Literary Voice

A Peer Reviewed Journal of English Studies
U.G.C. Care Group II Journal
ISSN 2277-4521
Indexed with Web of Science ESCI, Cosmos, ESJI, I2OR, CiteFactor, InfoBase

Number 17 Volume 1 March 2022

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RESEARCH PAPERS

British Literature

American Literature

Indian English Literature

Review Essays

Book Reviews

Poems

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Literary Voice: A Peer Reviewed Journal of English Studies March 2022 edition comprises research papers on various genres of British, American, Indian, Pakistani and Diaspora literatures. The issues interwoven in the numerous literary texts have been examined through the concepts of self-actualization, Posthumanism, urban spatiality, 'ecological trauma,' 'othering,' hybridity and the Third Space, the Proust phenomenon, habit memory, and prospective memory, John L. Austin's speech act theory, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "rhizomatic", Pnina Werbner's idea of "complex diasporas" and Aihwa Ong's notion of "flexible citizenship," neo-Orientalism that creates stereotypical and essentialist views about religious denominations. Some of the articles challenge the normativity of gendered violence and the corollary religious nationalism of the Partition, analyse the interstices of fiction and history, question the grand narratives of history and the perils of secession politics for the country, critique the scourge of authoritarianism, showcase the positive aspects of alteration of classic fairytales in order to deconstruct the social and gender stereotypes, revise the hegemonic canons of knowledge and cultural forms, discern the inherent stress and obscurity of society reflected in memes, and unravel the conspiracy of silence that mystifies Bangladesh war of 1971.

Besides, an Interview with Professor-Poet, Molly Joseph, a vibrant and authentic voice in the contemporary Indian English poetry, two insightful review essays on Prof. Somdatta Mandal's, *Bollywood, Tollywood and Beyond: Literary Essays on Indian Films* and Prof. Himadri Lahiri's *Asia Travels: Pan-Asian Cultural Discourses and Diasporic Asian Literature/s in English,* a brilliant write up on Rodrigo Garcia's *A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir,* three Book Reviews by Prof. Swaraj Raj of Narinder Jit Kaur's *Dawn to Dusk: A Collection of Middle Articles*, Dr. Tamali Neogi of J.S. Anand's edited *Cosmic Poetry: An Anthology of Liberating Verses*, and Krishna Chatur Sow Mondal's Kavita Kane's *Ahalya's Awakening*, and three emerging voices in Indian English Poetry – Mahima Raj, K. Suneetha and Anju Sosan George - are the prominent features of the current issue of *Literary Voice*.

We, in the *LV* will wait for your feedback.

T.S. Anand (Dr.)

Construction of Femininity and Masculinity through Language in Doris Lessing's The Cleft

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Abstract

Gender behaviours of an individual are constructed via different elements, and language is an essential one. Language dictates male and female characters to remain within the boundaries of femininity and masculinity by building dichotomies between them. A female-only society depicted in Doris Lessing's The Cleft *(2009) presents that the feminine and masculine traits are attributed to the members of society through language. Furthermore, the "history," when presented from a male point of view, interprets women's stories through speech acts to sculpt feminine and masculine behaviours for genders. Analysis of the novel reveals that the characters use implicit speech acts to perform their gender to fit into society. This study aims to analyse femininity and masculinity in* The Cleft *from the lens of John L. Austin's speech act theory. Consequently, the findings of this analysis are used to shed light on how the dynamics of being a male and a female are constructed via language within the text rather than the sex of a person.*
Keywords*: Gender, speech act theory, The Cleft, femininity, gender*

Introduction

The concept of femininity and masculinity has been debated, studied, and examined for their crucial role in the formation of understanding human sexuality as binaries. Essentially, these concepts result from "the belief that masculinity is what males do and femininity is what females do" (Deaux 297). In this study, femininity and masculinity are examined through a linguistic perspective to offer a diverse point of view. Applying the speech act theory has recently been developed in literary analysis, especially in text analysis. This study reveals how speech acts, specifically implicit performatives, play a vital part in constructing the gender codes in literature and society using Lessing's (2007) *The Cleft*. It is argued that in the novel, the speech acts play a significant role in displaying how gender-based roles are constructed and how they force individuals to fit in the gender-based labels. Therefore, individuals are forced to perform their feminine domestic duties or masculine heroic duties in society through speech acts.

Lessing was born in Persia (Iran) in 1919 and grew up in Zimbabwe. Then she moved to Britain in 1949 and died in 2013. She was dramatically affected by the First World War and

the Southern Africa culture; therefore, her literary works generally reflect her experiences (Ridout et al. 23). In 2007, Lessing won the Nobel Prize for Literature with *The Cleft* that was regarded revolutionary with the retelling of human history. This novel portrays an all-female society" where men are depicted as beings endangering women with their overwhelming power exertion" (Lalbakhsh 17). In *The Cleft*, Lessing (2007) creates a myth that shows the origin of men and women by reflecting the norms of femininity and masculinity. According to this myth, women existed before men. The story narrates what happens after the first male is born in a society composed entirely of women. Hence, *The Cleft* provides a different point of view to examine gender relations from the beginning in literary analysis. This study aims to provide an inductive reading of the selected novel by revealing that the male language is constructed through speech acts in which mainly implicit performatives are foregrounded. The effects of these utterances allow masculinity to preserve its dominance over femininity by verbally restricting women.

In linguistics, speech acts are used for "asserting, giving warning, making promises, and even making commands depending on the scenes where they are used" and "[t]he speech act theory brings out the language as a kind of activity instead of a medium to pass on and express" (Muriithi 24). Influenced by Aristotle's (1979) division between "apophantic," declaratory, and "non-apophantic," non-declaratory, statements, Austin (1962) mainly divides the utterances as constative and performative in his work *How to Do Things with Words* and creates the speech act theory (cited in Chapman and Routledge). Relatedly, Austin (1962) states that "not all true or false statements are descriptions, and for this reason I prefer to use the word 'Constative'" (3). The term constative means declarative (or true/false) statements according to the speech act theory. Unlike the constative utterances, performative utterances lead to actions, and therefore, "to utter the sentence is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it" (Austin 6). According to Austin, making statements is not the sole purpose of utterances. Instead, they are tools that can lead to actions in many contexts. Hence, Austin (1962) claims that various social conventions influence the speakers' speeches.

Nevertheless, the distinction between constative and performative acts is not clear. Hence, Austin (1962) also divides utterances into 'explicit' and 'implicit' statements. The examples such as 'I do,' 'I promise,' 'I name' clearly perform the actions without any implications; on the other hand, the implicit utterances denote various meanings as in the statement. Infelicities are significant in Austin's theory since "it is always necessary that the circumstances in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, appropriate," so each speaker should perform further actions that are uttered whether physically or not" (Austin 8). If the acts of "marrying, betting, bequeathing, christening, etc." through utterances do 'fail,' their results would not be false, but 'unhappy outcomes' or the infelicities (14). There are many types of infelicities such as "misfires, misinvocations, misexecutions, abuses, insincerities, etc." and all of them should be avoided, as he underlines in his study on the speech act theory (18).

Analysing implicit performatives in a literary text may provide a diverse perspective for the traditional gender behaviours. The naming process, insults, and gender stereotypes construct and maintain gender behaviours such as femininity and masculinity in heteronormative societies. To 'fit in' a heteronormative society, individuals perform their gender through speech acts, and they tend to stay within the gender limitations from birth. Therefore, such theoretical constructs emphasise the significance of language since it establishes dominance by regulating the norms to strengthen heteronormativity.

The novel opens with the narrator Transit describing an incident between a slave girl and boy by commenting on relationships in general. Then, as a historian and the narrator of the story, Transit compares women and men in the Roman and the first heteronormative society, the latter being composed of the Clefts, who were the first women, and Squirts, the first men. Transit, by collecting and commenting on the descriptions of the Clefts, narrates the origin of people. In the society of Cleft, the women condemn the male babies they do not reconcile to death by putting them at the tip of the hill they live. However, these babies are picked up by an eagle and taken down a valley. For this reason, two different societies, unaware of each other, continue their existence for a while. Then, the Clefts and the Squirts gradually form a heterogeneous structure that has not been seen before in the Cleft. This process starts with bodily differences and continues with language and sex. After the unification of these two societies, under the command of Maronna and Horsa, this society, once again, is divided into two categories: women and men. By rejecting the commands of the Clefts, the Squirts aim to keep the distance; thus, they lay the foundations of a tradition. In order to join the Squirts, the boys run away from their mothers at a certain age and risk their lives to join the men's community; hence, the dispute between the two societies escalates. However, after the Squirts destroy the Cleft, these two societies have to compose a new one using the old collective behaviours created by men.

Findings

In the novel, the speech acts play a significant part in displaying how gender-based roles are constructed and how they force individuals to fit into the gender-based labels while pushing women to depend on men. There are few dialogues in the novel; therefore, the narrator's comments throughout the plot are significant, and the limited direct quotations are worth a closer examination. Although evaluating the results of the implicit statements in the literary texts is relatively challenging since they are based on the implied and/or hidden effects, their outcomes generally construct gender dynamics between sexes. For instance, the novel starts with a line from Graves' (1964) poem "Man Does, Woman Is" to signify the gender dichotomy. This statement is a verdict or judgement with an implicit meaning. While naming women passive and stable and men active and unstable, this line also labels sexes by constituting a dichotomy and boundary. As seen in male-dominated societies, the systematic desire to maintain power creates a language in which men are relatively active.

Accordingly, "male-authorised history" preserves masculine power by claiming women's dependency on men in various circumstances (Jansen 29). The term "male-authorised history" is significant since the origins of women and men are narrated by, commented on and illustrated by Transit who is authorised to narrate the story as a wealthy Roman man. The story of the Cleft is narrated by Maire, the Squirt's ancient verbal records are narrated by Transit as he states, "The female kept records and I cannot bring myself to write down all that is there; and the male kept records: and I do bring myself to write down what is there" (Lessing 49). In this statement, Transit distinguishes the female and male's narration of history. Hence, the masculine heroism mentioned throughout the novel results from the male-authorised history's implicit utterances.

The novel opens with Transit's statement "I saw this today," to describe an event between a girl, Lolla, and a boy, Marcus (Lessing 3). In this example, Transit values his narration while implying to the reader that he is a wealthy Roman man. The narrator's

masculine confidence behind the 'I' voice is observed throughout the novel. In the novel, the 'I' voice cannot be separated from the existence of the cumulative and commonly masculine, 'we' voice. Hence, Transit's narration and commentaries on the incidents also present how speech acts maintain gender behaviours.

In *The Cleft*, the men dominate society and limit women by ordering and stereotyping them with negative connotations and imperatives such as commands. Transit's commentaries on gender are usually constructed upon declarative structures of implicit statements. For instance, Transit says, "[m]y sister is ever ready to ascribe to herself the more delicate of female attributes a not uncommon trait, I think" (7). In this example, the narrator expounds his views by uttering that his sister's attitude is "a not uncommon trait." In this way, Transit indicates that normally and naturally, women have/should have feminine behaviours. In addition, the gender-based stereotypes in society sustain the continuity of the gender norms by indicating the points that demarcate femininity and masculinity.

