine everything afresh. True and exceptional criticism requires high intellect, untiring efforts, and strict adherence to discipline. That is why, Urdu Criticism at present does not have examiners and analysts but many preachers and leaders.

Notes

1. Hadees-e-Qudsi- The words of Allah (God) but delivered by the Prophet Mohammad^{pbuh}.
2. Landhoor-bin-Sa'ad- A famous character from Dastan-e-Amir Hamza/narrating a tale in an unnecessarily elaborate style.
3. *Beeswi Sadi, Kahkashan, Mast-Qalandar*- Urdu Magazines. Beeswi Sadi was founded in 1937 by Kushtar Giami. Due to some reasons, it ceased publication for two years and later on became a biannual magazine.
4. Radeef and Qaafiya- Radeef denotes order. In Persian and Urdu poetry, in gazal the second line of all the couplets *must* end with the *same* word/s. This repeating of common words is called Radeef. Whereas, the rhyming pattern that directly precedes the Radeef. Qaafiya, is a repeating pattern of words.
5. Mudawa-healing/medicine/remedy/solution.
6. Gadar-rebellion/mutiny of 1857.
[Ghazal- A lyric poem with repeated rhyming scheme. A ghazal has Mat'la (the first verse) and Maq'ta (the last verse)
Nazm is a poem in rhymed verse with no restrictions of Mat'la and Maq'ta.
Marsiya- A poem to lament on/after someone's death, typically written to commemorate the battle of Karbala.]

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Assessing the Impact of an English Reading Software on the Comprehension Skills of Indian Tertiary Students: A Case Study

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Abstract

The research paper is based on a 32-hour project which was implemented to assess the impact of Clarity English Reading Software on the reading comprehension skills of the undergraduate learners. In order to arrive at the results, an experimental method with a pre-test post-test control group design was conducted on 80 students of an engineering college in Punjab, India. Comparative analyses of the t-tests revealed the statistically significant improvement in the scores of the experimental group as compared to their control group counterparts. Besides, improvement in the post-test result supports growing evidence for the importance of technologically assisted aids in enhancing reading skills of the learners.

Keywords: *Clarity English Reading Software; Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL); Reading comprehension Skills*

1. Introduction

The emergence of research in Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) experiences has redefined the teaching and learning processes across the globe. Such is the quantum of the impact that in the time frame of just three decades, CALL has reserved a significant place for itself in Applied Linguistics. It has veritably transformed the way language learning takes place inside and outside the classroom.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Reading Skills and the use of Technology

There is no denying to the fact that besides cultivating higher order inferential skills (Oakhill et al., 2003), reading comprehension, a multi-layered cognitive ability improves linguistic, cognitive (De Beni and Palladino, 2000) and meta-cognitive skills of the learners as well (Channa et al., 2015). Hence, it becomes one of the most imperative skills to be mastered for the 21st century learners. But, advocates of technology integration in the learning process have proven through their researches that teaching this skill without technology intervention emerges as a great challenge for EFL and ESL language teachers (Fogarty et al., 2017).

The findings of Khan et al.'s (2019) empirical based study on the use of Active Reading Software on the Saudi Arabian University students revealed high proficiency in learners' language in general and reading comprehension proficiency in particular.

Learning reading via technology intervention enhances the motivational level of the learners to read more independently both in formal and informal settings. According to Song, Kalet, and Plass (2016), the great advantage of technology-integrated reading instruction is a successful activation of learners' prior knowledge with the help of the multimedia tools. The efficacy of technology in enhancing reading proficiency of the learners is advocated by several studies carried out both in EFL and ESL contexts (Ansarin et al., 2017; McDermott and Gormley, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2018; Piper et al., 2016).

Hence, it is assumed that the students at the global level believe in the effectiveness of online reading activities and enjoy participating in the authentic activities provided to them through technological platforms.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory of constructivism is generally proposed as a basis for the instructional design of technology and Brooks and Brooks claim it to be a viable theory for language instruction (qtd. in Stepp-Greany 168). The meaningful and active role played by the learners in the construction and creation of knowledge which is based on their previous experiences is the fundamental principle of this theory. Besides the autonomy, the paradigm shift in the role of a teacher from a 'sage on the stage to a guide on the side' defines their learning process. She makes wise investments of her intellectual capital but not to lecture and profess rather to empower the learners.

The researcher in her study aimed at implementing the most relevant attributes of CALL through the use of software: authentic materials, hyper textuality, contextualized learning, interaction, temporal scaffolding and autonomy emphasizing a close parallel between the theory of constructivism and the pedagogy of CALL which could be summarized as follows:

Table 1: Constructivism and CALL (Perez Basanta, 112)

Constructivism	Computer-based Language Learning
Construction of learning through meaningful activities.	Authentic and multi-media materials
Emphasis on major concepts, not hierarchical knowledge	Hyper-textuality
Collaborative learning	Communication tools through digital platforms
Mentoring and scaffolding	Human mediation and interaction
Learner's responsibility	Distance learning and learner autonomy

3. Methodology

3.1 Statement of the Problem

The poor performance of the students in the placement test and other competitive examinations offered by the public and the private sector of the country in general and Punjab State in particular set the alarm bells ringing for the teacher-researcher. Lack of interest and motivation were suggested as the major reasons for the poor acquisition of the students' language skills in the classes. Hence, the idea of using interactive software was generated to positively influence the levels of motivation and interest for the students in the language learning activities. Researches across the globe reinforce the use of technology for not only teaching and learning process but also for the positive attitudinal changes in the learners (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed by the researcher to find out about the use of computer technology for the improvement of English language especially reading skills of the learners in India:

1. Is there a significant difference in students' Reading Comprehension skills with the use of English Reading software?
2. Is there a significant difference between software users' and nonusers' achievement in Reading Comprehension skills?

3.3 Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the research questions mentioned above, the following null hypotheses have been proposed:

1. There is no significant difference in students' Reading Comprehension skills with the use of English Reading software.
2. There is no significant difference between software users' and nonusers' achievement in Reading Comprehension skills.

3.4 Participants and Context

The subjects of this research were 80 students of an engineering college situated in Punjab, India. The average age of the students was 19.45 years. Of the 80 students, 34 were female and 46 were male. At the time of this research project, they were taking a compulsory Communication Skills course. This project was implemented in the students' communication skills practical laboratory course, which aimed to enable students to improve Reading Comprehension skills. These students tended to have relatively little exposure to English in their content-based classes.

3.6 Instrumentation

Three instruments of the research were used in order to obtain data as valid as possible.

1. Computer Self Efficacy (CSE) scale: was first developed by Murphy et al. (1989) and used by Harrison and Rainer; Torkzadeh and Koufteros (qtd. in Sam, H. 2005).
 2. IELTS General training (GT) Reading test to assess the proficiency level of the students at the beginning of the project as a pre-test and at the end of the project as a post-test.
 3. Semi-structured Interviews in the vernacular language of the learners were arranged at the end of the project to elicit the feedback from the participants.
- A pilot test was run to validate the test by the researcher herself.

Proficiency Levels for Reading

In order to categorize the subjects into three proficiency levels, the researcher used The Reading scores profile shared by J. Charles Alderson in his book *Assessing Reading*; the overview for each level is given below.

Table 2: Reading scores profi

Level	Description
Elementary	<i>Recognition of factual information and understanding of word meanings from the context.</i>
Intermediate	<i>Synthesize material from different sections of a passage and discern the main idea/purpose of a passage. Interpretation of figurative language</i>
Advanced	<i>Determine the relevance of information to draw conclusions; evaluation of data for consistency with known facts, hypotheses or methods.</i>

3.7 Description of the Programme

At the outset of the second semester, 40 students of the two experimental groups were introduced to the Clarity English Teaching Software program in the digital language laboratory. A group of twenty students each attended the language laboratory sessions for two hours a week and for 32 hours a semester. The rest of the 40 students of the control group also attended the language laboratory in the same manner, but they performed their practical following the traditional method of reading only i.e., paper-based reading comprehension exercises.

Below given is the description of the software used during the project in the language laboratory by the students of the experimental group:

Table 3: description of the clarity English reading software used in the project

Active Reading	Elementary to Advanced	The program comes at six levels from Elementary to Advanced, with five units in each level. Each unit starts with a video introduction, moves through controlled practice and comprehension exercises and concludes with a freer activity which expands on the topic. Topics that are presented in a relevant, stimulating and lively manner range from advertisements to ecotourism. Text types include newspaper and magazine articles, emails, poems, recipes, stories and press releases to appeal to every learner. The program integrates with Results Manager enabling teachers to track student progress and generate reports.
4. Data Collection and Results		

In order to find answers to the research questions and to see whether the null hypotheses were rejected or confirmed, meticulous computer assisted statistical analyses were conducted on the quantified data obtained from the tests thoroughly. To find the relationship and the comparison among the sets of scores, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The findings were demonstrated through tables and necessary figures; hence, interpretations were made to generalize the results to the whole population at a 0.05 level of significance.

4.1 FIRST PHASE: Identifying the Levels of Language Proficiency of the participants using Pre-test

During this phase of the study, an IELTS (GT) reading test, which was validated during the pilot study, was used for the subjects of the experimental group and control group. The reliability coefficient of the IELTS test is shown in the table:

Table-4: reliability coefficient of the IELTS reading test

Mean	Variance	Items	KR-21
13.95	19.27	25	.70

After seeking permission from the college authorities and taking consent from the students to become a part of the study, an IELTS(GT) Reading test as a diagnostic test was administered to all the 80 students of the study.

Based on the performance of the subjects in the test, they were placed at three different proficiency levels, the cut points were 50 and 75 percentile ranks. That is, those scoring higher than 75 percent formed the advanced group. Those scoring lower than 50 per cent were labelled as elementary. The rest of the subjects were placed in the intermediate group. The descriptive statistics of IELTS for the 40 students of experimental group are displayed in Table 5(a).

Table 5: descriptive statistics of the Reading Pre-test

Table 5(a): (Experimental Group)

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		13.825
Median		14
Mode		14.1
Std. Deviation		4.3908
Variance		19.2795
Skewness		-0.15
Std. Error of Skewness		0.1397
Kurtosis		-0.6571
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.2738
Minimum		5
Maximum		24

The skewness and the kurtosis show whether the distribution is normal or non-normal. They are parts of the descriptive statistics.

Table 5 (b):(Control Group)

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		13.52
Median		13.0
Mode		11.96
Std. Deviation		4.89
Variance		23.94
Skewness		0.81
Std. Error of Skewness		0.1397
Kurtosis		1.59
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.2873
Minimum		5
Maximum		21

In a normal distribution- bell shaped curve-the skewness and kurtosis equal zero. If the skewness or kurtosis exceed +2 or -2 then the distribution is not normal.

The close values of the mean (13.825), median (14) and the mode (14.1) together with the low values of skewness (-0.15) and kurtosis (-0.65) of the experimental group indicate that the distribution of the scores on the reading test was close to the normal distribution. In other words, they were neither skewed nor peaked [Figure 1(a)].