The limitations based on gender are drawn through speech as Transit states, "[m]ales are always put first, in our practice. They are first in our society, despite the influence of certain great ladies of the noble Houses," and he adds, "Yet, I suspect this priority was a later invention" (28). The narrator states the masculine and feminine norms in his society by identifying their dichotomy as passive/active. Hence, this assertion implies that men have superiority over women no matter what women accomplish. Through Transit's narration, the women are limited in both the social and linguistic spheres within masculine domination. For instance, this incident is also significant: "She had asked her mother why she was always ordered to feed and wash the babies, but her brothers were not. Her mother simply said that this was how things were" (58). In this example, the mother convicts her daughter that she should obey the duties. Also, she ranks children's social positions based on gender. The statement's implicit meaning displays that women ought to perform their domestic duties and not question these orders.

In the novel, the men's responsibility is associated with heroism as Transit comments, "He gave three of his sons to die for the empire, he was a true Roman" (64). Here the narrator adheres to or affirms the normative standards of being a true Roman. The implied meaning of this sentence is that men are expected to put their masculine duties over their self-interest. The implicit performatives constitute and normalise feminine and masculine behaviours in the long term. Therefore, the microcosmic story of femininity and masculinity in the novel displays how language provides a collective identity on gender while dominating one side in social positions based on bodies. While male-authorised history determines women's social and individual roles with femininity, masculinity is associated with men's powerful and even heroic positions to rule society. As a result, the speech rewards men and masculinity through active social empowerment while limiting women with passive domestic duties.

The separation between the Squirts and Clefts occurs via speech acts with the Squirts' statement "back to your own place" to the women (162). However, the implied meaning of the Squirts' expression "back to your own place" eventuates in social splitting in time (162). Even though both the Clefts and Squirts use speech acts in the novel, their implicit meanings differ in usage. With this statement, the women are commanded to go back to their places, and they are obligated to obey the men's orders. The implied meanings of the statements such as Transit's narration and the characters dialogues often justify men's supremacy in the novel. For instance, a girl questions her domestic duties while comparing herself with her brothers. Her mother, on the other hand, attempts to convict her daughter for the justification of male

supremacy by claiming that "this was how things were" (58). Moreover, a boy dictates his superiority over his sister by displaying his genitalia and stating "I am a boy" at the same time. Therefore men's superiority is preserved and maintained since men exercise power to dominate social positions while drawing social boundaries and giving orders or claiming power to women that internalized in time. Hence, the Squirts frequently use implicit performatives to exert and claim power for putting restrictions on the Clefts. Accordingly, the Squirts' survival actions, or their carelessness for the babies and children to be injured or even killed, are mainly embedded in their consciousness.

Masculine domination and masculine perception of history are conveyed and transmitted as trustworthy. In *The Cleft*, language use indicates the adverse effects of implicit performatives on individuals by forcing them to fit into feminine and masculine gender behaviours. Hence, the implicit statements maintain the constructed gender roles transmitted by that specific male-authorised history. The social dichotomy of femininity and masculinity can be observed from infancy. Both females and males are forced to perform their feminine domestic duties or masculine heroic duties in society.

Conclusion

In *The Cleft*, women's stories are narrated by male narrators who emphasise and legitimise masculine dominance over femininity via speech acts. The implicit meanings of these speech acts function as constant reminders in society. In the novel, the emergence of men in an all-female society is illustrated. The construction of femininity and masculinity, which is shaped by dichotomies, is exercised through speech acts. *The Cleft*, which describes the transition from a female-dominated society to a male-dominated society, reveals how gender stereotypes restrict women to maternity and domestic responsibilities while associating masculinity with heroism. As a result, the male characters frequently use speech acts to describe, make decisions, and expound their views to normalise their masculine domination over femininity in the selected novel. They also legitimise their dominant presence in society by narrating and commenting on the women's stories. The implicit meaning of these utterances functions as a reminder that maintains masculine domination. Hence, femininity and masculinity are constructed by performative speech acts that entail gender performativity on individuals.

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**This article was developed from the Master's thesis written by the first author and supervised by the second author.*

A Procedural's Procedure: The Narrativity of Phyllis Dorothy James White

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Abstract

Among sub-genres of crime fiction, police procedurals can be the least adventurous. Yet, it has emerged as one of the most popular forms of crime writing in the twenty first century. From novels to television series, films and web series, the sub-genre is widely explored in both the textual and digital space. The procedural's narrative structure follows the classic detective fiction formula but distinguishes itself through its humane characters, representation of social conditions, and struggles of human psyche and emotions. One such narrative is P.D. James's Adam Dalgliesh Series (1962–2008) set in the British space. James uses interrogations, the omniscient narrator and multiplicity of narrative strands within a single story. This paper aims to understand how the police procedural acts as a medium to represent the contemporary society beyond the confines of the genre-structure of crime and investigation.
***Keywords**: police procedural, narrative, P. D. James*

Introduction

The police procedural is a narrative of 'mundane experiences of everyday life' (Hausladen, 50). Yet one might wonder, how it emerges as one of the most popular forms of crime fiction literature, widely read and appreciated, and even adapted into films and web series during the digital age. Ed McBain, George Simenon, Colin Dexter, Ian Rankin, Ruth Rendell, Elizabeth George, Jo Nesbø, Keigo Higashino, Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, are well known police procedural novelists from across the globe. This list, however, is not exhaustive and is largely centric to the European and American space. Kinkley (1993) studies crime fiction literature in the Chinese tradition and declares that there exists a void due to the banning of the genre during the Mao period.

Smolin's (2013) 'Didactic Entertainment: The Moroccan "Police Journal" and the Origins of the Arabic Police Procedural' discusses police procedural narratives in Arabic literatures and in the African space. According to Smolin (2013), Morocco established its police force after independence from the Protectorate in 1956. In January 1961, it released the *Majallat al-Shurta* or *Police Journal* which was renamed to *Majallat al-Amn al-Watani* or *The Journal of National Security* in 1967. This journal not only documented real events but also fictional narratives in the form of short stories authored by police officers themselves (Smolin, 2013, 697). Some of these short stories include '"Jarima 'ala Difaf al-Buhayra" (A Crime on the Shores of the Lake)', '"Man Hafara Bi'ran . . . Waqa 'a fiha!" ("He Who Digs a Pit . . . Falls into It"!)', '"Basamat al-Qatil" (The Killer's Fingerprints)' (Smolin, 2013). In the

novel form, Smolin (2013) highlights that the first Arabic police procedural was '*Dahaya Hubb*, published in 1963 by Muhammad ibn al-Tuhami', however, this genre gradually disappeared in the latter years (699, 702).

Similarly, in India, some of the 'earliest true-crime writings are from the late 1800s Bengal, where Bakaullah and Priyanath Mukhopadhyay, darogas or detective policemen, recounted their investigations in journals and magazines. But it is not until early 2000s that actual cases were published in paperback' (Lopez, 2020, 14). In the contemporary times, police procedurals in India have been popularised in the form of critically acclaimed web series such as *Paatal Lok* (2020) and *Sacred Games* (2018), both adapted from novels by Tarun Tejpal and Vikram Chandra respectively, or the recent Emmy award winning series *Delhi Crime* (2019) based on real life incident (the December 16th, 2012, Delhi gang rape and murder case). Works such as Anita Nair's *Cut Like Wound* (2012) featuring inspector Borei Gowda have found a space in the novel form as well.

Generally, one observes, the police procedural as fictional writing has existed in the novel form, where the focus, as the name suggests, is on the procedural. Gulddal (2016), however, disagrees with the term 'police procedural' when categorising Ed Mc Bain's precinct series. Instead, he believes, 'police novel' or 'precinct novel' might be a more appropriate naming for the genre (Gulddal, 2016). A police procedural is understood as a mystery story wherein a crime occurs, is recognised by the judiciary system as violation of law and thus, to restore law and order, the case is 'solved by regular police detectives, usually working in teams and using ordinary police routines' (Dove, 1982, 1). Thus, the word procedural indicates a systematic process of events from the commencement of the crime to the resolution of it, even if the narrative may not follow a chronological order. The police procedural is also considered to be didactic in nature as it aims to instil a sense of law among the masses (Howell,1998; Broe, 2004; Smolin, 2013). It depicts the police officers in a humane light and its realistic social representation acts as a critique of the society in which the author lives (George C., 2006; Gulddal, 2016; Srinivasan et al, 2020). The police procedural subgenre is structurally distinct from the other sub genres of crime fiction but follows the basic structure of a mystery story. This paper aims to study the structural features and characteristics of a police procedural in the novel form. This paper observes how writers of this sub-genre narrate their story in such a manner that despite being an account of 'mundane experiences of everyday life', it grapples its audience's imagination and challenges their wit, within the framework of a popular mystery-puzzle story (Hausladen, 50).

The Procedural Narrative

Clandinin and Huber (2010) uphold the idea that, '[p]eople shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of their stories. Story. . . is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as a story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. . .' (436). Through narrative analysis therefore this paper aims to understand how stories in the form of police procedural novels documents society.

Two among the fourteen novels of author P. D. James have been selected for analysis: *A Taste for Death* and *Devices and Desires* published in 1986 and 1989 respectively. P. D. James's Adam Dalgliesh series span from the year 1962 to 2008, starting with *Cover Her Face* and culminating with *The Private Patient*. The two novels selected, are consecutively

published and thus contains a narrative continuity from its predecessors. The protagonist Adam Dalgliesh features in all the series however, he plays two different roles here. In *A Taste for Death* we see Dalgliesh as a police investigator. As a procedural novel, we see how he conducts a criminal investigation and faces professional and personal challenges. In the *Devices and Desires* however, his roles are reversed, and we see Dalgliesh as a witness and even a suspect of a murder case. Here he is not in a professional capacity as a police detective on duty.

A Taste for Death (1986) is the seventh novel of the Adam Dalgliesh series set in London where two bodies are discovered at St Matthew's Parish, Paddington, on the 18th of September, 8:45 am. One of the bodies found is that of Sir Paul Berowne, a Minister, and the other is of a tramp Harry Mack. Commander Adam Dalgliesh from the Scotland Yard is assigned this case. He is now a part of a Special Unit that deals with sensitive cases, and therefore with the death of a minister, this case falls under his jurisdiction. As a part of his specialised unit, he has Chief Inspector John Massingham as a part of his team. He has also recruited a woman police Inspector Kate Miskin, who makes an appearance for the first time from this novel. At the crime scene the police officers find the bodies of Paul and Harry with their throats slit, and a razor in Paul's right hand. On the face of it seems that Paul murdered Mack and then committed suicide, however, Dalgliesh disagrees and asserts that this is more likely a double murder. He discusses his claim with Dr Kynaston from the forensic department since, ultimately, they must produce physical evidence to prove in court. One also learns that Dalgliesh knows the victim, Paul, which makes the case challenging for him. It shows that the police officer does not always follow material evidence but also trusts his/her instincts.

James dedicates a major part of her writing into the procedural's structure which makes the narrative long and detailed. The narrative is descriptive which also serves as clues to the readers. James carefully mentions the date and time when the bodies are discovered. She talks about time taken for the process of investigation, the day-by-day progress in the case, the details of the victim's room or when the police receive the autopsy report. *Devices and Desires* (1989), for example, is divided into six books where each book records/documents the day and date. The epilogue which forms the denouement, is set on January 18th, Wednesday; the first book is dated Friday, September 16th, and the last book, 6th October, Thursday. Thus, the duration of investigation from onset of crime and the closure of the case, dictates the procedural. However, the narrative need not be in chronological order.

While *Devices and Desires* begins in *medias res*, *A Taste for Death* moves back and forth in time and memory. Dalgliesh recollects his meeting with Paul Berowne few days before his death. Berowne raises concern over a letter accusing him of the murder of three women: his first wife Anna, the nurse Theresa Nolan, and, his employee Diana Travers. To solve this complicated case, Dalgliesh is compelled to solve these mysterious deaths. The investigation leads Dalgliesh to 62 Campden Hill Square where he meets Paul's mother Lady Ursula Berowne, his present wife Barbara Berowne who is with child, Barbara's brother Dominic Swayne and Stephen Lampart who is a gynaecologist and also Barbara's lover. James introduces the readers to each of the characters and connects them with the main story through multiple strands of sub-stories that run parallelly. For instance, one learns that Theresa Nolan worked at Pembroke Lodge, that is Lampart's gynaecology centre, where he conducted unauthorised abortions. Diana Travers was an undercover spy who is murdered by Dominic Swayne during his party at the Black Swan restaurant. James's narrative challenge is the multiplicity of primary and secondary characters which has the potential to confuse an inattentive reader or challenge the proactive reader. For example, in *Devices and Desires* there

are more than twenty characters that are a part of the story.

With a larger suspect list, it is challenging for the reader as well as for the fictional detective to solve the mystery. The Adam Dalgliesh police procedural novels is in the form of a continuous series therefore the readers are familiar with the recurring characters such as Dalgliesh and his team members: Tarrant, Miskin, Massingham, Martin, Dr Kynaston and so on. James also gives a glimpse of their lives, both past and present, personal and profession, along with their social situation. James's police procedural novel, therefore, is not one single narrative but multiple narratives held together around a linchpin: the crime and its investigation.

Devices and Desires begins with a serial killer, named as the Whistler, claiming his next victim. The main narrative, however, is not about the Whistler. The story is set in the headlands of a fictional town called Larksoken in Norfolk. Larksoken is now known for its Nuclear Power Station. Dalgliesh is on 'leave for a two-week holiday' and headed to the north-east coast of Norfolk where his aunt, Jane, has left him a windmill, after her death (James, 1989, 10). Here he meets Alex Mair, the Director at the Power Station, who lives with his sister Alice, a cookbook writer. Hillary Robarts, Miles Lessingham, Johnathan Reeves and Caroline Amphlett also work at the Power Station. The story revolves around the death of Hilary Robarts. When Dalgliesh is taking a walk on the headlands, he encounters Robarts' body. She has been murdered using the same *modus operandi* of that of the Whistler. The case falls under the jurisdiction of the Norfolk Police, Chief Inspector Terry Rickards. They soon learn that the Whistler has committed suicide and Robarts had been murdered by a copycat killer. James builds her list of suspects and gives them a plausible motive. The narrative takes us to Alex and Alice's childhood, to the death of Tobias Gledhill and finally to the conspiracy of infiltrating the Power Station from which we learn that Amy and Caroline are working undercover.

Even though the case remains unsolved and no arrest is made despite being a procedural, the readers are given the satisfaction of knowing the complete story with the denouement. The omniscient narrator is aware about the mystery, the resolution and even the thoughts and psychology of all the characters. Although James does not dwell into the scientific details of the forensic investigation, such as DNA fingerprinting, the autopsy, the evidence collected by the scene of crime officers (SOCO), we know they are present and constantly working in the background. The focus is on how a police officer works through the case largely based on a series of interrogation.

'Dialogue,' according to Hausladen (1996), 'can help ground the reader in place, develop a character, support a secondary agenda, provide clues for the resolution of the crime, or establish the credibility of the author, the authenticity of the plot' (55). Many a times, same suspects are interrogated repeatedly, resulting in a long, extremely slow, repetitive narrative fated to exist as a novel form instead of a short story. It is within these dialogues that most clues are hidden, and the police officer must be very attentive to the words used or the slight alterations in a witness or suspect's statements. The police officer is, however, aware that memories are unreliable (James, 1986, 147). Although a major part of James's procedural is dialogic, it also gives an insight into the workings of the police officer's mind, their investigative processes, and situational challenges.

Conclusion

'That might work in fiction but hardly in real life' (James, 1986, 181). The police

procedural narrative is known for its realistic representation of society, the police force and the investigative processes. It is distinct from other subgenres of crime fiction such as the classical detective fiction or the hardboiled fiction or thrillers and spy fiction. One will not see the fast-paced action-oriented thrill often observed in Fleming's Bond series or the ingenious detection in Doyle's Holmes. The procedural is slow, and the interrogation is the highlight. However, it is not completely denied the sense of thrill. *A Taste for Death* ends in a dramatic scene where Kate Miskin and her grandmother are taken hostage by Dominic Swayne. In *Devices and Desires* the final act of Alice Mair setting herself on fire and Dalgliesh's failed attempt to save her, adds an action-oriented twist to the otherwise dialogic narrative. The procedural depicts the police officer both in the professional and private domain. The officer is not devoid of emotion, and is a humane individual subjected to horrors of death. In James's novels *A Taste for Death* and *Devices and Desires* we see Dalgliesh both as an officer on duty and off-duty. We see how he is affected with emotions of anger and pain while investigating a case where he knows the victim. We also see him iterate the sudden shock of discovering the mutilated body of Hilary Robarts:

> He was inured to horror; few manifestations of human cruelty, violence or desperation were unfamiliar to his practised eye. He was too sensitive ever to view a violated body with crude indifference but only in one recent case, his last, had this sensitivity caused him more than momentary inconvenience. And with Paul Berowne at least he had been warned. This was the first time he had almost stumbled over a murdered woman. Now he looked down on her, his mind analysed the difference between the reaction of an expert summoned to the scene of crime knowing what to expect and this sudden exposure to ultimate violence. (James, 1989, 214)

James's procedural is, therefore, not just a documentation of police investigation, but a deep insight and investigation into human mind and emotions. Understanding the psychology of both an individual and of the society at large is a significant attribute to her procedurals. The police officer is a thinking individual, and not someone who always follows instructions, although bound by the law. Dalgliesh follows his instincts and proves Berowne's death as a case of murder instead of a suicide.

The procedural does not always mean an arrest is made at the end and the detective inspector is always victorious. *Devices and Desires* remains an unsolved case where no arrests are made, and the truth is revealed only to the readers. In a procedural, the proof is important. While the mystery story might culminate for the readers, we are told that the police officer must continue to work, file necessary paperwork, and give evidence at the court. The procedural is much more than a mystery story. It is an author's comment on the society through parallel narratives. The author through a mystery story reveals the challenges of policing, recruitment of women police officer in the investigating team, the class hierarchies that gives a minister's death more importance than that of a tramp, the question of abortion, and issues of nuclear power and national security. In James' case therefore, one can conclude, that it is not just a 'police novel'. Each character carries with him or her a narrative of past and present. James's procedural narrative, is thus, a collection of stories, multiple lives, perspectives, thoughts, and memories, all intricately woven under the cryptograph of a police procedural.

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Reimaging 'ecological trauma' in the Anthropocene: An Ecocritical Reading of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

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Abstract

With the emergence of post-structuralism, Shakespearean plays have been subjected to critical appraisal through the postmodern approaches of feminism, Postcolonialism, Marxism, and ecocriticis, thereby enriching Shakespearean oeuvre with imaginative and interdisciplinary readings. Keeping this in consideration, the article shall attempt to interrogate ecological as well as climatic concerns and considerations to address the idea of 'ecological trauma' in the Anthropocene as addressed by Shakespeare in his play, The Tempest*, and investigate the literary form "cli-fi" with an aim to not only understand 'ecological trauma' as a prime factor in the complex relationship between humans and nature but also direct responses for a better understanding, embracing and shaping of the impeding Apocalypse as witnessed in the Anthropocene.*
Keywords*: Anthropocene, Ecocriticism, The Tempest, Ecological trauma, cli-fi, Anthropocentrism*

Introduction

The contemporary society has witnessed manifestation of the Anthropocene through unnatural occurrences like climate change, loss of biodiversity, increased global warming and the endangerment of the planet which has subsequently triggered 'ecophobia' for the impending Apocalypse. Acknowledging this situation, ecocriticism through its interdisciplinary temperament has reoriented itself with planetary concerns by closely associating with the new approach of the Anthropocene which in the postnatural period has become an 'undeniable reality' abound with ecological trauma and ecocide. Through this, attempts have been made to interrogate the ongoing environmental crisis as a human-engineered act of aggressive and interventionist activities of Man. This tendency has placed humans as a singular force that not only altered but also accelerated the natural geological evolution of the planet for its forthcoming sixth mass extinction. In this regard, humans are no longer seen as a simple biological force, for we have become geological agent that regressively transformed the natural course of functioning of the planet. While this approach called for great seriousness, awareness and activism among its readers, its recent coinage by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer during the Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (2000) along with its failure to attain authoritative formalisation has been a major setback to its greater visibility in theoretical and literary efforts. In fact, as a trend, Anthropocene aims to continue the magnum project of ecocriticism with the added dimension of planetary concerns which have been addressed by several eminent critics like Ian Angus, Jeremy Davis, Erle C. Ellis, Alf Hornborg, Jedediah Purdy, Dipesh Chakraborty, Roy Scranton and Clive Hamilton.

To this end, Anthropocene attached added responsibility and solidarity in our interpretation and interaction with the 'declining' environment. This tendency was addressed through the concept of 'new' anthropocentrism which allowed mobility in the traditional idea of anthropocentrism as structured by western ideologies. In this context, both ecocriticism and Anthropocene appear as ethical movements that aim to include the nonhuman world as an integral component to understand the conception of ecological trauma in the complex relationship between human nature (Glotfelty xix). To this end, the article shall attempt to interrogate the global crisis of climate change which has been explicitly addressed under the new sub-genre of climate fiction that gained visibility through the efforts of Dan Bloom who shorthanded the emerging area as "cli-fi" which subsequently "spurred the creation of a whole new genre of fiction" (Trexler 8). As a recent literary approach, it aims to reveal "the end of history" through "violent and grotesque images," hopelessness, fear, anxiety, paranoia, violence, indifference and denialism (Garrard 86). Through these diverse range of emotions among its readers, cli-fi attempts to mobilise their imagination and sensibilities that shall eventually allow them to redraw their pre-designed anthropocentric perceptions, choices and actions to an eco-centric structure mapped by tendencies like eco-cosmopolitanism, sustainability, stewardship and deep ecological commitments based on bio-centric ethics.