Similarly, the close values of the mean (13.52), median (13) and the mode (11.96) along with the values of skewness (0.81) and kurtosis (1.59) manifest the normal distribution of the scores on the reading test. [Figure 1(b)]

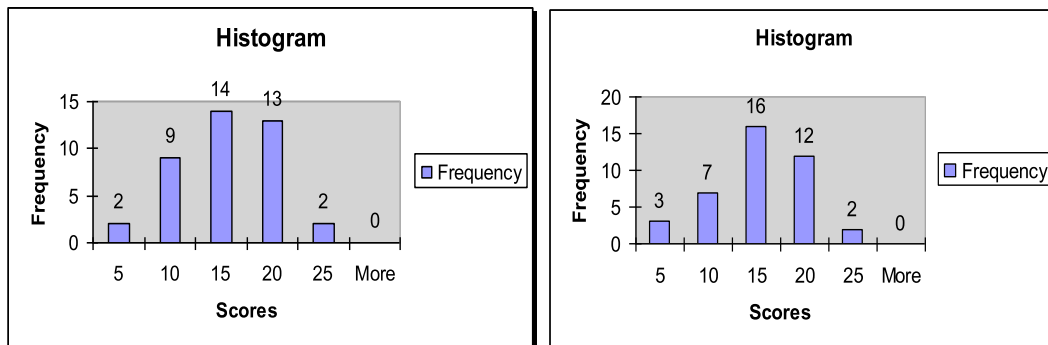


Figure1: Distribution of the Reading Pre-test score

Figure 1(a): (Experimental group)

Figure 1(b):(Control group)

Further, the table given below displays the 50 and 75 percentile ranks. The subjects who scored higher than 19 out of 25 were considered to be advanced. Those scoring below 12 formed the elementary group. The remaining subjects constituted the intermediate group. The descriptive statistics for the three groups are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: descriptive statistics of the three proficiency groups in the Reading Pre-test

Table 6(a):(Experimental Group)

Table 6(b):(Control Group)

Level of Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Elementary	16	9.125	2.34	5	12
Intermediate	19	15.63	1.89	13	18
Advanced	5	20.8	1.72	19	24
Total	40	13.825	4.3908	05	24

Level of Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Elementary	17	9.29	2.49	5	12
Intermediate	17	15.47	1.88	13	18
Advanced	6	20	0.816	19	21
Total	40	13.52	4.89	5	21

4.2 SECOND PHASE: Execution of the project

In the second phase of the study, the students of the experimental group were given the treatment i.e., they were taught Reading skills using Clarity English Reading Software for 32 hours in their second semester whereas the students of the control group performed their paper-based comprehension exercises.

4.3 THIRD PHASE: Analysis of the Post-tests

At this stage the researcher administered a standard IELTS (GT) Reading test as a post-test to the students of the control and the experimental group at the end of semester. The purpose of this test was to evaluate the performance of the students after taking the treatment for the complete semester.

Table 7: descriptive statistics of the reading post-test of the experimental group

Table 7(a):(Experimental Group)

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		15.85
Median		16
Mode		16.55
Std. Deviation		4.3998
Variance		19.3585
Skewness		0.81
Std. Error of Skewness		0.1397
Kurtosis		0.7251
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.2873
Minimum		8
Maximum		25

Table 7(b):(Control Group)

N	Valid	40
	Missing	0
Mean		14.02
Median		14.0
Mode		13.96
Std. Deviation		4.13
Variance		17.075
Skewness		0.06
Std. Error of Skewness		0.1397
Kurtosis		0.71
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.2873
Minimum		5
Maximum		22

The values of the mean (15.85), median (16) and the mode (16.55) together with the low values of skewness (0.81) and kurtosis (0.72) of the experimental group along with the values of the mean (14.02), median (14) and the mode (13.96) together with the low values of skewness (0.06) and kurtosis (0.71) of the control group represent the normal distribution of the reading post-test scores of both the groups. In other words, they are neither skewed nor peaked as can be clearly seen in the figures below.

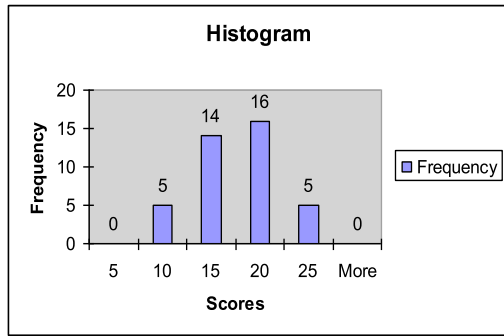


Figure 2(a):(Experimental group)

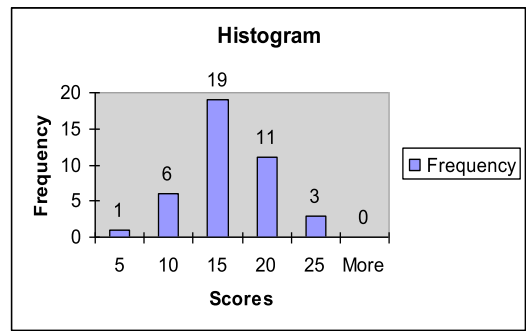


Figure 2(b):(Control group)

As mentioned earlier participants scoring higher than 75 were considered to be of advanced level. Those scoring below 50 formed the elementary group. However, the remaining subjects formed the intermediate group. The descriptive statistics for the three groups are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8: descriptive statistics of the three proficiency groups in the reading post-test

Table 8(a):(Experimental Group)

Level of Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Elementary	10	8.6	1.95	5	11
Intermediate	22	14.27	1.38	13	17
Advanced	8	20.12	1.05	19	22
Total	40	14.02	4.13	5	22

Table 8(b):(Control Group)

Level of Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Elementary	14	10.18	1.58	8	12
Intermediate	19	16.15	1.70	13	18
Advanced	7	21.55	1.83	19	25
Total	40	15.85	4.3998	8	25

4.4 FOURTH PHASE: Comparison of the Results of the Tests

In this phase of the study, the mean scores of the students in the pre-test and the post-test were compared followed by the comparison of the scores of the experimental and the control group in order to explore whether the Reading Software has succeeded in making significant improvement in the Reading comprehension skills of the participants.

To determine whether the difference is statistically significant or merely a chance of occurrence, an appropriate statistical analysis i.e., the t-test was recommended to be applied.

Test of Significance

For this experiment, the researcher used the 5% (0.05) alpha level of significance as usually used in psychological and educational research. The number of subjects in this experiment was 40. The degree of freedom (df) was $N-1=40-1=39$. For five percent alpha level and 39 degree of freedom, there was no definite critical value in the table. It was necessary to find the definite value in order to get the closest of the critical value in the t-table. The researcher chose degree of freedom (df) 40 because it is the closest (df) from 39. The t-value for 40 in the table was 2.02.

The obtained t-value in the reading skills test was 2.06 so the t-value was higher than the critical value on the table ($2.06 > 2.02$).

Table 9: t-test results for the differences based on the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group

Language Skill	Type of test	N	Mean	Variance	t-value	Df
Reading Skills	Pre-test	40	13.825	19.2795	2.06	78
	Post -test	40	15.85	19.3585		

From the data in the result it could be concluded that the difference was statistically significant. Therefore, based on the computation there was a significant difference between teaching reading skills after and before using the Reading software in the class. Teaching Reading skills using the software has proven to be more effective than paper-based teaching. It could be seen by the result of the test where the students' score was higher after giving the treatment.

Table 10: t-Test Results for the Differences based on the Pre-test and Post-test of the Control Group

Language Skill	Type of test	N	Mean	Variance	t-value	df
Reading Skills	Pre-test	40	13.825	23.94	0.5	78
	Post-test	40	14.02	17.075		

It is clear that the calculated t-value of the reading test is 0.5 which is lower than the critical value on the table ($0.5 < 2.02$). So in the control group, where the students were taught in a traditional manner, there is no significant difference in their achievement in the pre-test and the post-test.

Then, the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group were compared to discover the effectiveness of the use of technology to improve the reading skills of the participants.

Significant difference between two means of the Experimental and the Control groups

Table 11: Test Results for the Differences in the Reading Skills of the Experimental and the Control Group

Language Skill	Type of test	N	Mean	Variance	t-value	df
Reading Skills	Experimental	40	15.85	19.3585	2.12	78
	Control	40	14.02	17.075		

From the result, it was concluded that after applying the t-test it has been found that there is a statistically significant difference in the reading skills ($2.12 > 2.02$) of the experimental and the control group.

5. Discussion

5.1 Research Question 1

To answer question number 1, the researcher tested the hypothesis number 1 "There is no significant difference in students' Reading Comprehension skills with the use of English Reading software." The t-test rejected the null hypothesis revealing a significant difference in students' reading achievement due to Software usage ($2.06 > 2.02$). This significant difference between the two tests favouring software users was an indication of the effect of technology on improving students' competence in reading.

Apart from the difference in the overall mean scores, the improvement at the three proficiency levels is also apparent (Fig 3). The data in the figure clearly reveals the progress shown by the students in the post-test. The considerable increase in the number of students in the post-test can be attributed to the use of CERS.

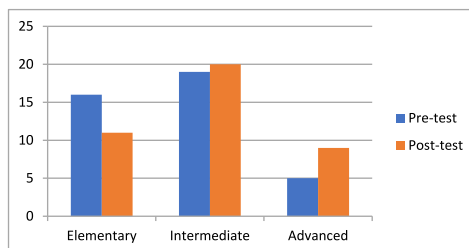


Figure 3: Mean Differences in the Reading Pre-test and the Post-test at Proficiency Levels

The results are consistent with earlier reviews of the research literature on the effectiveness of computer-based instruction on reading (e.g., Moran et.al, 2008; Patel et.al 2018). Students reported in their interviews that glossing or multimedia annotations had been effective means to enhance their comprehension. Their views are consonant with the reports of a study conducted by Al-Seghayer (225).

5.2 Research Question 2

To answer question number 2, hypothesis number 2 "there is no significant difference between software users' and non-users' achievement in Reading Comprehension Skills. Once again, a t-test was run to compute the mean scores of reading test of the experimental and the control group. Rejecting the null hypothesis, the t-test revealed a significant difference in the software users' achievement in reading ($2.12 > 2.02$) as compared to non-users.

The results of the current study are in line with the study by Ikonta and Ugonna (2015) supporting computer software usage for better reading comprehension of ESL learners. Besides the increase in the number of students in Intermediate and Advance group (Fig 4) substantiate the fact that the use of software helps in the progressing the reading comprehension skills of the learners.

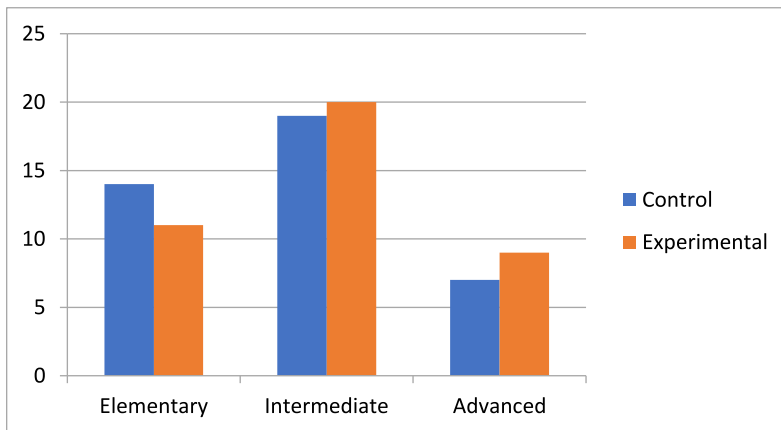


Figure 4: Mean Differences in the Reading Post-tests of the Experimental and the Control Group at Proficiency Levels

6. Conclusion

The study was designed to evaluate the efficacy of technology integration in enhancing the Reading comprehension skills of the under-graduate engineering students of an Indian college. Students in the experimental group completed their practical Reading assignments using Clarity English Reading Software for 32 hours, while their control group counterparts completed the identical paper-based reading tasks in the traditional set up only. A close examination of the results of pre and post- tests of both the groups which were evaluated using t-test revealed a substantial difference between the mean scores of the two groups. The experimental group outperformed the control group. Hence, these results indicating the

positive influence of Clarity Reading Software endorse the potential that CALL and TELL hold in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the learners. These results are in alignment with the principles of constructivism, which is used as part of the theoretical framework for this study. The results of the study also corroborate the research results given in the review of literature.