To this end, the present article shall attempt to investigate the new literary approach of cli-fi in postcolonial and postmodern ecocriticism. For this purpose, the article shall attempt to explore the play, *The Tempest* (1611) by William Shakespeare that has been embedded with the element of thriller, science and futurism associated to cli-fi. This intention of investigating *The Tempest* grew from the recent efforts of "greening" Shakespeare which have increasingly made us aware of the "representation of climate in early modern drama intersected with discourses on misrule, politics, science, animals, food and crops, as well as on race, emotions and humours" (Chiari 18).

As we realise the inclusion of climate in historical documentation, we also recognise the role of climate crisis as an ecological trauma that further strained Man's relationship with nature. To this end, the article shall trace *The Tempest* as a prototype of 'cli-fi' which shall thereafter aid readers to understand the development of ecocide and ecological trauma throughout human history. Such an effort, according to Estok has become necessary for it would open "opportunities to the study of nature in ways similar to the ways terms such as misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism open up studies of the representations of women, race, sexuality, and Jewishness respectively". Adding to this, Estok also claims that ideas like ecophobia, racism, misogyny, homophobia and speciesism are thoroughly interwoven with one another, thereby opening the scope of ecological trauma (13 and 14). Such an understanding attached political and ethical dimensions to the complex understanding of ecological trauma and ecophobia which could thereafter redirect the relationships between "nature and culture, environment and society" by "re-arranging the socionatural entanglement in a more enlightened, reflective way" (Maldonado 85, 124). For this purpose, the deconstruction of the nature/culture binary as systematically endorsed by anthropocentrism seems paramount, for it has subtly justified the irreparable and irreversible damages of the planet caused by humans for their singular benefits.

Shakespeare and Ecological trauma

While the conceptual idea of ecological trauma may seem as a recent activity in the theoretical world, its occurrences have always been present in the socio-environmental

history of human existence. This was because previous literature had often relegated environmental and climatic concerns into the periphery with minimal representation. In this regard, Shakespeare's works become a significant site of study as he represented climatic concerns through his plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello, King Lear, Anthony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest* which have been analyzed by Sophia Chiari in her recent work, *Shakespeare's Representation of Weather, Climate and Environment: The Early Modern 'Fated Sky'* (2019) where she considers Shakespearean plays to be well-positioned to communicate ecological possibilities to the modern audiences of the Anthropocene. In fact, for Chiari, the extensive engagement of Shakespeare with climate concerns through his work, *The Tempest* marked his "maturity surrounded by a generational sense that a previously fecund, temperate, and reliable natural environment had been replaced by freezing temperatures, blighted harvests, and sudden, wild storms" caused by increased anthropogenic activities that was ushered by Humanism in the Renaissance. This was done by playwrights like Shakespeare with an intention "to represent and question men's behaviour in connection not just with the natural world but also with religion, power and politics" by reconciling the material and the metaphoric, the actual and the imagined. Additionally, it also traced the gradual shift towards an "experimental ground to challenge medieval beliefs and to test fresh hypotheses" that could investigate our anthropocentrically scaled attitude that maybe responsible for the climatic imbalance and the eventual ecocide (4, 15 and 20).

In fact, for Greenblatt and Estok, the engagement of Shakespeare with environmental and climatic concerns in his latter plays was an outcome of Renaissance's weather becoming "more unpredictable, with sudden shifts and lower temperatures that culminated in the cold decades of the late sixteenth century" which subsequently resulted in "a lethal mix of misfortunes descended[ing] on a growing European population" (Estok 21). This was because of increased anthropogenic activities like deforestation, development, urbanism, pollution, colonisation, population growth and modernism that spurred during the Renaissance. These factors played a significant role in shaping both social and ecological trauma which has explicitly been addressed by Shakespeare in his play, *The Tempest*. In this regard, most of Shakespearean plays have become a credible area of ecological study as they systematically provide awareness and *timely* warnings regarding the catastrophic manifestation of the impeding Apocalypse.

Ecological trauma in *The Tempest*

While *The Tempest* has often been read with ecological inklings following the 'greening' of Shakespeare, it has also been read as a 'cli-fi' text in the Anthropocene for it predominantly engages with weather, nature, magic, science, culture and politics through the storm that allows the staging of "a proto-scientific experimentation with climate" in literature, thereby dismantling the humanities/science binary. This representation of nature with its erratic calamities dissociated natural catastrophes as "some godly intervention," which was how weather was largely explained and justified in the Renaissance. Following this, nature became a site of human interventions that had *tremendously* and *dangerously* altered the ecological and climatic functioning of the planet. To this end, the storm in *The Tempest*, for Rufo became a "human artefact" as it was designed by Prospero through his access to knowledge and magic which he (mis)used to seek vengeance from his brother Antonio who had unjustifiable dethroned and exiled Prospero from Milan (149). Caught in

this political trauma, Prospero not only becomes a representative of anthropocentrism but also a "decisive geological and climatological force" as he gave the sailors a "shortlived illusion [of] the inaccessible was at long last within reach (Chiari 23 and Singer 245). In fact, the storm generated feelings of ecological trauma among the sailors in Act 1 as they fear for their life while anxiously fighting against the harsh winds, sea and lightning to keep the ship from shrinking. Seeing the "dreadful sight" of the tempest, Miranda was also traumatized who thereafter pleaded with her "dearest father" Prospero to stop the storm which made the sky appear as if it were "pouring down flaming tar, [while] the sea rises up to dash out the fire." In addition to her request to Prospero, Miranda also stated that she "suffered with those I saw suffer! A brave ship, which no doubt had some Noble people on board, was dashed to pieces. The cries broke my heart! Poor souls, they must surely have died!" (Shakespeare 1.2.8) Thus, her emotional dilemma takes the shape of ecological trauma. Adding to this, Ariel in his report of the illusionary storm that he dutifully provided to Prospero emphasises on the ecological trauma as experienced by the sailor through heightened terror, madness, hopelessness and desperation in their shipwreck.

As the storm was an occurrence outside natural phenomenon and an inexplicable event, it makes us realise the disastrous impact of intensive human interferences with the ecosystem. In fact, the dark romantic images of nature in *The Tempest* represented the 'second' environment which "acts upon men as they act upon it" with Prospero as the imperialist who subsequently controlled and altered the island, its inhabitants and the weather for his singular benefits. To this end, Chiari considers Prospero as "God on earth, an absolute and controlling force in human and meteorological terms" who also became "a master of disruption and bad weather" (229). In his alteration of the environment, nature is passed on as "supernature" which aided Prospero to recover his dukedom that he lost to his cunning brother Antonio (Egan 174). This added geopolitical considerations to the storm as depicted in *The Tempest* through the legacy of colonialism wherein "legend, geography and weather all serve to conceal a daunting fiction concerned with the possible forms of sovereignty in a hostile milieu" (Chiari 245). Such a predesigned interaction with nature makes the storm a medium of "hostile force which threaten[ed] man's existence" (Clemen 185). This subsequently added socio-political-ecological dimensions to our understanding of the climate in the Anthropocene which thereafter mobilized it beyond a scientific conception.

The ecological trauma experienced by Man further increased his disassociation with nature which legitimised his subsequent indulgence in culture, science, magic, development, power politics and anthropocentrism that not only altered nature but also the spiritual stability of humans. Herein, we begin to see parallels between our interactions with nature and its interactions with us. In this context, the storm raises several fundamental questions regarding Man's existential and climatic fears to which the natural world remained 'indifferent.' This could be seen at the end of the storm; as the weather got mild, sweet, delicate which made the island appear lush, healthy and green; while the travellers experienced ecological trauma (Shakespeare 2.1.35). The dual representation of nature not only creates confusion and unfamiliarity but also the initial instincts for ecological trauma and ecocide which marks the Anthropocene as it witnessed innumerable catastrophes that have been human-engineered. This is evident in the opening lines of the play where death, distress, grief, fear and distress linger over the sailor as they encounter the tempest. Through this sensational yet dramatic imagery, Shakespeare attempted to create "feelings of terror in terms of apocalyptic weather imagery" among his audience and thereafter allow them to experience catharsis that appears to be integral in evoking eco-centric values, philosophies

and ideologies. To this end, the environment in *The Tempest* has been represented as wonder, merciful, amazement, "beautiful and serene or hideous [unpredictable, dangerous, fearful, torment amoral, threatening, troubling] and deadly, depending on Prospero's needs" (Estok 104 and Shakespeare 5.1.86 and 89). To this end, *The Tempest* makes indirect references of the dual idea of nature, while explicitly narrating Man's irrational desire to *master* and *control* the natural resources. This anthropocentric obsession could be seen in Prospero as he constantly and endlessly commanded Caliban and Ferdinand to collect woods from the island. This encroachment highlights the presence of deforestation in the Renaissance which is considered as a central activity of ecological imperialism. Recognising this, Chiari associated deforestation of the "new lands" with increased "advent of tempests" in the Renaissance which subsequently initiated the prolonged environmental degradation as intensified by industrialism, modernism, colonialism and capitalism in the following years that has resulted to the ongoing ecological crisis in the Anthropocene (223).

The unromantic illustration of nature, for Estok further detached ethics, responsibility and partnership among humans for the environment. This subsequently developed "a mindset of ecophobia rather than biophilia or ecophilia, a sense of competition between the individual and the larger opponent of nature rather than a sense of harmony and mutuality" (105). Such a tendency further prompts us to reconsider the role of humans in triggering natural catastrophes that also (re)shaped humans' behaviours and destinies as seen in the cases of Miranda, Ferdinand, Alonso and the sailors whose lives as 'ecological refugees' got entangled during the tempest. In fact, Ferdinand like his father Alonso, who thought the other to be dead in the tempest, experienced prolonged ecological trauma that made them feel numb, weak, mournful, hopeless, anger, distressed, and "heartfelt sorrow." In addition, Alonso feels desperately guilty over his son's death which becomes his "slow poison" that began "to bite [his] spirits" and drove him into complete "madness [that may] now provoke them to do" anything wild (Shakespeare 3.3.68-69 and 5.1.82). For Alonso, the loss of his son in the storm was "irreparable" which even "patience cannot cure." Like the travellers, even Caliban experienced several ecological traumas throughout his life which makes him appear as "an islander, struck dead by a thunderbolt" (Shakespeare 2.2.47 and 5.1.87). In fact, for Egan, Caliban developed a "recognizable symptom of the mentally traumatized" that made him recognize the storm as an agent of Prospero's alteration of nature through imperialism (160).