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Impact of Proficiency in English Language on Engineering Students' Performance in their Curricular Subjects

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Dr. B. Spoorthi**

Abstract

Proficiency in English language plays a significant role in the academic and professional progress of an engineering student. This is primarily because English is used as the medium of instruction at all the technical higher education institutes in India. This study examines the relationship between engineering students' proficiency in English language and their performance in curricular subjects. It also studies Engineering students' and teachers' perceptions on the impact of proficiency in English language on students' performance in other subjects. Furthermore, this study identifies the other factors (beyond Proficiency in English Language) that affect engineering students' performance in other subjects. This research employs a cross-sectional survey research design. The data collected through qualitative questionnaires and the quantitative data from the end semester exam results are used for the research purposes. The data is analysed statistically using descriptive statistics and the inferential statistical test, Spearman rank-order correlation. A comparison of test grades analysis and the students' and teachers' perceptions is also carried out to derive a holistic understanding of the relationship between proficiency in English language and performance in curricular subjects. The findings of the study indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between the engineering students' proficiency in English language and their performance in science and core subjects.

Keywords: *proficiency in English language, engineering students' performance, curricular subjects, Spearman correlation*

1. Introduction

Engineering education in India is characterised by its complexity and ongoing changes (Madheswari and Mageswari 215). Its origin can be traced back to the pre-independence period, but, even after the independence, the significance of engineering education was acknowledged and various measures were incorporated for the growth of the field (216). Now, in the era of Industry 4.0, considering the declining employability rate of engineers in India, the focus of engineering education is shifting from producing merely knowledgeable graduates to industry-ready professionals. The industry is currently looking for graduates who possess not just technical skills, but also soft and employability skills. The engineering graduates are required to develop 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, leadership, teamwork, communication, technology, interpersonal skills, etc. (Madheswari and Mageswari 222; Shekhawat 264). Since proficiency in English language plays a significant role in the enhancement of the above skills in the present-day globalised world, National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW) offers courses like English for

Technical Communication, Business Communication, Corporate Communication, etc. which incorporate different modules to enhance the aforementioned skills in the students.

1.1 English Language in Technical Higher Education

English has been established as a global language or lingua franca. It has been widely used for international trade and commerce, science and technology, International relationships, etc. Even its role in education, especially in higher education is unparalleled (Patra and Mohanty 24-26). In modern-day higher education, the prominent role played by English language is irrefutable. This is due to the fact that English is the medium of instruction in all the higher education institutes around the world (Mutaz 26). The scenario is similar even in India. At the majority of the Indian higher education institutes and universities, teaching and learning happen in English.

India is one of the countries that has English as an official as well as a second language. Therefore, students of higher education access the knowledge of their respective subjects through the medium of English. Students join National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW) after qualifying in Joint Entrance Examination(JEE) which unfortunately does not test their proficiency in English Language. However, the students need to have an adequate level of proficiency in English Language to communicate their ideas effectively and to excel in their academic and professional domains. Proficiency in English language plays a significant role in technical higher education because English is used as the medium of instruction at all the technical higher education institutes in India, including NITW. All the engineering materials like textbooks, course books, research articles, lab manuals, etc. are written primarily in English.

In addition, the exchange of ideas in the classrooms happens through the medium of English (Patra and Mohanty 26). An engineering student is also required to indulge in a significant amount of scientific dialogue in order to succeed in their academic career. Failing to articulate their understanding effectively might negatively impact their performance (Shrestha et al. 184). Therefore, an adequate level of proficiency in English language is significantly linked to students' academic performance, especially in terms of learning, research, and developing soft and employability skills (Mutaz 31). Having said that, it is relevant to explore the impact of engineering students' proficiency in English language on their performance in curricular subjects. In this study, the word 'curricular subjects' is used to indicate the subjects (both science and technical) that engineering students have to complete to obtain their engineering degree.

2. Recent Studies on the Relationship Between Proficiency in English Language and Performance in Curricular Subjects

The most recent study carried out by Bo et al., with English-speaking domestic students of Singapore, found that English language proficiency has a significant relationship with tertiary academic performance (1). They also found that English language proficiency could predict the current academic performance of the students (Bo et al. 1). An additional perspective has also been added by them when they identified and studied other non-linguistic

factors like students' previous academic performance, academic discipline, the demographic background of the students, etc. that affect students' academic performance (Bo et al. 3). Furthermore, another recent study conducted by Waluyo and Panmei supports the argument that English proficiency has the power to predict students' academic achievement, although there are other factors in the place (1). They also suggested that enhancing students' proficiency in English would positively affect their academic progress (7-8).

Clement and Murugavel reaffirmed Riemer's argument that "a global engineer must cross national and cultural borders and only English language skills can help the engineer to break those boundaries" (Clement and Murugavel 118). This argument asserts the fact that a present-day engineering graduate requires an adequate level of proficiency in English language to develop the skills pertaining to his/her professional success (118). A similar argument has been stated by Shekhawat who opined that a technical graduate should be "a good leader, a motivator and a person having all the necessary attributes which enable him to deliver his best in the job scenario" (Shekhawat 265). In order to excel in academics and increase their employability rate, technical graduates should have the ability to communicate ideas and opinions fluently in English (Clement and Murugavel 122).

According to Graham, many prediction studies have been done on the correlation between English Language Proficiency and academic success by analysing test scores and Grade Point Averages (GPAs) (506). However, he also opined that test scores alone are not sufficient to find the exact correlation (514). He said, "a statistically significant relationship does not necessarily indicate a strong relationship" (Graham 508). Light et al. also stated a similar opinion that criteria for academic progress (other than test scores, GPAs, credits, etc.) should also be keenly examined (259). They mentioned, that "the criteria might include professors' evaluations and students' perceptions" (Light et al. 259). They envisaged that the study of these variables might provide the researchers with a better understanding of the actual relation between the proficiency in the English language and the overall academic performance of the students (Light et al. 260).

In addition, researchers like Nasirudeen and Xiao think that the impact of proficiency in the English Language on students' academic performance is debatable and ambiguous (31). Their study concludes that students can achieve success in academics, despite their language impairments (Nasirudeen and Xiao 37). In addition, according to Light et al. (1987), English proficiency is just one of the several criteria that impact the academic potential of the students (259). This implies that there are other factors (beyond proficiency in English language) that affect the academic progress of a student.

Therefore, this study examines the impact of Engineering students' proficiency in English language on their performance in curricular subjects by analysing both end-semester exam grades and the students' and teachers' perceptions. In addition, it also identifies the other factors (beyond proficiency in English language) that affect students' performance in their curricular subjects. A comparison of end-semester exam grades analysis and the students' and teachers' perceptions is also carried out to synthesize the results and to derive a holistic understanding of the relationship.

3. Methodology

This research employs a cross-sectional survey research design. The data collected using questionnaires and the grades of the end semester exams are used for the research purposes. A total of two online surveys were carried out: one with engineering students and the other with teachers. The main purpose of the surveys is to study the Engineering students' and teachers' perceptions on the impact of proficiency in English language on performance in curricular subjects. Both the surveys included open-ended and closed-ended questions. The data is analysed statistically using descriptive statistics and the inferential statistical test, Spearman rank-order correlation, to analyse test grades. A qualitative analysis is also incorporated to analyse closed-ended questions of the surveys.

3.1 Purpose of the study

For the purpose of research, we engaged with the first-semester engineering students of National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW) and it was observed that students with adequate proficiency in English language tended to perform better in their curricular subjects when compared with their peers. This finding gives a huge scope for the integration of English language with a curricular subject. Even National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India greatly emphasises the need for integration and multidisciplinary (36). As proficiency in English language plays a significant role in the academic progress of an engineering student, this study analyses the relationship between engineering students' proficiency in English language and their performance in a science and a core subject. It also examines engineering students' and teachers' perceptions on the impact of proficiency in English language on Performance in curricular subjects. In addition, this study identifies the other factors (beyond proficiency in English Language) that affect engineering students' performance in their curricular subjects. The study also compares the results of the test grades analysis with the students' and teachers' perceptions to obtain a holistic understanding of the relationship between proficiency in English language and performance in curricular subjects.

3.2 Participants

This study has first-semester engineering students and engineering teachers of National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW) as the sample. In addition, engineering teachers from institutions like Malla Reddy College of Engineering and Technology Hyderabad, Priyadarshini College of Engineering Nagpur, MNNIT Allahabad, etc. have been included in the study. Teachers of English language from different countries have also participated in the survey.

3.2.1 Students

A homogenous sampling technique has been used to collect data from the respondents as the focus is on engineering students. The response rate stands at 82.2%. 79 students who were in their first year (first semester) B. Tech. were selected. They all are studying at National Institute of Technology Warangal (NITW), India. Out of 79 students, 65 have responded to the questionnaire. The students' age group ranges from 17 years to 20

years. They belong to different states of India, so they have a different mother tongue. Except for 2 students, everyone had received their education in English till higher secondary level. English language is taught 3-5 hours a week in the first year of the first semester at the institute.

3.2.2 Teachers

A simple random sampling strategy has been incorporated to select respondents (teachers). 53 responses have been received from different parts of the world. Among all the 53 teachers, 21 are male and 32 are female teachers. 32 teachers are involved in teaching English and the rest teach different subjects (science and engineering). When it comes to the language of Instruction, 42 teachers use English to teach and 10 teachers use both English and vernacular languages in their classrooms. Among all the 53 teachers, 39 teachers teach at higher education level and the rest teach at other lower levels of education.

3.3 Research Instruments

The research instruments include grades of semester-end exams and questionnaires.

3.3.1 Tests

Semester-end exam grades of the students in English, a science subject, and a core subject were collected and analysed to find the correlation.

3.3.2 Questionnaires

3.3.2.1 Student

The student questionnaire was divided into two parts: Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 of the questionnaire includes the demographic information of the students. Whereas, Part 2 of the questionnaire comprises 10 questions: 5 open-ended and 5 closed-ended.

3.3.2.2 Faculty

The faculty questionnaire was divided into three parts: Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3. Part 1 of the questionnaire includes the demographic information of the teachers. Whereas, Part 2 has 8 questions (5 open-ended and 3 closed-ended) about teachers' perceptions of students. Part 3 of the questionnaire consisted of 5 questions (2 open-ended and 3 closed-ended) about teachers' perceptions of their own performance.

3.4 Analysis

The data is analysed statistically using descriptive statistics and the inferential nonparametric statistical test, Spearman rank-order correlation, to analyse test grades. This particular test is employed as the test grades are ordinal, non-linear, and monotonic. Spearman Rank-Order Correlation coefficient is calculated using IBM SPSS software. A qualitative analysis is also incorporated to analyse closed-ended questions of the surveys.

4. Results

4.1 Grades Analysis

Semester-end exam grades of the students in English, a science subject, and a core subject were systematically entered into IBM SPSS software, and scatter plots were generated by having English test grades on the X-axis and subject test grades on the Y-axis.

The data points on the scatter plots reveal that the relationship between English test grades and the subject test grades is non-linear and monotonic (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

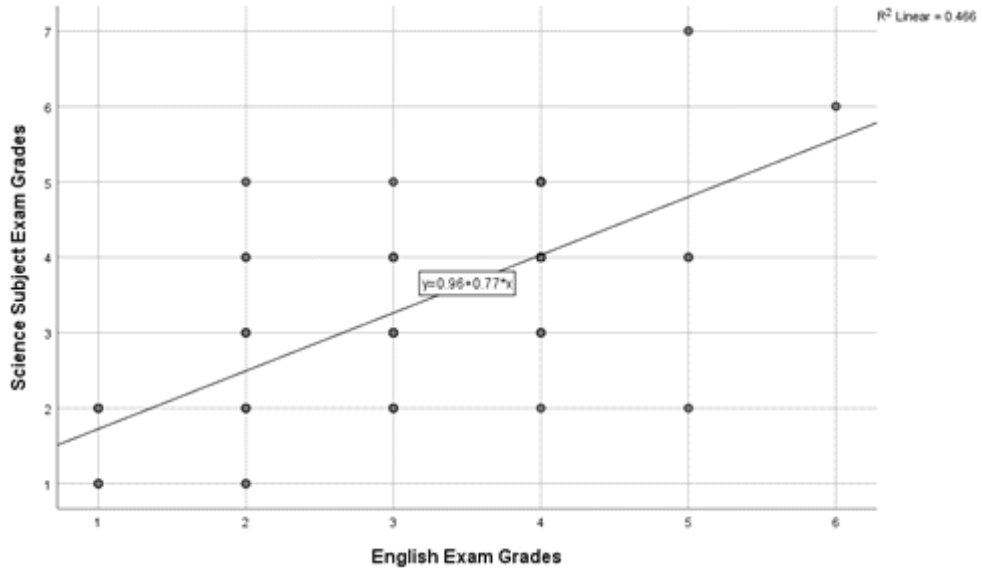


Figure 1: Relationship between English exam grades and grades in a science subject exam

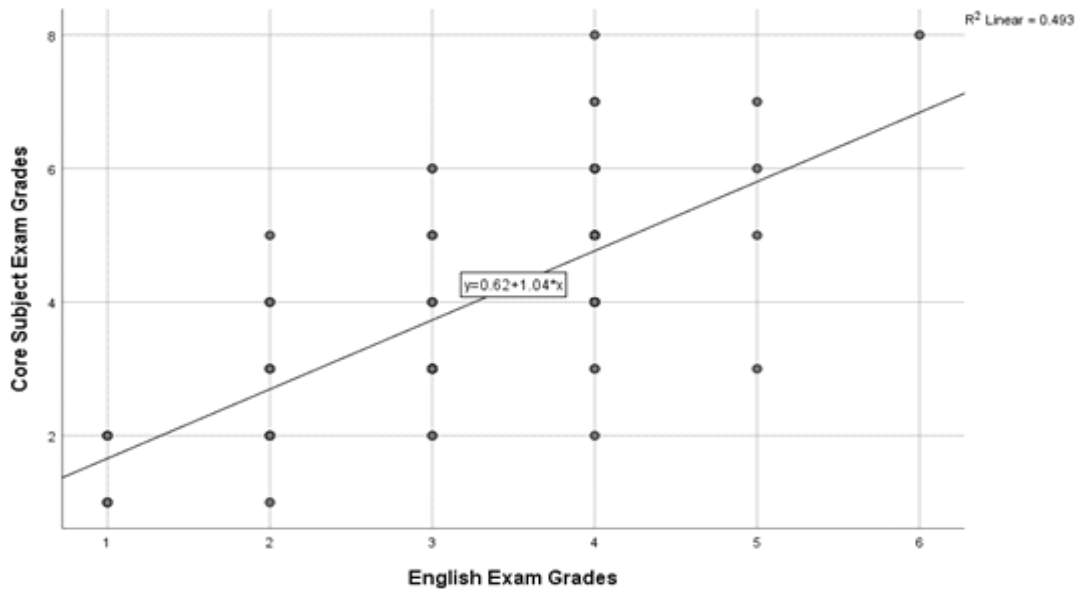


Figure 2: Relationship between English exam grades and grades in a core subject exam

As the exam grades belong to ordinal data and the relationship between English test grades and the grades of a science and a core subject is non-linear and monotonic (see Figure 1 & Figure 2), the Spearman rank-order correlation test, which is an alternative nonparametric test to the Pearson product-moment correlation, is employed (Miller 80).

Results of the analysis show a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.660$ & $r = 0.686$, $p < 0.01$) between the English exam grades and the grades of a science and a core subject. These results of the study are shown in Figure 3.

Since the coefficient $r = 0.30$ in both cases, it indicates a moderate relationship (according to Miller 82) between the English exam grades and the grades of a science and a core subject.

Correlations

			English Exam Grades	Science Subject Exam Grades	Core Subject Exam Grades
Spearman's rho	English Exam Grades	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.660**	.686**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
		N	76	76	76
	Science Subject Exam Grades	Correlation Coefficient	.660**	1.000	.811**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
		N	76	76	76
	Core Subject Exam Grades	Correlation Coefficient	.686**	.811**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
		N	76	76	76

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 3: Spearman's correlation between the English test grades and the subjects

After analysing the results on both the scatterplots and the Spearman's correlation, we can conclude that there is a significant relationship between proficiency in English language and students' performance in their curricular subjects. In addition, we could also observe that the students who perform well in the English exam tend to perform well in the other curricular subject exams as well.

4.2 Survey Data Analysis

The responses of the participants were collected using online tools and were processed into a spreadsheet. The answers to both open-ended and closed-ended questions were analysed and the results were computed.

4.2.1 Engineering Students' Perception of the Impact of Proficiency in English Language On the Performance in Curricular Subjects

When asked about the impact of proficiency in the English language on their performance in curricular subjects, 83% of the students opined that proficiency in the English language impacts their performance in curricular subjects (see Figure 4).

The students, when asked to explain the impact, said that proficiency in the English language helps them to comprehend the concepts better as most of their books are written in English and the instructional language in the classroom is also English. They said that it also improves their subject-related vocabulary and enables them to communicate their understanding effectively, which will also increase their confidence. Most of them mentioned that English Language plays an indispensable role in developing both their knowledge and performance in curricular subjects.

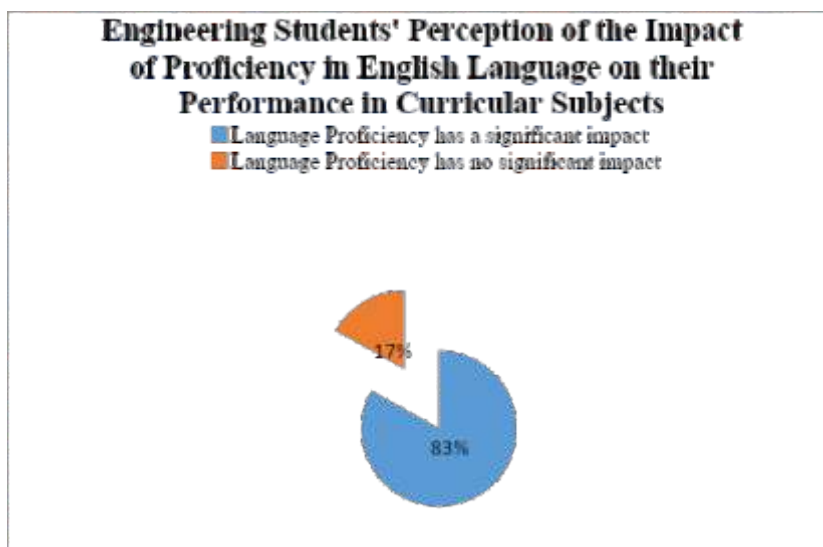


Figure 4 Engineering Students' Perception of the Impact of Proficiency in English Language on their Performance in Curricular Subjects

4.2.2 Teachers' Perception of the Impact of Proficiency in English Language on the Performance in Curricular Subjects

Around 91% of the teachers opined that proficiency in the English language has a significant impact on students' performance in curricular subjects (see Figure 5). Most of the teachers (around 90%) opined that proficiency in the English language is important for understanding the concepts and for communicating ideas in the classroom. Few also said that limited proficiency in English might lead to anxiety and low self-esteem in students. They asserted that better proficiency in English will give more access to the subject knowledge and help students in academic and professional development. However, few teachers (around 9%) think that language proficiency has no significance in terms of performance in curricular subjects.

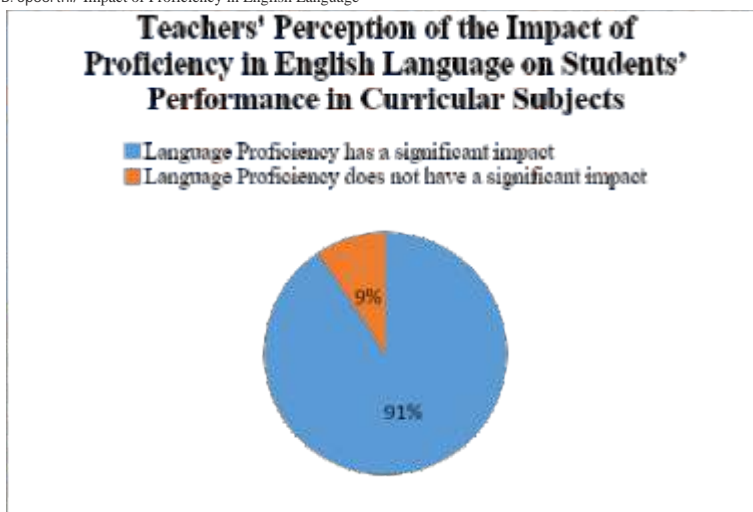


Figure 5: Teachers' Perception of the Impact of Proficiency in English Language on Students' Performance in Curricular Subjects

4.2.3 Factors Impacting Students' Performance in their Engineering Curricular Subjects (According to the Students)

When the students were asked to mention the factors (other than English) that influence their performance in curricular subjects, they selected/mentioned the following: motivation, personal well-being, cognition, anxiety, lack of confidence, addiction, and interest. Among these aspects, Motivation has been selected by the highest number of students (69.2%) and addiction has been mentioned by the lowest number of students (1.5%) (see Figure 6).

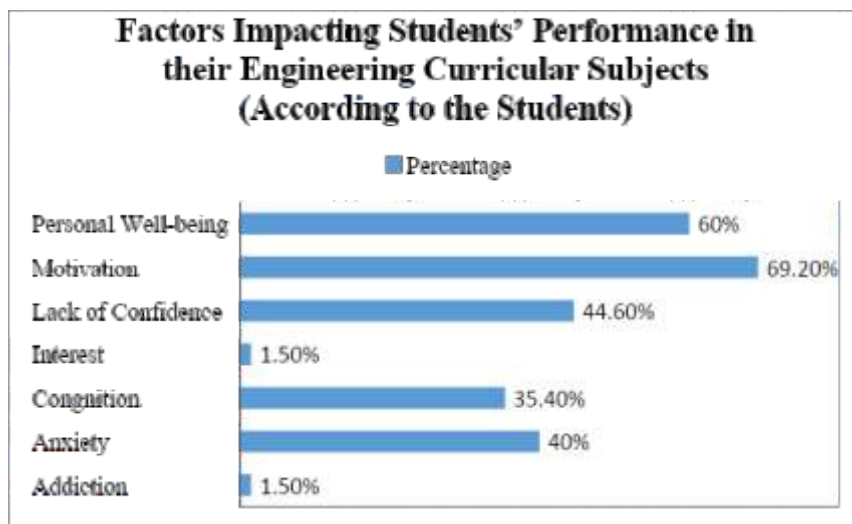


Figure 6: Factors Impacting Students' Performance in their Engineering Curricular Subjects (According to Students)

4.2.4 Factors Impacting Students' Performance in their Engineering Curricular Subjects (According to the Teachers)

When asked about the factors that influence students' performance in curricular subjects, 83% of the teachers selected Learners' motivation, 64% of the teachers voted for Instructional language, and 56% for cognition. The factors like lack of confidence, anxiety, personal well-being, Teachers' attitude, and metacognition were selected by 41%, 30%, 28%, 1.9%, and 1.9% of the teachers respectively (see Figure 7).