In fact, the return of the storm in Act 2, scene 2 of the play again exposes the heightened fears of the travellers who had become 'ecological refugees' on the unknown island ruled by Prospero. Caught in this, Trinculo searched for shelter from the 'fearful' storm that was approaching them. In fact, in his anguish, Trinculo felt that he shall be "with the dead man till the storm is past" for "[t]here are no bushes or shrubs here to protect me from the weather" (Shakespeare 2.2.46-47). In the new 'fearful' and uncertain environment, "the shipwrecked passengers engaged in broken-up conversations and utter[ed] disjointed sentences, thus making their words mirror the disruptive weather of the island" (Chiari 260). Such ecological trauma for Morton reiterates the idea of psychological repression arising from PTSD that the sailors' re-experience as they witness the approaching storm. This further reignites their level of stress and shocks which lead to impulsive reaction that disabled them to continue their emotional stability and daily business.

Conclusion

With the increased interrogation of climatic concerns, *The Tempest* has gained visibility as an ecocritical narrative in the Anthropocene for it actively emphasized on the lasting and irreparable alteration of the environment by Prospero; through whom we are exposed to the dangers of aggressive and interventionist anthropogenic actions. Driven by guilt and self-realisation, Prospero at the end of the play left the island while being powerless to reverse the environmental damage that he had caused to the island during his imperial rule. This further evokes the idea of ecological imperialism that has been frequently addressed by postcolonial ecocriticism as it aims to investigate the polarised relationship between the West and East; and how their power politics redefines the landscape of the East that has been essentially exploited and transformed for the singular benefits of the West.

However, Prospero through his access to knowledge and magic continued to control the weather as he promises to create "calm seas, favorable winds" for the homeward journey to secure the ecophobic emotions of the travellers as they feared that another natural calamity would be life threatening (Shakespeare 5.1.95). This ability of Prospero highlights humans' potential to change the on-going catastrophic condition of the planet. For this, a deep commitment to ethics, responsibilities and stewardship should be emphasized by humans in their complex relationship with nature. In fact, such an effort appears significant in the Anthropocene for it can facilitate the opening and mobilization of traditional anthropocentrism through the concept of "new" anthropocentrism as advocated by prominent Anthropocene scholars like Jerediah Purdy, Clive Hamilton, and Robert William Sandford. This exercise shall also make human beings aware of nonhuman presences and functioning in literary, cultural and theoretical space that have always co-existed and co-evolved with humans. Such a framework can also open possibilities for a shift from ecophobia among humans to a neutral 'interspecies' platform for ecological dialogues and deliberations by providing effective direction to political and ethical re-engagement as well as re-consideration of anthropocentric beliefs. To this end, such an exercise appears crucial for the contemporary generation living in the postnatural world of the Anthropocene that has witnessed a human-engineered planetary "rupture" which should be taken into collective considerations across the globe as *timely warning* and visions to avoid the impending Apocalypse.

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Reason and Passion in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*

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Abstract

In this paper, the main focus will be on Book IX of John Milton's "Paradise Lost". Emphasis will be made on the use of reasoning and passion in the narrative of Book IX by John Milton. To examine the use of reason and passion, mainly four instances have been taken from Book IX, Satan's dialogue with himself while looking for an animal to take shape of, Adam and Eve's discussion about doing their daily tasks, Satan's persuasion of Eve to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge and aftermath of the fall.
***Keywords**: Reason, Passion, Paradise, Satan, Adam, Eve, God, Fall*

Paradise Lost by John Milton is one of the greatest literary achievements in the English language, perhaps, of all times. The poem was originally issued in 10 books in 1667 with Books 7 and 10 each split into two parts and published in 12 books in the second edition of 1674. The epic poem is Milton's take on the biblical story of the rebellion of Satan against God and his corruption of the God's most revered creation- humanity. The poem is written in epic style. It has many classical and Renaissance epic conceits, it begins in the middle of the events, also called *medias res*, it concerns heavenly and earthly beings and their interactions with each other. It uses conventions like epic similes, catalogues of people and places, invocation to a muse and has themes similar to epics, such as war, nationalism, empire and stories of origin. In writing his epic, Milton has taken inspiration from previous great works in epic poetry, such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, etc. Although the poem is inspired by classical literature, but the subject matter of the poem is specifically Christian. The main characters of the poem are God, Satan, Adam and Eve and also some mention of Son of God. Many other works of art have been inspired by *Paradise Lost*, notably Joseph Haydn's oratorio "The Creation" (1798) and John Keats's long poem "Endymion". Milton wrote a companion piece, *Paradise Regained*, in 1671, which carries the story further after the redemption of humankind and dramatizes the temptation of Christ.

In Book IX of his poem, Milton gives the narrative of how Satan approached Earth in order to corrupt God's creation-Adam and Eve and carries out his evil plan which leads to fall of mankind. It is shown how Satan journeyed around whole of Earth, hiding in the dark of night, in search of an animal in whose form he will disguise himself and carry out his plan of corrupting Adam and Eve. After looking around whole of the Earth and examining each and every creature that roamed about the Earth, Satan decides to take the form of a serpent. Milton gives the reason for choosing a serpent that it is a very subtle creature and no one would be able to sense any deceitful activity while Satan is in the form of a serpent. Then the focus is shifted to Satan's inner dilemma. On seeing Earth, Satan is bedazzled by its beauty, so much so that he feels Earth is more beautiful and wonderful than Heaven itself. He is amazed by all the creatures roaming on Earth and its scenic beauty. This is shown by Milton through Satan's

dialogue with himself –

> "O Earth, how like to Heaven, if not preferred
> More justly, seat worthier of Gods, as built
> With second thoughts, reforming what was old!
> For what God, after better, worse would build" (Milton 9.99-102)

He goes on to praise Earth by even comparing it to God, by saying that like God is the centre of the Heaven, so is Earth the centre of the solar system and like God, all the virtues of other planets reside in Earth itself. For an instant, he seems to lament his decision of rebelling against God's rule and wonders how he would have felt if he could roam freely on Earth. He seems to question his own decision of taking revenge on God. He feels sorry for himself for having fallen to the level of a beast from that of an adored angel and says that revenge recoils back instead of satisfying. This long talk of Satan with himself clearly displays his ability to reason with himself and of questioning his own motives rationally. Satan feels that nothing will come out of his fight and it is all worthless. But soon, Satan's hatred for God takes over his reasoning and he seemingly justifies his evil plan. Satan says that God's latest creation-Man, fills him with rage and anger. He calls man a piece of clay and despises him. Satan argues that God created Man out of dust in meanness, to show Satan his power of creation and that meanness should be paid back with meanness (9.176-178). Also Satan says that the more he looks at Earth's splendour, it fills him with even more torment and rage. He says that now he could stay in heaven only after defeating its ruler, God. Satan despises God's love for humanity and thus feels to take revenge on God he would have to destroy God's faith in humanity. Satan's passionate hatred for God makes him carry out his evil intentions and in his case passion overpowers reasoning. He does not submits to his grief and resolves to do what he had come for. Through Satan's dialogues, Milton has shown how reason and passion are at clash in Satan's mind.

After having finally decided to corrupt Adam and Eve, Satan finally takes the form of a serpent and starts looking for them. Then Milton takes us to Eden, where day has just started and Adam and Eve are getting ready to do their daily chores. Here Eve starts to reason with Adam that their required work has outgrown their capability and to carry out their daily routine, they will need help. She asks for Adam's opinion and gives her suggestion that both Adam and Eve should divide their work among themselves. Saif Patel, feels that it was this suggestion of Eve to divide their labour, which was the first step towards the fall. In his essay, "Through the Narrow Gate: Impassioned Reason and Rational Passion in Milton's "Paradise Lost," he writes

> "It is in this sense that when the two follow Eve's idea to "divide [their] labors," they literally sever their relationship with each other, set apart what God has joined together. As presented in many paintings of Genesis, the original state of Adam and Eve, and, therefore, the proper position of Reason and Passion, is that of a harmonious embrace, a pragmatic co-existence. Thus, the first stage of the fall is when this embrace is destroyed." (Patel)

Adam is not convinced by Eve's suggestion. Although he appreciates her reasoning and agrees that sometimes it is good to be left in solitude, but still Adam reminds Eve that they have been warned of an evil foe by the guarding angels, who is very harmful and is looking for a way to hinder their happiness. Therefore Adam argues that Eve should not part from him and go out on her own, as according to him, she could be easily seduced by the enemy. Eve is deeply hurt by this statement of Adam's and rebukes him for not believing in her faith towards him and God. She says that Adam is not that much afraid of the evil power of the enemy as

much as he is afraid that Eve would be carried away by the enemy's fraud and asks him that how could he let such a thought of questioning her faith and firmness towards God and himself come into his mind? To this Adam replies that he is not questioning Eve's faith but does not want to part from her because of his love for her. He wants Eve to stay with him and not let the enemy take advantage of her being alone and thus corrupt her through evil actions. He goes on further to say that Eve's presence fills him with more virtue, strength and intelligence and that Eve should feel the same towards him. Eve is not convinced and further goes on to question their present state and states that if they are under the threat of an enemy, then they cannot be happy, whether they stay together or part ways. She questions God's plan for them and calls it imperfect. She feels that the Eden in which they stayed was not the one they were promised. All these dialogues of Eve show Eve's curious nature and her tendency to question everything. She is trying to reason with Adam by showing him the actual state of events whereas Adam is blindly following God's orders, without ever thinking. He is portrayed by Milton as the orthodox follower, who cannot think rationally without defying God's orders. This is further illustrated by Adam's response to Eve's questioning of God's plan-

> "O Woman, best are all things as the will
> Of God ordained them; his creating hand
> Nothing imperfet or deficient left
> Of all that he created—much less Man,
> Or aught that might his happy state secure,
> Secure from outward force. Within himself
> The danger lies, yet lies within his power;
> Against his will he can receive no harm.
> But God left free the Will; for what obeys
> Reason is free; and Reason he made right," (Milton 9.343-352)

Here Adam again justifies God's actions by saying that all things that God wished are perfect and that the danger that threatens them is also under the control of God. He says that God has protected them but at the same time given them free will to choose what they wish to do. However, he says that to obey God is to carry out free will. Also, he gives in to Eve's persuasion and let her do what she wishes but does not forgets to warn her of the consequences. Eve then bids him farewell and says that she does not thinks that the enemy would attack her (the weaker of the two) and if he does, it would be shameful for him.

This whole long discourse between Adam and Eve depicts their own ability to interpret and assess and reason. On one hand, there is Adam, who has complete devotion and unfaltering confidence in God's will and on the other hand is Eve, ever curious to think in a different way, questioning everything and increase her knowledge. Through the character of Eve, Milton has shown a rational human being that can form her own opinions. But at the same time, he has shown that Eve was the one who ate the forbidden fruit and thus led to the fall of the whole humankind. Thus we can say that Milton was not fully in favour of a completely free rational being. Although there can be a different interpretation too, as Milton based his epic on the Christian story of Adam and Eve, where Eve is portrayed as the one responsible for the fall, hence Milton could not change or add much of his own in the story. He had to follow the basic premise.