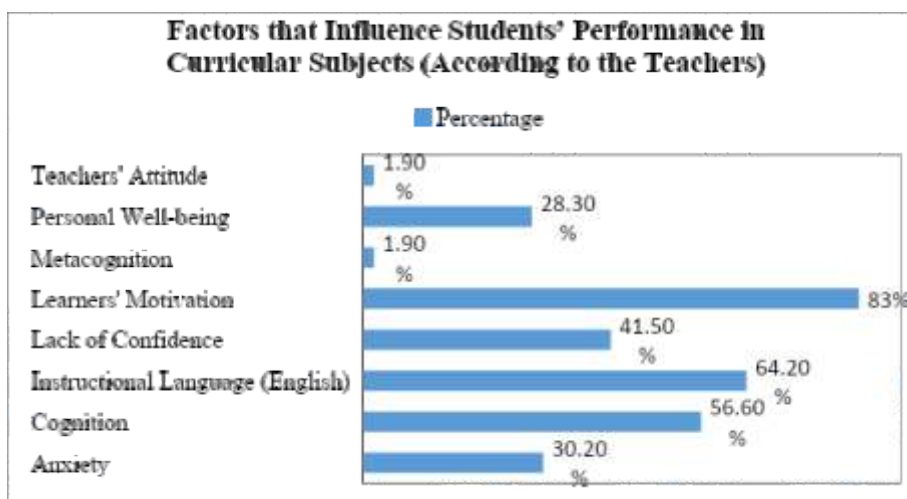


Figure 7: Factors that Influence Students' Performance in Curricular Subjects (According to the Teachers)

5. Discussion

The results of the test grades analysis showed that the students' proficiency in English language has a significant positive impact on their performance in curricular subjects. Similarly, 83% of the students and 91% of the teachers opined that proficiency in the English language impacts their performance in curricular subjects. Both the results: exam grades analysis and the questionnaires responses are in accordance with each other. This strengthens the argument that proficiency in English language plays a significant role on Engineering students' performance in their curricular subjects.

The results of the analysis of the semester-end exam grades are consistent with the results of the previous studies (Bo et al. 1; Light et al. 259;) The results also support Patra and Mohanty's argument that academic success in Engineering is significantly based on students' proficiency in the English language (26). Not just in terms of academic success, as a few participants of the current study pointed out, Proficiency in the English language is also essential for students' professional development. The results are also on par with the conclusions drawn by Racca and Lasaten that proved students' academic progress can be ascribed to their proficiency in the English language (48). As scientific and technological discoveries, to a large extent, are written and published in English, students are required to be

proficient in English to comprehend the knowledge in their academic domain (Racca and Lasaten 44-45).

Furthermore, the insights drawn, from students' and teachers' responses on how proficiency in English language impacts the performance in curricular subjects, are similar to the findings of Shrestha et al. (183-187). It is evident from the results of the current study that English is extensively used as a means of communication in engineering education. This situation requires the aspiring engineerings to use the English language for acquiring knowledge from textbooks; for giving presentations and engaging in classroom discussions; for working with their peers in labs and classrooms; etc. (Shrestha et al. 182). Therefore, as Latha said, “English is a tool that notably affects engineering students' academic life” (122).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The current study essayed to examine the impact of proficiency in English language on engineering students' performance in their curricular subjects. The study used semester-end exams grades of the students and the students' and teachers' perceptions to understand the impact. The results of the study revealed that proficiency in the English language has a significant impact on engineering students' performance in their curricular subjects. The study also found that there are other factors like motivation, confidence, cognition, anxiety, personal well-being, etc. that affect the students' performance in their curricular subjects.

Considering the results, we can summarize that the proficiency in English language is an important factor that plays a significant role in students' academic success. This leaves a huge scope for the implementation of the emerging innovative teaching practices like the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Approach and Content-based Instruction (CBI) that integrate both content and language, leading to more positive outcomes.

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From Prof. Swaraj Raj's Bookshelf
A Poetic Date with Insects

Harold Schechter and Kimiko Hahn, Eds. *Buzz Words: Poems About Insects*
Everyman's Library Pocket Poets. 2021. Pages 256, Rs. 1156

I was delighted to receive the book *Buzz Words*, an anthology of 125 poems on insects by poets ranging wide from all over the world and time, as a gift in January this year. This is perhaps the only anthology of its type available in print. Before dipping into the poems, most of which are short lyrics though stylistically, generically and thematically different from each other, I was intrigued by one statistic with which the Foreword opens: “Scientists estimate that, at any given time, there are ten quintillion insects on the earth – or, to put the figure in more comprehensible terms, more than 200 million insects for every human being” (18). Let me add here that one quintillion is 1 followed by 18 zeroes, or a billion billion! I found it intriguing because with so much of insect life proliferating on the earth, there is only one anthology dealing with insects? This is not a rhetorical question, but a poser that made me ponder over apparent disregard to insect life in literature. Despite somewhat sobering claim made in the same Foreword a little later that poems about insects abound in ancient Greek literature, British literature from the Elizabethan period onwards and in American literature, the absence of an anthology is still puzzling. If this is true, then why the absence of insect studies in literary academy? In order to look for an answer, I believe it is necessary to go into how animals have been generally portrayed in literary works and the reasons for neglect of animal studies by the literary academy.

Most of us walk straight following our nose. Seldom do we look left or right, or see what lies on the ground we tread. In fact, casting sideways glances makes us feel guilty, much like the horse rider on that coldest night of the year in Frost's poem “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening.” Frost's narrator was at least aware of the distractions on the way to his destination and he wanted to enjoy the beauty of the woods fill up with snow. But we are mostly unaware of the life teeming around us in myriad, beautiful forms. For us it is always a straight path. The journey itself, however beautiful it might be, is much less important than the destination. This attitude is the result in part of our uniquely human hubris which itself is born of anthropocentric values most religious ideologies, secular philosophies and social Darwinist ideologies have instilled into our minds over a long period of time. We have been instructed since centuries that a human being is the crown of creation, the only life form that is sentient and gifted with reason. Owing to this pride in our superiority, we swagger and strut the earth with the misconception that all other life forms exist for us only. And our heavy investments in worldly affairs, of being “too much with the world”, also create barriers between us and Nature.

Our terribly misplaced pride in human superiority is evident from the two simple empirical facts that Ed Yong in his book *I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grander View of Life* (2016) draws our attention towards. One, if we collapse the entire 4.5 billion-year history of the earth into a single calendar year, we will realize that human beings have existed for only thirty minutes or fewer; and two, our uniqueness and singularity come under serious question mark when we realize that our bodies have, as per the latest estimates based on current scientific data, 30 trillion human cells but 39 trillion microbial ones. To quote Yong, by “any reckoning we contain multitudes” (10) and our “alliances with microbes have reportedly changed the course of animal evolution and transformed the world around us” (13).

According to him the scare stories being churned out endlessly by the modern media that all the microbes are pathogenic contaminants, are grossly exaggerated and egregiously unfair. Whatever understanding of the microbiome we have today reveals that most microorganisms are not pathogens; they are the ones that actually make us stay alive. We outsource most of our bodily functions – digestion being the most important among them – to these microorganisms. Not only this, these microbes “affect the development of our nervous system, and perhaps influence our behaviour” too (12), and our genetic makeup as well through the horizontal gene transfer process (197). So much for our superiority, uniqueness and singularity as human beings!

What Ed Yong says provides a scientific validation of Whitman's assertion in “Song of Myself” wherein he says, “I am large, I contain multitudes.” This is why his senses were attuned to small wonders that surrounded him and in the midst of which he could declare: “as to me, I know nothing else but miracles.” Well, small wonders surround us as well, though we remain oblivious of their presence.

In fact, countless miracles in the form of plants, animals, birds and myriad varieties of insects surround us. Animals abound in all cultures, literature, mythology and religious texts. Animal images on the walls of ancient caves prove the close relationship of human beings and animals in the distant past. Depiction of fabulous creatures that are half animal and half human – humanimals – in many mythologies are examples of criss-crossing interspecies borderlands. These mythological humanimals, no doubt chimerical, do suggest how the animal engages the human and vice versa. Garry Marwin and Susan McHugh in their Introduction to *Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* (2014) write that “Human worlds are built upon animal lives and deaths, conceptually as well as physically. It is difficult to imagine how we could mark ourselves out as human without other animals, for we have become human alongside other animals. But this is actually more 'among' than 'alongside' – with its sense of humans and animals living parallel but separate lives – for, from the beginning, these were lives that have always been and remain profoundly intertwined” (1). It is in fact, the presence of animals that shows us how to behave as human.

Thousands of years of human-animal coevolution has left its mark on our culture, and what we think to be human nature is actually a result of our long, dynamic interrelationship with nonhuman animals. However, the centrality we attach to human existence not only marginalizes nonhuman species, it also obscures the role of animal agency in the evolution of what appears to us as human culture. In fact, anthropocentrism as an ideology of human exceptionalism not only constructs binaries between animals and humans, it also excludes animal agency and animal perspectives by allegorizing them for their symbolic significance only. Whether these be fables of *Panchatantra* or that of Aesop's, or any other animal stories for that matter, animals always stand for something else. They are often symbols of virtues and vices. Hardworking ants, merry-go-lucky grasshoppers and singing insects like cicadas and crickets, singing virtuosos of the avian world such as the larks, thrushes and nightingales, and tigers with their terrifying beauty like that of Blake's Tyger “burning bright / In the forests of the night” prompting him to ask profound anagogical questions, are just a few examples of animals symbolizing certain qualities we like or despise. Animals make their presence in many narratives in several other ways too. For instance, Ben Jonson in his play *Volpone*, made use of the Italian beast fable in which humans allegorizing certain animal qualities figure prominently.

What is really interesting to note here is that animals in literary works appear as metaphors and serve a symbolic function only, they are not allowed to be themselves. Margot

Norris, states very forcefully this fact in her *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (1985): “Nowhere in literature were animals allowed to be themselves, to refer to Nature and to their own animality without being pressed into symbolic service as metaphors, or as figures in fable or allegory” (17). The issue is not only that animals are not allowed to be themselves, though getting out of our human skin to attempt such a representational mutation itself poses an essentially insurmountable challenge; the real issue actually concerns how anthropocentrism informs literary study and hermeneutics as well. In this regard, Susan McHugh emphasizes in her *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (2011) that only in rarefied ways animals have “been the focal point of systematic literary study” (6). Thus, the exclusionary nature of anthropocentrism not only disallows animals *to be* animals in literary works, it also does not allow literary study to focus on literary works that have animals as major protagonists such as Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, Kafka's animal tales and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* from the point of view of recuperating animal agency and animal perspective.

When it comes to representation of insects in literary works, the situation appears bleaker still. But let's for a while move away from the portrayal of insects in literary works and look into how we react to the presence of insects around us. The presence of insects, the creeping, crawling, flying, darting, slithering, squirming, jumping, hopping, and wriggling masters of kinesis and makers of “the Poetry of earth”, as a Keats would say, elicits ambivalent responses from us. Most people react to insects with a sense of revilement and extreme fear – entomophobia as it is called. The intriguing behaviours of insects, their small size, brief life span, mysteries surrounding their anatomy and various metamorphic life stages produce in us a sense of wonderment as well. But generally we tend to associate disease and contamination with most insect species. The Book of Leviticus, which is the third book of the Old Testament has this admonition: “All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you.” Given the sway of the idea that insects are an abomination, we either tend to disregard them, or want to exterminate them. No doubt there are some notable exceptions to such thinking. Butterflies, moths, honey bees and certain other insect species are often portrayed by poets and artists as symbols of beauty, earth's music, renewal and regeneration of life, industry, virility, and survival against all odds. However, a single visit to a multiple retail store is enough to prove that we think of insects mainly as an abomination. We will find shelves full of insecticides of different kinds, but not even a single item claiming to help promote the growth of even a single species of friendly insects. This is quite intriguing given the fact that insects play not only a pivotal role in terrestrial ecosystem, they play an equally important role in our agricultural, culinary, architectural traditions and fashions.

The sorry state of our ailing planet today, pointing towards the certainty of climate apocalypse and that too, in not a very distant future, demands that we award centrality to animal studies in literature. Animal studies should not be the preserve of scientific disciplines only, as it has been most of the time. The divide between sciences and imaginative literary writing – The Great Derangement as Amitav Ghosh calls this divide in his book by the same title – needs to be bridged. This is important if we wish to move away from one of the most enduring orthodoxies of all times which happens to be our belief in the 'great chain of being' that places humans at the top of a hierarchy of life forms in terms of their complexity, intelligence and value. Any ideology that underpins hierarchization of life with humans at the top rung will end up thingifying nonhuman animals and justifying anthropogenic violence against lower placed species. True multiculturalism does not lie in engaging on equal terms with human 'others' and their different cultures, it lies rather in engaging in a similar way with

all life forms that exist, to borrow a metaphor from Deleuze and Guattari, as nodes in a non-hierarchical, horizontally spreading rhizomatic web of life, since a “rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 25). The rhizome can be a model for a truly multicultural society with its non-hierarchical trans-species connectivity that eschews binarist dichotomy we posit between human and nonhuman animals.

In recent times, informed by insights provided by poststructuralism, postmodernism, posthumanism, ecocriticism, zoosemiotics, ethology and growing awareness of decreasing biodiversity and the cataclysmic impact of ruthless destruction of Nature on our planet, literary scholarship has moved away from reading the presence of nonhuman animals in literature from allegorical perspective to what is known as zoopoetic approach which explores the agency of nonhuman animals. Zoopoetics as Aaron M. Moe defines it in his work *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* (2014) refers to “the process of discovering innovative breakthroughs in form through an attentiveness to another species’ bodily *poiesis*” (10). Zoopoetics has two main foci. One, it “focuses on the process by which animals are makers. They make texts. They gesture. They vocalize. The sounds and vocalizations emerge from a rhetorical body, a poetic body, or rather a body that is able *to make*. This assumes agency The second focus of zoopoetics emerges out of the first. It exposes how the gestures of animals—and the vocalizations embedded in those gestures—have shaped the making of human poetry” (11). This is how when animal gestures are re-enacted, mimicked or recreated through textual gestures, that poetry includes the presence of animals. Thus, the focus in literary animal studies has shifted to investigating how literary works are informed by animal poiesis, in other words to investigating the presence or absence of animal agency.

As Anne Simon suggests in her essay “Literature and Animal Expressions: On the Cognitive and Ethical Aspects of Zoopoetics” according to “many linguists and philosophers, parts of human languages originated in animal forms, such as those related to body parts, or types of locomotion or noise emissions. Just think of onomatopoeia and the many other words whose meaning is conveyed by their sounding, such as the *hiss* of the snake” (204). Animals can create bodily forms of responses through behaviours, sounds, rhythms and so forth. In a way, animal agency – *poiein* (making) – is constitutive of their very existence.

As a keen observer of nature, particularly birds and lepidopterans (butterflies and moths), I have seen them responding to their environment in adaptive ways, communicating within or beyond their species, indulging in thuggery, laying traps for their prospective preys, preying on their victims in innovative ways, and responding to danger individually and collectively by sending vocal and bodily cues of danger to the members of their own species and to those from other species too. In the words of Anne Simon, “Primordial poetics of the living . . . thus exists, which is also a pre-literary way to define zoopoetics. One can understand that many writers consider their creation as the expression, if not the foundation, of an ontological relationship between living and writing” (205). Now this is a relationship that unfolds at the intersection of Nature, culture, language and ethics. It is from the perspective of zoopoetics that the poems included in *Buzz Words* can be and need to be investigated.

Buzz Words is a very wide-ranging anthology divided into ten sections based on the behaviours and appearances of insects. These sections are: Insectarium (8 poems); Workers (16 poems); Singers (14 poems); Sparklers and Swoopers (13 poems); Gliders (13 poems); Leapers (10 poems); Weavers (13 poems); Crawlers (15); Stingers, Biters, and Suckers (13 poems); and Pests (20 poems). Such classification is a bit arbitrary from a strictly scientific point of view but acceptable, nonetheless, for bringing some system to a bewildering variety

of imaginative figuration of an equally bewildering variety of life forms we tend to exoticize from a view from the above. The poets whose poems find a place in this book range from Japanese haiku master Kobayashi Issa, Paul Valery, Pablo Neruda, William Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edwin Markham, Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, E. E. Cummings, Carol Ann Duffy, Emily Dickinson, Ogden Nash, William Empson, Charles Bukowski, Charles Simic, D. H. Lawrence, Tu Fu, William Blake, Ted Hughes, Antonio Machado and Yang Wan-Li among others.

Presentation of nonhuman experience poses challenges which are ontological as well as epistemological. The kind of negative capability Keats seeks as an ideal form of empathy in order to leave our human skin for entering the animal skin demands complete annihilation of the hyphen separating the experiencing 'self' from the 'other', 'I' from 'Thou'. This idea of negation which is Keats's poetic creed is mesmerized by an unresolvable contradiction also; the desire for undivided unity tends to engender ontological insecurity because of the fear of merger of the 'self' into the 'other' and the resultant loss of alterity of the merging entities. This is the kind of insecurity we find Wordsworth grappling with in his poems "Tintern Abbey" and "The Prelude."

From the thematic point of view, most of the poems in this anthology – including Keats's sonnet "On the Grasshopper and Cricket" – do not provide sufficient evidence of ontological insecurity on the part of their authors thus putting to rest any claim to workings of negative capability, yet all the poems are informed by recognition of the importance of intertwinement of insect and human life. Anthropocentric biases are evident in many poems and anthropomorphic mutations also are in ample evidence. But the insect agency, that "primordial poetics of the living", to use once again Anne Simon's words, permeates these poems which is visible in innovative syntax, polysemy and sudden shifts in the narrative. All these imaginative stylistic devices combined with high degree of figurality make the poems capture insect poesis, something that is not possible without attentive seeing and listening. The outcome of these efforts is "reanimalization of language" – the kind of which Káři Driscoll and Eva Hoffmann in their Introduction to *What is Zoopoetics: Texts, Bodies, Entanglement* (2018), talk about in relation to Kafka's animal stories. Drawing on Derrida's perspective in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* that places "the animal" in the position usually occupied by the Cartesian *cogito*" (2), and also on Walter Benjamin's reading of Kafka's animal poetics, Driscoll and Hoffman argue that "Kafka's "vast zoopoetics," . . . is also a poetics of the body, of the sudden reminder of one's own corporeality, and hence of one's own animality" (4). Reanimalization of language means revitalization of disembodied language that results from denial of human animality by the "Western, carno-phallogocentric tradition" (3). Reanimalized language draws attention towards its own textuality and materiality in reflecting upon questions of writing and representation; and in order to do so, it "proceeds via the animal" (3). The poems included in the present anthology foreground their own textuality via the animals they represent.

In regard to figuration of animal agency reanimalizing language in poetry, the best example is E. E. Cummings's celebrated poem on grasshopper titled "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r." The poem captures the grasshopper's agency through its innovative narrative style by freeing language from all grammatical constraints and accepted rules of syntax. The unusual stanzaic pattern and use of upper and lower case shock us and upturn our expectations of linear comprehension in order to capture the hopping movements of the subject of the poem. The first stanza itself shocks the reader who expects a well-knit linear linguistic structure on the page:

r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r
who

a)sw(e loo)k
upnowgath

PPEGORHRASS

Disorganized and distorted word order and very eccentric looking typography that defies conventional expectations about the poetic form on a page present a figure of a hopping and leaping grasshopper. Cummings's poem bridges the gap between gesture and language, animal and human. If the grasshopper is all play and movement, Cummings's poem enacts the insect's playful movements. His language emerges from an attentiveness to the gestural poesis of the grasshopper, a language of high figuration joining the insect's poesis with vocality predating grammaticized human language of linear logic. In doing this, Cummings foregrounds the overlapping continuity between human speech and animal gestures. Only in the one-word last line of the poem, the insect's name preceded by a comma and followed by a semicolon, is spelt in a correct way – “,grasshopper;” – thus gesturing towards the immense possibilities of humanimal vocality.

To Meleager, a Greek poet of 1st Century BCE, no musician can equal the song of a Cicada:

Cicada, drunk with drops of dew
What musician equals you
In the rural solitude?
On your perch within a wood,
Scraping to your heart's desire
Dusky sides with notchy feet,
Thrilling, shrilling, fast and sweet,
Like the music of a lyre.

(From “To the Cicada”)

Meleager entreats the Cicada to sing something new to the wood nymphs “So that from his arboured seat / Pan himself may answer you / Till every inmost glade rejoices / With your loud alternate voices.” The poem ends on a note of the narrator's wish to listen to the Cicada's song so that he may forget all “thorns, the doubts and fears, / Love in this sad heart hath set” and fall “Into a noontide sleep.” Though the poem is unmistakably anthropocentric but is informed by the recognition of interweaving of the world of Nature, the supernatural and the human.



(The Praying Mantis: Beautiful Predator Par Excellence)

Mantis is an insect that arouses immense curiosity because of its weird anatomy and mating rituals. The female decapitates the male after mating. No doubt mantises have been studied extensively by scientists and they have inspired many poets to write poems about

them. Kimiko Hahn in her “Reckless Sonnet # 2” wonders not only at the bizarre beauty of the Mantis's slender body, she marvels at “lavish pheromones” and the “stunning heat” that drive the strange coupling at the end of which the “female eats the male after that single fuck”. In a manner that links the mantis love with love among humans, one wonders how one could fall asleep in the same bed “once made bloody / first with love and then with love –.” The terrifying image of a virgin losing her virginity and then killing her lover ends in an unsettling question: How can one stay calm in the kitchen listening to the percolator “after that knowledge?”

Ella Duffy's poem “Mantis” is focused on the Mantis's anatomy, especially on its posture when it waits for its prey. The subject, in Duffy's poem is also a female mantis as it in Hahn's. The poem, through captivating images brings out the idea of terror and beauty fused in the body and desire of the Mantis. The Mantis, standing still, an “a green meditation” as an “Icon on guard” waiting for its prey is “threat posed as prophet.” With a “body of tricks” the “wild queen” is “a small violence.” Her “face is geometry / at play; a compass / for the dead.” Whereas in Donne's poem “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” the compass symbolizes two separate but joined lovers drawing their souls into a perfect circle, in Duffy's poem the compass is a symbol of death. This stark but incidental contrast throws into sharp relief the patiently meditative, graceful but macabre beauty of the she Mantis. The word “geometry” Duffy employs to refer to the Mantis's perfectly sculpted face is a highly ironic metaphor as it intensifies the idea of the destructive symmetry of the Mantis. Such designs are plentiful in Nature as Robert Frost also presents such a terrifying design of a white spider in his poem “Design.” Unravelling of such contradictions makes us look beyond dichotomies of black and white.



(Spider's Deadly Design)

In Indo-Caribbean American poet Rajiv Mohabir's poem “Cryptic Mimicry”, the Oriental beauty of orchid mantis hiding in pink and white orchid petals and not revealing “its accented flecks / of cherry and peach to lure prey” once drew men to East. The mantis is now kept as pet to decorate American homes. The cryptic mimicry of the orchid mantis acquires a political force when the narrator dismisses the idea of being exoticized and treated as a pet. He claims that “praying in traces” of his “heathen tongue” he has come to “raze all ships sailing for Empire.”

In a similar way, other poems also draw our attention to varying attitudes to insects, all premised on the idea of continuity in human-animal spheres. They make us rethink the human-animal divide by foregrounding animal agency. Attributing agency to animals may appear anthropomorphizing in the final analysis, but it is necessary too if we wish to respect animal ontology and animal rights for a truly multicultural living on our planet.