After depicting this discussion, Milton shows us Eve leaving Adam and to support his narrative, Milton uses figures from classical mythology. Then again comes Satan, this time in the form of a serpent. Here Milton again shows us the dilemma inside Satan's mind. When Satan looks at Eve for the first time, he is mesmerised by her angelic beauty and all his hate,

malice seems to vanish, but like before, soon he brings himself back to hate and revenge and says to himself to not forget what he came for. He carries on his plan and attracts Eve's attention through speaking. Eve had not seen any animal speak before and immediately is interested in this unique creature. Her doubt towards God's plan is further provoked as she was told that God did not give animals the ability to speak. She asks the serpent how he had gained the ability to speak and this gives Satan the chance he was looking for. He tells her of the forbidden tree of knowledge and the forbidden apple. Eve is not convinced and wants Satan to take her to the tree itself. Here Eve's ability to reason and not believing in heresay is depicted. She tells Satan that God has asked her and Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge or they will receive Death. She is curious how a serpent survived after eating the forbidden apple. But as it is shown in the coming lines, Eve's curious nature made her vulnerable to Satan's fraud. He turns Eve's reason into passion for the forbidden fruit. Through his convincing argument that if an animal like himself can survive after eating from tree of knowledge and gain reasoning and talking abilities like humans, Eve, being human should not fear the consequences and think of all the improvement she can have after consuming the apple. Also he tries to flatter Eve by singing her praises. Now she is influenced and believing in Satan (in the form of a serpent), eats the forbidden apple. One may feel that Eve's action was quick and unthoughtful but according to Sarah C. McCollum – "One of Milton's most powerful arguments for the justness of God is that God equipped Adam and Eve with reason and with the liberty afforded them by free will, making them "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3.99). Adam and Eve, endowed with the gifts of reason and free will, are responsible for using these gifts rightly. Their task is that of interpreting the godly bounds of knowledge and liberty, but it is Eve, rather than Adam, who faces the most difficult interpretive task in the epic, that of discerning the validity or error of Satan's arguments." (McCollum)

Thus, Eve's quest for self-improvement leads to the fall of humankind. She is pleased by eating the fruit and is astonished that she has not died, as warned by God. She reasons with herself whether to let Adam share her fate by giving him the apple or keep him in the dark, and herself be superior to him. But then she decides that she should let Adam eat the fruit as she fears that she would die and Adam would get a new Eve, and she cannot think of Adam living without her. Here again Milton skilfully shows how passion overpowers human minds and makes humans do more wrong rather than recover the wrong done. Eve's love and passion for Adam motivates her to persuade him to share the fruit with her. Adam, knowing that Eve has sinned by defying God's orders, at first is reluctant, but soon his love and desire for Eve's companionship leads him to give up his reasoning ability and take part in the ultimate sin. Here too, passion overpowers reason and ultimately leads to the fall.

At first both Adam and Eve are ecstatic on eating the fruit and feel themselves to be filled with great power and knowledge. Adam even declares

"True relish, tasting. If such pleasure be
In things to us forbidden, it might be wished
For this one Tree had been forbidden ten." (9.1024-1026)

After this Milton depicts Adam and Eve with lust and sensuality for each other. Possessed by the power of the fruit, or 'knowledge of good and evil', they engage in love making. On waking the next morning, they realise the extent of their revolting act. As Milton puts it "the force of that fallacious fruit" has faded away and both realise their mistake. Milton shows us how humans commit blunders under the belief that they have immense knowledge and do not realise that they are actually doing wrong, until it's too late. Here Milton seems to

advocate for God's supremacy over human beings by suggesting that even though Adam and Eve carried out free will and chose to disobey God, ultimately they realised that it was for no good. God also gave them free will and let them do as they wished and learn from their own mistakes. Milton illustrates human's desire for self-improvement and in doing so letting passion take over reason.

Having understood the depth of their corruption, Adam and Eve resort to blaming each other for the fall. Also, for the first time since their creation, they have a feeling of guilt and embarrassment. They try to cover their nakedness by using plants. Here Milton again shows the human's tendency of blaming others for anything gone wrong. Human, instead of realising his/her own fault, blames others for his/her passions gone wrong.

Thus, through the analysis of Book IX, it can be seen that Milton keeps Reason and Passion at opposite ends. Through the characters of Satan, Adam and Eve, Milton advocates that whenever passion overpowers reason, it leads to great troubles. Milton's own views about passion are pointed out by S.A Nock in his review, "All Passion Spent" of the book "Paradise Lost An Account of Its Growth and Major Origins" by Grant McColley-

> "The character of Satan is probably a personification of Milton's attitude toward passion: brilliant, overwhelming, able to make any course desired seem the best course. At the same time, Milton felt that the end of unchecked passion is a mere grovelling in the dust. The man who lives the passionate life is the man who is overwhelmed by his own nature." (Nock 563-564)

Passion is also an important element of human existence. However, both Reason and Passion have their proper roles. Though Passion gives life a sense of vividness and is also considered a source of exercising freedom, Reason should have the final say, because actions have consequences which are overlooked under the influence of passion. This is what has been discussed in Book IX of "Paradise Lost". John Milton depicts the human mind's conflict with the heart's passion through the lines of 'Paradise Lost' and seems to favour reason over passion.

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Myth Revisionism in Urban Fantasy Fiction: A Critical Reading of Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman's *Good Omens*

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Abstract

Urban Fantasy narratives have long been under the shadow of the overarching genre of Fantasy literature. Often neglected as a pop-culture and non-serious form of literature during its budding period, this hybrid genre has attained much critical acclaim through vigorous research work in the present times. Apart from being a literary endeavour that satisfies the fantastic imagination of young-adult generation, these narratives are also replete with themes that interrogate certain critical issues of contemporary period. This paper, in this regard, shall attempt to critically analyse the trope of myth that has been revisited by the authors with a tinge of humour and irony in the fictive work Good Omens*. Using the tools of revisionism and mythopoeia in general, this paper shall analyse how urban fantasy provides a space to destabilise the absoluteness and hierarchy of grand narratives of religion and culture.*
Keywords*: urban, fantasy, revisionism, myth, mythopoeia.*

Literature has always been a palimpsest where imagination and knowledge often act as a catalyst to create and recreate new genres and subgenres that evolve through the medium of scepticism, critical evaluation, acceptance and rejection. Fantasy is one such genre that has recently attained not only serious acclaim but also evolved into several sub genres that have occupied their own space further inviting critical evaluation and understanding. In this context, mythic fantasy fictions have made a serious intrusion both in the popular and literary genre that often endeavour to either create new myths or recreate old myths in order to dismantle the absoluteness of myths in major cultures. For the purpose of critically analysing such texts, the critical tools of postmodernism, revisionism, mythopoeia can be utilised to evaluate such texts thus imparting more currency to the genre itself. This article is an attempt to understand, first, the trajectory of how and when fantasy and myth convoluted in literary creations and second, analyse Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch* in terms of mythic fantasy fiction.

Brian Attebery's *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* is a seminal work in the realm of fantasy and myth criticism, Attebery analyses how three separate genres, that of myth, fantasy, and speculative fiction, gradually merge in to form the mythopoeic fantasy fiction. Myth, as Attebery suggests, was initially in the form of oral narratives that were passed down from generation to generation as cult stories or religious stories. However, with the development of its receptors and their subsequent context, almost every myth across cultures distorts and evolves to suit the psychological understanding of that generation. In this context, it becomes quintessential to mention Attebery's view, "Myths, however, are not literature but sacred narrative, and they mean what they say, however difficult that meaning might be to grasp" (Attebery 29). The general classification of documented myth has been in the form of either Christian or Pagan myth which was later

adapted into various literary forms. Christian myth, in general, encompasses Creation stories from Genesis, the stories of resurrection and atonement from gospels, the stories of Apocalypse and a few medieval stories such as the story of Lilith, Adam's first wife. These stories are manifested by litterateurs through their works, wrapped in literary ornamentations while sustaining the primary essence of the myth alive and vivid. However, these mythic narratives, when adapted by fantasy writers, attain a postmodernist perspective and emerge as revised, altered and non-hierarchical tales. In this regard, it would be pertinent to mention Attebery's remark, "Fantasy is fundamentally playful – which does not mean that it is not serious. Its way of playing with symbols encourages the reader to see meaning as something unstable and elusive, rather than single and self-evident" (Attebery 12-13). Fantasy narrative, further, breaks away from the rigid confinement of Biblical narratives or Christian myths and also draws upon secular legends and a host of cultural strands.

Myth, as a constituent of literature, might be traced back to *Gilgamesh*, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that intended towards glorifying the core myth on which the stories were woven. During the modern period, myths were compartmentalised into two essential types, first, the ones that have lost their cultural context, for instance, the Greek myths and the second belongs to those who are wronged by modern civilization in Western culture's attempt to displace, disrupt, convert or even kill them. However, in order to understand the interface between myth and modern fantasy literature, it becomes crucial to recognise its gradual evolution. Ovid's *Metamorphosis* can be conceived as one of the precursors of fantasy literature wherein, Ovid uses Greek and Roman mythological beings and reorients those stories to fit his purpose. Further, when analysed critically, Milton's *Paradise Lost* can also be perceived as a work of mythopoeic fantasy for Milton's endeavours, as suggested by William Blake, in manifesting the Biblical characters have been unconventional. However, the conception of Myth as a fantasy tradition was popularised during the nineteenth century by Brothers Grimm who derived the materials from oral narratives and their written offshoots. The folktales created by Brothers Grimm embedded within themselves myths that evolved as cultural icons which also inspired European writers to create their own version of *Märchen*, that is folktales. Nonetheless, it was through the writings of Mac-Donald during the later part of the eighteenth century that fantasy started to evolve as an individual genre, wherein, the myths of creation, fall and salvation were reconfigured and reinterpreted which also, essentially paved the way for modern fantasy writers to experiment with popular myths and secular beliefs. His final and major work *Lilith* is woven around the Jewish and Christian myth where he distorts those myths by the elements of folklores. However, fantasy attained heyday in the writings of Tolkien and Lewis who established it not only as a popular culture but also as a literary tradition. Tolkien and Lewis were essentially modernist in their approach towards the manifestation of myth, for their works embed notes of hierarchy and despair wherein, reverence for tradition and manifestation of wars for power and dominance can be seen as a metaphor for the world wars. Mythic patterns in fantasy literature, at large, create a space for forming new perspective, albeit, it is difficult to deal with core Christian beliefs rather than experimenting with the pagan offshoots, such as Grail quest. Fantasy, thus, provides a living structure for myths to survive, as Attebery opines, "Literary texts do not come immersed in belief systems, ways of life and interpretive schemata, as do myths in oral cultures. That is the other part of fantasy's mythic method, to provide living contexts to replace the ones stripped from myth texts" (Attebery 92). Thereafter, towards the end of the twentieth century till the present time, fantasies started to attain a postmodern perspective; myths and traditions are essentially revisited with a tone of irony, thereby dismantling their

hierarchy and challenging the established 'grand narratives'. This phenomenon of revisiting the myths in order to create new meanings is called revisionism in critical terms, which is essentially mythopoeic in nature, that is, it formulates a new myth from the old ones, its 'capacity for mythopoeiesis: the making of narratives that reshape the world' (Attebery 23). In light of this discussion, having mentioned the developing trajectory of mythopoeic fantasy, this article is an attempt to analyse *Good Omens* as a text that entails revisionism, having postmodern undertones that parodies the grand narratives of Christian mythology, the central one in this regard being the 'Book of Revelation'. The plot is interwoven around the birth of Anti-Christ who is destined to bring apocalypse along with his four horsemen. The turn of events occurs when the child, being raised by humble parents and surrounded by witty friends decides otherwise, thus defying his destiny. Thus, in order to critically understand the narrative, it is also quintessential to understand literary myth revisionism as a critical tool to analyse such mythopoeic fantasy fiction along with myth criticism.