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Lalit Mohan Sharma. *Parables: Fair and Flawed*
Authors Press, New Delhi. 2021, Rs. 295, pp. 154.

Dr. Tamali Neogi*

“In my view a good poem is one in which the form of
the verse and the joining of its parts seems light as
a shallow river flowing over its sandy bed”
(<https://www.poetsgraves.com>).

These words of Japanese poet Matsuo Basho primarily come to mind when one turns the pages of *Parables: Fair and Flawed*, an anthology of poems by Lalit Mohan Sharma, published by Author Press, New Delhi, 2021. What makes this book of verses unique is that it encapsulates two different rather contradistinctive kinds of poems triggered by two dissimilar sorts of emotions - one of agony, anguish, anxiety, anger and disgust revealing the poet as a socio-political being, and the other soft, subtle and finer category of human feelings, emotions and sensibilities that redeem suffering wherefrom springs poetry of love and beauty. “A Time for Transition” is the poem which not only invites the readers to come out of his/her own individual construct “seeking the unknown” but the two distinct groups are also significantly demarcated by this poem. What gives the collection an edge is that it serves as a perfect vehicle and repository of emotional conundrums involving human body and soul; the poet tears open human hearts and with remarkable ease and velocity frees the cascades of human emotions.

The first group of poems portray the socio-economic and political concerns that agitate the consciousness of the poet at the mayhem caused by the Pandemic which unravelled the miserable plight of his countrymen in a system deeply shadowed by hypocrisy. The poems lay bare the society's anguished and bruised soul and become the 'speaking-mirror' of contemporary times. The poet's understanding of man's utter inability to break the shackles (“Before the Advent of Gods”), his anger against the present system where the poor and the destitute can't live a life “without a fear” (“Them/he People”), his unfailing voice of protest against the social iniquities that have become pathetically obtrusive during the recent Corona pandemic (“Dreaming Nightmares”), his frustrations at man's vaunting ambition (“Parables-2020”), as the 'centre' forces each individual to join the 'action' even at the risk of “losing the ground solid beneath your feet” (“A Cacophony”), his disbelief of the media and the tribe of politicians (“A Cacophony”), his disgust with the country being caught in the web of blank words and gestures (“Metamorphosis”), his desperation to seek forgiveness from Jesus for what his country is being dragged into (“Forgiveness”), his love of nation (“Better Now than Later”) and the seamy side of life - the violence, hatred, lust, chaos, death all around – are manifest in myriad ways in the first group of poems. The satiric undertones pave the way for the poet's abiding faith in humanity and universal bonding in the other cluster of poems. Love, joy, trust, beauty and charm of the natural world characterize the second half of the book that cheers, rejuvenates and invigorates our souls and adequately informed by the reigning spirit of buoyancy in the second half. The poems as “A Poem on Guru Purnima,” “Daddy-Friend's

Greetings,” “A Birthday Dream,” “On a Complaint by a Friend” add to the riches of the anthology as a whole. A reader's sense of variety is satiated as almost in every new stanza/section of a poem, the poet seems to surprise by offering something new, either thematically or analogically. What engages a reader is the poet's amazingly new outlook as revealed in a number of poems.

The impress of intertextuality is writ large on some of the poems which allude to legendary and mythological characters. This specifically interests the readers, as in each of the poems as “Ashwathama,” “Visamriti,” “Melon, Mirage and the Bird,” “Birth of Krishna,” “The Roving Eye,” “Dance of Death and Devotion” the poet tries to bring out the contemporaneity of myths and epical happenings. The other noteworthy aspect of this volume is the titles of the poems which are really justified, be it a noun phrase, an adjective phrase, a proper noun, a participle or a sentence and in cases it is not apparent there is a significant correlation between the readers' perceptual understanding of multiple dimensions of meanings and how these are reflected in the titles poetically. Additionally in a sense a reader is to invent a story in poems generated either from the beatific vision of the poet or the satiric one portraying human follies and foibles that scare, instruct and entertain.

In the poems as “Celestial Flights,” “May and April,” “Wages of Language,” “Daddy-Friend's Greetings,” “Dream of Beauty,” and “Theatre of Politics” the poet either alludes to unforgettable lines of a precursor poet or directly names him, most of the times to emphasize his own point of view or his vision. Notably, the poems are in free verse form and the poet successfully attains semantic and thematic coherence. Exceptionally, some of the long poems, as “Rainbow Blues,” “The Roving Eye,” and “Airborne Allusions” may appear to the readers as compilation of dispersed ideas which is however not the case with the other long poems as they have underlying thematic resonance. In spite of jarring occurrence of words as 'hosannas,' 'pulsating,' 'timber bridge,' 'greying,' 'rivulets,' and 'coiffeur,' the poet's commendable strength in drawing analogies is significantly noticeable. Metaphors and images weave the rich tapestry of Lalit Mohan Sharma's poetic craft. Furthermore, the form, pattern, structure and the rhetorical devices used in each poem seem to flow from the internal logic of the poems, sans pretentiousness.

Finally, the absence of any punctuation mark in the poems (incidentally there is period at the ending of “Lovers”) on the one hand builds a complex sort of narrative in the poems and on the other allows the readers more freedom to derive their own meanings. It may appear so that the poet simply gathers expressions and breaks them into verses, stanzas and groups but such is the art of the poet as the diverse parts of poems tend to join each other smoothly and lightly. A reader feels re-energized as the poetic stuff dished out touches the inner chords of human heart. *The Parables: Fair and Flawed* helps us to discover our multiple selves, emotions, actions and inactions which shock, instruct and entertain. When anxiety, death and grey clouds of uncertainties envelope the globe and the human in man becomes the first casualty, one must turn to *The Parables* for succour, truth, unalloyed joy and mediative solace in order to immerse into something beautiful and profound that "empowers human potential with celestial flights."

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***Sri Krisna Parijata*, by Tammanna of Kulagodu, Tr. Basavaraj Naikar**
CVG Books: Bengaluru, 2021, pp.176. Rs. 395.

Dr. Chandrasekharaiah*

Who, in the Indian context, doesn't know the myth of *parijata* flower that has inspired many a poet-composer to sing its paeon and sending countless rustic troubadours to burst into rapturous singing and dancing to immortalize the blissful love of the legendary trio--- Sri Krisna, Rukmini and Satyabhama? Indian folk-lore overflows with this ever fresh and juicy story of *parijata* flower . Dr. Basavaraj Naikar's translation of *Sri Krisna Parijata*, a popular Kannada folk-play into English is indeed a fascinating read as does its original text. And if the same is enacted on the stage it will surely enwrap the audience in the aura of that eternal thing called love!

Devotion to God as a subject of interest in Indian literature is too familiar to the lay and the learned alike. And the classical literature, both oral and written, produced in our languages is in one form or the other mostly devotion centric. Devotion to God as its core value is but an expression of love to the divine. Longing of an individual soul to get merged into the eternal one is but an act spurred by the sentiment of love, either temporal or spiritual. But in most instances temporal love gets transformed into the divine or the spiritual one at the sublimation level of human feelings or emotions. Concepts such as these formed the subject of countless literary masterpieces, both oral and written, in all the Indian languages and they have played pivotal role in shaping our values of love, both divine and existential. And obviously such masterpieces have set examples to follow and emulate. The cult of love between Krisna, Radha and Rukmini and Shiva and Parvathi needs to be studied and understood from the human perspective rather than the divine. The folk play under review, if looked at from this angle, would certainly refine our experiences of love more and elevate us to level of the divine.

Sri Krisna Parijata tells a triangle story, but unlike the one we find in modern films where the hero, heroine and the villain form the triangle. Here Sri Krisna and his two beloved wives, Rukmini and Satyabhama, form the triangle. Satyabhama, junior in status, loves Krisna as dearly as the senior Rukmini. But her grouse is that Krisna loves Rukmini more than he would do her. It was all due to her ignorance of being ego-centric and self-centered nature buttressed by her thoughts of feeling more beautiful and loving. In the process she had totally misunderstood the virtuous Rukmini. Yes, Satyabhama needed a lesson to be taught, so that her veil of ignorance was torn apart and helped to see the divine aspect of the sacred feminine in Rukmini.

Coming to the plot of the play it so happens that when Satyabhama was smarting under the illusion of being neglected things move fast. She becomes completely distrustful of Krisna's love for her alleging that he spends more time with Rukmini seeking the pleasure of her company contrary to the fact that Krisna didn't prefer one to the other though he respected Rukmini more for her enlightened love. Sathyabhama got herself transformed into an embodiment of envy and began to treat Rukmini as her bitter rival. And when her attitude towards Krisna crossed the boundary of womanly modesty , it was time to expose her to the

nature of true love.

The ways and means applied by the divine to set things right are inscrutable. Krisna was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, one of the trinity of the Hindu pantheon, responsible for saving and sustaining the creation. Satyabhama had forgotten this aspect of her husband or had she ignored it? And the stage was set to bring the straying soul back on track. At this juncture the role of *parijata* flower comes to the fore. Narada, the celestial messenger-cum-mischief monger takes over to teach the intransigent Satyabhama the lesson of her life. He meets her and tells that Krisna gave the *parijata* flower he had brought for him from heaven to Rukmini as a token of his deep love for her. Narada's subtle insinuation meant that Krisna could have given it to her had he loved her as much. Satyabhama was furious. Literally she became with anger. And again strange are the ways of God that the intervening developments prompted Krisna to present Satyabhama just not a single *parijata* flower, but a whole tree laden with flowers! Satyabhama was pleased immensely! But her happiness turned to be brief and passing. To her utter shame and disbelief the flowers of the tree began to be blown off from her premises and made to fall at Rukmini's residence! That was enough for Satyabhama to understand who Krisna was and how great was Rukmini's love.

Sri Krisna Parijata, classified as a *sannata*, a distinct form of folk-play in Kannada, is a crowd-puller even to today and it is hugely watched in northern parts of Karnataka. The Kannada dialect used in the original text is known for its robust tangy regional flavor that naturally poses a challenge to the translator. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has met the challenge imaginatively capturing the essence of a great folk-romance in detail in his English translation. His style is as racy and hearty as the style of the original contributing overwhelmingly for the success of this literary endeavor.

The play as it were cast in the rural environs is basically meant to entertain and instruct the rural folk focusing chiefly on the sentiment of love which happens to be universal in its appeal. Comprising thirteen scenes, an unconventional format, the play is presented through ten characters of which only four--- Sri Krisna, Rukmini, Satyabhama and Narada---are mythological and the rest are from the rural diaspora.

The mythological characters in the play are but rustic dummies in the guise of celestials and thus they have close proximity to the rural psyche. And the magic wand wielded by the playwrights creates a make-believe effect on the rural folk that the godly ones too live and love as they do in their own likeness. Obviously *Sri Krisna Parijata* is one of the finest romantic folk-plays ever written in Kannada sometime in the 18th century by two rustic bards, Tammanna and Sadashivaiah, about whom very little is known.

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has discreetly chosen this work for translation and in doing so he has produced an excellent work that is as much faithful to the original as it is delightfully authentic in English, the language of its translation. With an engaging introduction and a glossary the work is an invaluable addition to the corpus of folk literature in translation and it is a must-read.

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Colonizing the Natural Beauty: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

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Pramod Kumari*

“A jeremiad of great clarity and force that one might have called
torrential were the language not so finely controlled.”

Salman Rushdie

Jamaica Kincaid's *oeuvre* largely draws upon her own life, and her tone is often criticised as angry though she dismisses these insinuations. Her writings negotiate the problematics of colonialism, colonial legacy, postcolonialism and neo-colonialism, gender, British and American imperialism and racism. Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988), a creative nonfiction, explores the multiplicity of narrative elements cutting across literary genres. It is her memoir of growing up in Antigua, social and cultural critique with autobiography and a history of imperialism, environmental racism and environmental injustice meted out to the people of marginalized communities. The narration begins with the description of picturesque natural beauty of the island, “What a beautiful island Antigua is—more beautiful than any of the other islands you have seen, and they were very beautiful in their way, but they were much too green, much too lush with vegetation . . . and since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought . . . must never cross your mind.” Her tone is bitter and sarcastic, especially when dealing with Antigua's colonial past and tourist-driven present. There are more tender moments of melancholy throughout; however, anger is the prevailing mood as her homeland faces a new form of colonization in the name of tourism industry that is actually promoting new ways of foreign occupation of the land, enslavement of the local people, and environmental racism.

A Small Place spread of four untitled sections, begins with Kincaid's description of the natural beauty of the island, expensive Japanese cars, mansions on the island and dilapidated library awaiting repairs after an earthquake and concludes with a discussion of her view of the moral ugliness of being a tourist. The second section offers vignettes of Kincaid's memories of the “old” Antigua, its possession by Great Britain, the casual racism of the times, and the cultural subservience of Antigua to England, and the distortions that colonialism has ushered in the Antiguan polity, and the connection she sees between the colonial past of the island and its corrupt present. The third is suffused with Kincaid's nostalgic sweet and sour memories of the library, and the dynamics of colonial regime the evil governance of the present day Antigua. The fourth part invokes the physical beauty of the island vis a vis the Antiguans steeped in poverty and wrestling with the problems and contradictions of life.

As the narrative unfolds the readers get a fair idea of the anguish and agony as Kincaid records “the oppressive colonial past of the land that has been ravaged under imperial rule by exploitation of the natural resources and subjugation of the human resources.” After its independence, another sort of colonialism emerged – the corruption inherent in the

political system, the main cause of deteriorating state of present day Antigua. The book is a trenchant commentary on the neglected natural beauty of the island, and a blatant attack on Antiguan government for the continuing decay of the land. *A Small Place* speaks of the past and present-day Antigua that tourists do not see. In short, it is a severe indictment of the Antiguan government and Britain's colonial legacy. Kincaid's critique focuses on the foundation of the global world: Capitalism and its consequences.

A Small Place explores different perspectives on and aspects of Antigua. Kincaid highlights the realities behind the surface of what the tourist experiences. Just an instance, “since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used . . . must never cross your mind,” wherein Kincaid names the issue she is talking about more precisely, concretely talking about drought, a circumstance that affects locals everyday while a tourist will never be affected by it. The narrative is suffused with questions that agitate the writer's consciousness. It is not without reason that Susan Sontag legitimately calls Jamaica Kincaid's work “emotional truthfulness” as it raises readers' awareness about new forms of colonialism that displace “those at the centre of power from ethics, morality and humanity.”

**Dr. Pramod Kumari, Assistant Professor, Dept of English, Engineering College, Bharatpur (Rajasthan), India. Kumaripramod7@gmail.com*

Hela Jenayah Tekali*

Modern Cosmology

We are enveloped in this modern cosmology
Made as traps in its hypnotic oligarchy
Wherever we go our eyes are seduced
By a magnetic field enslaved and abused.

The virginity of our spirit is misled
We are already announcing that we are dead
Moving towards a virtual world full of hypnosis
Are we realizing its impact on our psychosis?

Our ions , particles, electrons ,molecules are in chains
Theory of quantum physics creating new gains
Of bodies , souls , hearts , and even our brains
A new form of slavery attacking our veins.

Shall we wake up to this new consciousness?
Look "inside" for what rests of our intelligence
Turn upside down this modern cosmology
Trigger the " insight" with fruitful poetry.

It is high time to free man from this dependence
To see into his true humanism, and plain essence
There's no existence of man without the divine
Let him look inside for what makes him really shine.

Soul Made Of All Souls

Is the soul made of all souls?
Following an assemblage of linear codes
We hear, see ,feel and taste the same
Our root systems run deep in our bone marrows.

Our consciousness , identity, molten rocks
And mountains run through our decoded veins
Leaves are shed from trees
trees are shed from the earth
and all reach down to the ground.

The moon, the sun, the stars hang in the sky

The leaves, trees rocks reach down to earth
 The soul and body roll through sky and earth
 Gathered like husks around the entire globe.

The soul sings the song of the body and truth
 Dictionaries can't touch the real Me
 Codes are angles, curves, spirals and dots
 Real words are rooted in the ground and sea.

Each soul sees a fraction of reality of its own
 Wisdom of the universe with signs unreached
 We all sit there with the mystic unseen soul
 Striving to fathom that paradox of existence.

Silence of soul is heard in the main stream
 When waters keep trickling drops after drops
 Words and water merge together to give life
 A diction of soil, fire, water , air all in a nutshell.

We all stand amid notions of good and evil
 Decoding the bone marrows of existential survival
 All swings around us, darkness and light
 Sun and moon swing around us
 while we stand still
 with our who I Am altogether untouched.

**Hela Jenayah Tekali is an outstanding mystical Poetess from Tunisia. A Professor of English at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences in Tunisia, she has authored 7 books on Sufism, Spirituality and Mystic poetry. Halos of Light, The Quest of Love, The Soaring of My Soul, Mystical Eye and The Song of the Thirsty Bird; "Metaphysics : A Mirror to Mysticism" (Literary Criticism), Alchemy : Another Name For Love. "Dives into Mysteries." She has co-authored a book on Indo-North African Poetry, Eternal Showers and published in several international anthologies.*

Ms. Tarala Deshpande*

One More Breath

If she could breathe another minute,
Perhaps
She would look at her tiny marvel
Once again, the twinkle in his eyes
Once again, the shine on his unkempt hair
Once again.....

If she could breathe the second minute
Perhaps
She would live another life through her fairy
Once again, the dances and tunes in her memory
Once again, the melodies she recorded
Once again, the drama she enacted
Once again....

If she could breathe the third minute
Perhaps
She would look into his eyes to find answers painted
Once again, argue through her silence
Once again, admire his dried up tears
Once again, travel through their calling memories
Once again....

Only if she could breathe another time....

Touch the Sky

Free your caged feathers and
Answer the call of the sky
'You don't know how cruel the sky can be' they will say,
Pay not a heed to them, for what they know
Of the sky that they never embraced

Free from those chains
That bound you to the bells of monotonous dance
And cacophonies of empty vessels
See how the bright sky shines on your glories
And wait not for the never impending right time
For none, but you know your time and worth

Free from those unappealing customs and
Fly high to make your own
For it is your way and you will get to see your sky but once.

Rapporteur

Yes I am a rapporteur
I hear and not speak,
Listen and not interpret,
Note and not disclose
Sense and not show
Feel and not react
Understand and not reveal
I know the secrets
I know the loops
I know the gaps
And I know to erase those from my mind
So I go like nothing I know
Back to all my normal
Be like all other normal
I wrote what I heard and
Erased all from memory
I am a rapporteur and
I reproduce and not revise
I keep it a secret as long as it be and I be

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Bipasha Majumder (De)

Six Haikus

dewy dawn . . .
musa plant wearing
diamond jewelry

*

early night . . .
she shudders with her
mirror image

*

winter shopping . . .
a naked mannequin
in the shop window

*

receding sea . . .
her thinning hair
after chemo

*

autumn breeze . . .
a worm is caught
in the web

*

late peace lilies . . .
corona spectres
disappear.

**Bipasha Majumder (De) is Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, Debra TSKS Mahavidyalaya, West Bengal. Her poems have featured in Literary Voice, IJELLH, The Criterion, Contemporary Literary Review India, Rock Pebbles, Glimpse of Creations, Bunch of Emotions, Kaleidoscope: Anthology of International Poets, Scarlet Dragonfly Journal, Haiku Dialogue, Under the Basho Journal and Haiku Corner 2022. Her maiden anthology of Haiku, Teleidoscope: An Anthology of 60 Haiku has been published with a foreword by Dr. Jernail Singh Anand.*

Dr Saraswathy Selvarajan

Forever

Scary are those
forever-s
that it breathes
In fairy tales; in pages
Full of colours; the Prussian blues
Fakes and smirks at
Those who believe in promises
As real!

As fallen leaves
That it floats and floats; the ebbs and flows
and dances with the tune of the stream
With hopes of reaching its
Destination

The white masks and
The autumns are the sweetest
Hide the scars beneath
The stains and the pains
Of the bygones

Let the departed souls unite,
And stroll on the meadows
Of new sprouts and the real;
The eternal journey of
The everlasting *forever-s*

Found and Lost

The bright dazzling eyes
ignited the alter ego;
the dark black fumes blurred
all around me except thee

The tantalizing red-wine
That I ever envied to dive in—
the much awaited summer rain
longing to get drenched

The rusted hand-cuff eaten up my flesh;
the unhealed wound had left me with a
ever growing scar—

The deepest dark cell imprisoned me;
An inmate for a life time!
Let me be drowned in your soothing melody
Oh! That's my much awaited destiny!

While I was fumbling to find
And was lost somewhere in the mid-way
As you were there right an hand away

I'm no more to lose any more
The riddle remains unanswerable
As an unknown mystery
Yet the search for thee never ceases

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Mari Shobana*

Four days! Four walls!

I, a Maria, Daughter of spring
Who catches the trumpet of colors,
Music and blissfulness: An unanimated season.
You are the seven-sighted rainbow joined together.
Today is the glorious dawn of the red carpet!

Either I start from scratch or my song
I unmute my flute: It's ebony.
Life surprises you until you expect
Some may be shocked.
But both sound like lizards.

Yes! it had to happen
Once you open your windows
You will wake with a new-blown day
Your four-senses paint your five.
And your flames are winged.

I am flying with my wings
to color my vision! That's my mission.
When I was a teenager, I met with an accident
Yes! Hope is dark! Dark is dawn!
Yet you won't believe but you can.

When I was in my teens, my five became four
I lost my beautiful eyes, which are apart
Of my journey, A journey without my flame
Is...no, I don't want to express it in words.
Once I said that I was nothing.

Days gone, My life has done
I close my door and windows
I don't want to see the sun's rays and the moon's beauty
"I laugh at myself in front of my mirror, every day not, each hour,
And asked what are you doing Maria? Are you mad?.

You already lost your vision no need to do
All these nautical things".
I re-laughed again and again.
For nearly four days, I survived around the four walls,
Four full-fledged days! Four walls!

96 hours taught me how to live and love
 Your newborn life. You care like a child.
 Sometimes she cries, sometimes she laughs
 She needs toys and a cradle song.
 Switch off sympathies and philosophies.

I have a wooden flute, A white cane.
 Oh, my dear seven-sighted rainbows!
 I want to see your colorful wings in my sanctuary
 Remember, life welcomes you, offers you,
 Breaks you, and heals you.

A Winged Sparrow, My Comrade

I am getting tired of overworked and over-loved
 A warrior is grinning from Ear to Ear_the fairest
 Of all melodies. Near my Balcony, A happy Chamber
 Many times I saw his little tail , but today was delightful.

Like a man, he paints my canva with his beak
 Color me happy with hope and love and fear.
 He is the man of maple tree upon my bitter cloud
 neither pampered nor ill-treated.

No more Adieu! Nevertheless; He promises.
 He uncaged my thoughts and tags my emotions
 And into poetry. An uncaged spirit cracks a smile.
 I dream to not make him a pet but as my comrade, **A winged sparrow.**

**Mari shobana is emerging poet, from Ramanathapuram (Tamil Nadu). She is the co-author of the book, Velocity of Thoughts. marishobana8@gmail.com*

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- A Dialogue with Shabnam Kaur , Poetess LV Number 9, Vol.1 September 2018, pp. 5-11*
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