Lillian Doherty's essay "Revisionism" discusses how a set of canonical texts in literature play a pivotal role in centralizing myths that conform to hierarchy and patriarchy and subsequently talks about the emerging set of canonical texts that decentralise and reframe popular myths. Doherty opines that myths, since the period of their genesis, had served moral and didactic purposes that categorise normative behaviour of a man and thus, the purpose of revisionism is to undercut those metanarratives by creating a host of micro-narratives based on real experiences which, while offering a parallax, refrains itself from creating hierarchies. To quote Doherty:

> Realism, as we will see, has been a primary tool in the revisionist use of mythology, along with irony, created by the juxtaposition of different points of view or by discrepancies between words and actions. Humour is often involved as well, to make more palatable the affront to established norms. (Doherty 154).

In this context, it is pertinent to mention that one of the central debates in *Good Omens* is that of role performance of Angel and Demon, that is, Aziraphale and Crowley. The authors, through the conversation between Aziraphale and Crowley, question the normative role as prescribed by almost all the grand narratives which assert that a demon should perform evil, whereas an angel should perform goodness. However, from the beginning of the text, Crowley's attempt to ironically interrogate the prescribed set of actions for angels and demons is perceptible, for instance, Crowley justifies the act of temptation in tasting the forbidden fruit of knowledge, for he believes gaining knowledge is rational behaviour, while unquestionable obedience is irrational. Thus, through the works of revisionist fantasy myth making, it becomes quite apparent that the meanings of the myth cannot be confined into finite possibilities rather it is through revisionism that they evolve further, surpassing the religious and cultural barriers.

Scott Freer in his work *Modernist Mythopoeia: The Twilight of Gods* opines that, ". . . there is no 'endgame' to myth – the recurring reception ensures its endurability" (10). Freer states that the Modernists were conscious that myth could be perceived as an allegorical bind and also as a poetic opening thus, rejecting its totalizing tendency. Freer further states, "Invariably, the content of inherited myth is violence and misogyny which modernist mythopoeia inverts" (Freer 11). In the light of this argument, the actions of Adam – the Anti-Christ when analysed critically, offers a new way of perception. While the purpose of his birth and his subsequent implantation on earth was to cause Armageddon, the great war that would end the world, Adam refuses to perform his role as the "Adversary, Destroyer of Kings, Angel of the Bottomless Pit, Great Beast that is called Dragon, Prince of this World, Father of Lies,

Spawn of Satan, and Lord of Darkness" (Pratchett and Gaiman 37). He rather chooses to contain earth for its ecological beauty, for its people who, either innocent or guilty, deserve to have a choice. Further, he was created to be merciless, but instead, "Adam was a soft touch for tears" (Pratchett and Gaiman 147). This brief instance from the text provides an understanding of mythopoeia which essentially disorients the hegemony of myths and further paves the way for parallax reading of myths and role orientation of mythological beings.

Through the revision of myth in this text, it becomes quite palpable that Heaven and Hell are not manifested as either good or evil, rather, these are apparently 'sides in the cosmic chess game'. The authors oftentimes put an ironic remark through their mouthpiece, questioning the obligation of any war between Heaven and Hell and the subsequent establishment of hierarchy. Urban fantasy texts, thus, through the postmodern, heterarchical, heterogeneous and uncanny space, provide a wide canvas for experimentation and retelling of myths and further criticise the political, religious and elitist structures. In this context, Attebery's view appears to be significant, ". . . exploring myth is not the only thing fantasy does. In the hands of a Terry Pratchett or a James Morrow, the fantastic is a glorious vehicle for satire on contemporary mores and institutions" (Attebery 15).

Laurence Coupe, in his work, *Myth* opines that mythic grand narratives require a decisive battle to prove the victory of good over evil, which is apparently a recurring phenomenon. In the light of this statement, *Good Omens* can, again, be perceived as critiquing the Biblical grand narratives as the text frames itself upon the Book of Revelation. Throughout the text it is evident that after the Banishment and the Fall, Heaven and Hell had been preparing for Armageddon, the great war in order to reinstate the victory of Heaven over Hell, good over evil. Myth generally administers a hierarchical order while fantasy, in its adaptation, retextures those myths by manifesting their possible heterarchy.

Having discussed the possible apparatus where myths can be distorted and restructured, it is also important to reflect on the role of the hero who aids in reconstituting the myth. Gideon Haberkorn's essay "Cultural Palimpsests: Terry Pratchett's New Fantasy Heroes" discusses how the hero or the attributes that make a hero are not a finite entity but are cultural palimpsests which are pliable to change from time to time and vary across cultures. Haberkorn opines, "Heroes are not just a site of the cultural discourse on heroism; they are interpreters and performers of that discourse, they help shape it, and they can change it" (Haberkorn 320). Haberkorn, while referring to George Lakoff, states that there are a set of critical attributes that are embedded in the psyche of a person, what he calls 'idealized cognitive models' or ICMs, which bind a person to recognise, either a person from the society itself or from literary text, as the cultural hero. Thus, fantasy literature, with its creation of a new set of heroes, creates a cultural palimpsest of heroes who are not just idealised mythic-beings, rather they survive in the urban space, dealing with the contemporary struggle of existence and survival and thus, provide a new vision to the frame of hero itself. To quote Haberkorn:

> According to Jean Francois Lyotard and other postmodernists, the time of the great metanarratives is past (xxiv). We long left behind the age of *myth*, and entered the age of *myths*. There is not one cultural discourse, but a plethora of discourses, and consequently, there is not one hero, but a multitude of them – each one repeating, amplifying, or repudiating the tradition, each one adding another layer to the palimpsest. The modern fantasy hero may be just one voice among many, yet it arguably is a significant and influential one. (Haberkorn 323)

In Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman's *Good Omens*, Adam, Aziraphale and Crowley can be

seen as heroes who are affecting the popular cultural and religious discourse by inverting the idealized cognitive models (ICMs) of good and evil. Adam, who is destined to cause Armageddon is instead raised as a compassionate child who rationalises the futility of war, implementation of hierarchy and the doom of human race. Aziraphale and Crowley, an angel and demon respectively, were assigned to look after the successive events that would ensure the arrival of apocalypse and the subsequent war between Hell and Heaven. However, contrary to their conventional roles, the authors create a bond of friendship between the two who work hand in hand to prevent the impending catastrophe as a result of the fondness that has grown into them for earth and the ones who inhibit the space. Further, the text recurrently questions the religious dogma, often with a note of irony, that it is the evil or the demon that makes people do unfortunate things. To quote from the text:

> They'd come up with some stomach-churning idea that no demon could have thought of in a thousand years, some dark and mindless unpleasantness that only a fully functioning human brain could conceive, then shout 'The Devil Made Me Do It' and get the sympathy of the court when the whole point was that the Devil hardly made anyone do anything. (Pratchett and Gaiman 93).

Thus, *Good Omens*, when analysed as a mythopoeic fantasy fiction, emerges as a text that, while challenging and altering the established structures of power and hierarchy, offers a host of micro-narratives that are heterarchical and does not claim hegemony. The bold attempt on the part of the authors to revisit a religious grand narrative and to recreate it in context of the contemporary urban milieu imbibes a sense of irony and humour. Such an attempt to destabilise the authority of grand narratives through fantasy and recreation of myth provide urban fantasy literature a higher and more serious stake in the domain of critical studies of literary texts.

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Deconstructing Heteronormative Binaries: Androgyny in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*

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Abstract

The paper discusses Virginia Woolf's fantasy novel Orlando: A Biography to establish the constructedness of the binaries of sex, gender and sexuality across varied cultures and ages. It further deconstructs the normativity of sex and gender and establishes them as patriarchal. Woolf contends that the presumption of the dependence of gender upon biological sex is an unnecessary social and cultural construct. She tactically developed Orlando as a mock-biography to examine and promote androgyny. A significant episode in the text is midway through the narrative when the titular character phantasmagorically transforms from a man to a woman. The paper through the reading of Orlando, analyses that Woolf created a fictional atmosphere with fantastic and surreal scenarios in which she could subvert the heteronormative dichotomies of sex, gender and sexuality.
Keywords*: Androgyny, gender, deconstruction, heteronormativity, binaries*

Virginia Woolf proposed her theory of androgyny in her manifesto *A Room of One's Own*, where she famously states that "in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female" (97) and "It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly." (102). This radical dictum is explored at length by her in *Orlando*. This concept has invited both favourable and unfavourable remarks from feminist scholars. Supporters include Carolyn Heilbrun and Nancy Topping Bazin who describe it as as a balance and union among opposites. Bazin in *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* remarks that Woolf's "interest in what it means to be a male or female was related to her quest for the self or the point of balance that would stabilize her personality and give her the sense of wholeness" (4). Heilbrun in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* celebrates Woolf and states that the term androgyny, for Woolf, meant to be "fully human"(16) and the function of androgyny would ideally be to provide "a third term that neutralizes the gendered way in which the subject is constructed" (81). Likewise, Hargreaves in *Androgyny in Modern Literature* emphasizes on the positivity of the term and explicates that:

> Woolf's engagement with the ideals (and imperatives) of androgyny also constitute a decisive shift in early twentieth-century representations, moving androgyny away from the pathologised, degenerative and decadent inacarnations to consolidate instead a relationship with feminism, polymorphous sexuality, writing and a creative literary criticism. (77)

Thus, she asserts that Woolf's application of androgyny distances itself from a pathologised

representation and glides towards a revolutionary and liberating approach for feminism. For her, Woolf postulates an understanding of gender beyond the biological determinism. This concept of androgyny as espoused by Woolf in *Orlando: A Biography* is read from an ontological perspective in this paper and is elaborately discussed in the following sections.

The poststructuralist approach is particularly apt for the analysis of Orlando as it deconstructs the rigid structures of sex, gender and sexuality. The paper develops its theoretical framework on the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. The problematics of gender and sexual identity have been extensively theorized in their works. Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978-1986) contends that sexual categories are cultural constructs wherein heterosexuality is considered normative and any other sexuality is defined as a pathologised condition. Thus, Foucault presents sexuality as a construct. His notions regarding sexuality have led to a radical interrogation of the "relation between sexual choice and sexual preference and identity." (Mills 87) and has propelled the critics to rethink identity as a discourse rather than in essentialist terms. Judith Butler's seminal work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) has been hailed for the theorization of gender performativity. Butler contends that "Gender is 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" (37).

Orlando: A Biography, published on 11 October 1928, covers roughly the span of 400 years in duration from the sixteenth to the twentieth century (1570-1928). The novel depicts the adventures of a young noble poet Orlando from the Elizabethan age to the Modern age who only ages thirty six years during the course of the novel. A significant incident occurs mid-way in the narrative when Orlando awakens and finds his metamorphosis from a male to a female. This fantastical event provides Woolf an opportunity "to create a fictional case study, examining and essentially promoting androgyny" (Hastings 31). It is placed somewhere between a novel and a biography. Although she began it as a joke, she gradually became serious. She records in her diary that was later compiled as *A Writers Diary* by her husband Leonard Woolf that her worries "begun on 8th October, as a joke; and now rather too long for my liking. It may fall between stools, be too long for a joke, and too frivolous for a serious book" (124). She made a note in her diary that she had an idea of some literary project where she wants to deal with "fantasy", "sapphism", "satire". Woolf's initial but unaccomplished idea for a fantasy was "The Jessamy Brides" which was about "two women, poor, solitary at the top of the house", replete with "satire and wilderness" suggesting "sapphism" (*A Writer's Diary* 105). Later *Orlando* was developed from this idea "Vita; only with a change about from one sex to another. (116). Woolf's playfulness, thus, should not be seen as unseriousness, but as Minow-Pinkney in *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* says that is a "necessary detatchment and disguise, a deliberate narrative politics by which she can express what she otherwise prohibits herself . . ." (120) Woolf uses this playfulness as a tool to express what she cannot articulate otherwise within the legitimate confines. It is important to mention here that as the title states that *Orlando: A Biography* is a biography but a thorough examination of the text makes it clear that this title is a parodic one meant to mock at the simplistic ways to categorize literature. In her diary, Woolf recorded her ambition that Orlando "should be truthful; but fantastic" (Gilbert xii). Orlando, thus is a fantasy which involves a fictional character who phantasmasmagorically transcends gender as well as generations.

The subject matter of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* was extracted from her circle of friends, especially Vita Sackville West. Hargreaves points to Woolf's biography written by

Hermione Lee where she signals towards a string of incidents which led to the germination of *Orlando*. These are:

> Vita's sexual fling with Mary Hutchinson (the former mistress of Woolf's brother-in-law, Clive Bell), Woolf's three-day visit to see the lesbian couple Ethel Sands and Nan Hudson in France, . . . Vita's relationship with Mary Campbell. Woolf went to Long Barn, Vita's home, where Vita had dressed her young son Nigel as a Russian Boy. "Don't. it makes me look like a girl," he'd said. She had gone to a fancy dress party at the Keynes's where photos of a "pretty young woman who had become a man" were circulated. (77)

It is quite interesting to mention here that *Orlando* was inspired by Woolf's association with Vita Sackville-West, and both of them shared feelings for each other which could easily be termed homo-erotic. Hastings notes that "Woolf's relationship with Sackville-West was tenuous at first; gradually developed into a mutual, albeit tumultuous attraction and romantic relationship; and eventually evolved into a lasting and affectionate friendship" (23) Sackville-West never once conveyed discontent with her biological sex, but was displeased with society expectations and demands of a woman. Hastings notes that she resisted automatic gendering promoted by biological sex (14). Her foray into cross dressing was a device that provided her an opportunity to assimilate the gender characteristics which she valued without binding her to stereotypical gender roles. Even her lovers recognized and celebrated her androgyny. Mary Campbell, Vita's another lover described her as someone who transgresses binaries of sex: "I don't think of you as a woman, or as a man either. Perhaps as someone who is both, the complete human being who transcends both." (Glendinning 253) In her confessional Portrait of a Marriage, Vita claim that she is "qualified to speak with the intimacy a professional scientist could acquire only after years of study and indirect information, because I have the object of study always to hand, in my own heart, and can gauge the exact truthfulness of what my own experience tells me." (Nicolson 108) Sackville West's oscillation, privately delineated in Portrait, found a public expression in *Orlando*.

Gender is portrayed throughout Orlando as a performativity. This gender ambiguity is not only limited to androgynous Orlando but is extended to other charcters likewise. This ambiguity acts as a significant weapon to deconstruct the stereotypical assumptions of sex, gender and sexuality. Orlando's polymorphism exhibits that the binaries of gender and sex viz. man/woman and male/female as they are understood in heteronormative societies are the products of discursive cultural means. Alongwith Orlando, other characters like Princess Saha, Archduke Harriet and Shelmerdine also exhibit gender fluid characteristics exhibiting androgyny. Orlando's androgyny has been the principal case study of the novel. Orlando is born in Elizabethan England and becomes a leading courtier, who serves as a page and becomes favourite of the elderly queen. He meets Sasha, the Russian princess and falls in love with her but her unfaithfulness and sudden departure to Russia led to the first of Orlando's seven day sleep trances. The second seven day trance happened in Constantinople where Orlando is raised to Dukedom. However, the night of conferring of the Dukedom happened to be of civil unrest and riots on the streets. Upon awakening from the trance, Orlando finds that he has been transformed into a woman, Woolf in Orlando contends "the same person, with the same personality and intellect, but in a woman's body." (14) The now Lady Orlando escapes Constantinople and leaves for England.

On her arrival in England, during the eighteenth century, she feels the brunt of her sex change as there are law suits against her and she is left "in a state of incognito or incognita" (120). Orlando's metamorphosis from male to female shows how sex and gender is a

discourse. The power of the legal agencies to determine sexed identity are implored and laid bare in the text. It is also proposed that the discourses related to sex and gender are constructed and determined by State and its various agencies like Law, Judiciary, sexologists, biologists, psychologists and others. Woolf further emphasises that the presumption that gender and sex are intrinsically linked is inaccurate. She dismisses it when she displays how the metamorphosis of Orlando from man to woman has no effect whatsoever on the identity of Orlando. To quote from text, Woolf notes:

> Orlando had become a woman- there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits proved practically the same. His memory-but in the future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his', and 'she' for 'he' – her memory then went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. (103)

The suggestion, here, that Orlando's identity remained completely intact vis-à-vis her gender after her polymorphomism is extremely crucial. Her sense of self and identity remains completely unaltered but the reactions and the expectations of the society vary significantly. On her return to England during the eighteenth century, Orlando starts internalising the cultural expectations and perceptions of women and reflects them in her own actions as she becomes modest of her brains and vain about her appearance. Moreover, she gave up all sorts of ambitions, administrative roles and refrained from pursuing an active career. However, Orlando manages to transgress the strict gender binaries constructed by the society. There are several instances when Orlando clearly defies these binary oppositions. Orlando clearly plays around with gender formations by undermining social explanations with her playful escapades and transvestism.

The Russian Princess Sasha, Orlando's passionate love, is introduced as someone who flouts strict binaries. She is portrayed in Orlando as a gender fluid person ". . . a figure, which, whether boy's or woman's, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, . . ." (26). The episode hints at Orlando's incapacity to clearly distinguish whether the person alluded to is male or female. Archduchess Harriet Griselda is another character who displays androgyny through transvestism. Shelmerdine is introduced as her ideal partner, an androgynous person who does not fall into the dichotomies of binaries. In the text, Orlando on seeing Shelmerdine reacts as:

> "You're a woman, Shel!" she cried.
>
> "You're a man, Orlando!" he cried.
>
> Never was there such a scene of protestation and demonstration as then took place since the world began. (174-175)

The exclamations of Orlando and Shelmerdine suggests a site of contestation where the identities of sex and gender are negotiated beyond the binaries of opposition. They move beyond the binaries of masculinity and femininity. Butler explains this in Gender Trouble as follows:

> When the constructed status of gender is theorized as independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (9)

Shelmerdine's role as a husband transgresses the suffocating norms of Victorian stereotypes. This androgynous union releases Orlando from the burden of the strict categorizations of the nineteenth century England. So, it can be safely argued that the love between Orlando and

Shelmerdine leads to an authentic androgynous love where both unearth a complementary and innate maleness and femaleness.

Another important point is that gender is presented as an outfit to wear, foregrounding its constructedness. After leaving the gypsies, Orlando dons women's clothing while heading back to England and soon she realizes the vast difference in etiquette and affectations between different sexes. As Talia Schaffer in "Posing Orlando" affirms, "the novel is about costuming, precisely because costuming is what gender is all about." (36-37) Virginia Woolf echoes the same about sartorial choices in *Orlando* that:

> Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking. So, having now worn skirts for a considerable time, a certain change was visible in Orlando. . . .(138).

This proves that the sartorial choices have the potential to completely alter one's identity or how one perceives the individual. Thus, Woolf tries to negate essentialist argument on clothes and sexual difference through *Orlando*. The realisation of Orlando's ability to glide smoothly among different gender templates by altering her sartorial choices opened seamless possibilities available to her. Thus, it is amply suggested that clothes substantially demarcate male or female the individual in whom a vacillation between sexes constantly takes place.

To conclude, it can be stated emphatically that *Orlando: A Biography* mocks at the rigid dichotomies of sex, gender and sexuality. Woolf used *Orlando* as a vehicle to deconstruct the stereotypically accepted binaries regarding sex, gender and sexuality. Woolf forcefully examined, dissected, and directly criticised these oppressive notions that were being enforced by the society. Moreover, she felt that they were not inherently dependent on each other. In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf establishes fantastic and surreal scenarios wherin she could subvert the heteronormative assumptions and successfully establishes sex, gender and sexuality as a construct. She further attempts to lay bare the implicit and explicit sartorial politics and concludes that clothes determine gender. The characters Orlando, Sasha, and Shelmerdine are presented as gender ambiguous who transgress the strict binaries of gender, sex and sexuality and display an affinity towards androgyny.

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Contemporary Society in Quest for Order in Anarchy in Nathanael West's *Dream Life of Balso Snell*

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Abstract

The decade of the 1930's in America appeared as a period of brazen conmanship and despair, producing bitter disenchantment and an irreversible erosion of traditional hopes as a very unfortunate occurrence took place, known by the name of Great Depression. Nathanael West, a writer of that era, with a futuristic vision, anticipated a decade where tradition would offer no relief from isolation and an atmosphere of apostasy and tribulations became the final reality. The paper analyses The Dream Life of Balso Snell *(1931) that highlights how West dealt with all the contemporary existential problems. Balso, the protagonist, is a true representative of 'Dystopian Hero' who feels confined and is struggling to escape the world in which he lives, and strongly believes that something is awry and specious with the society. What he comes across is an animalistic existence where cultural decadence is at its peak. In fact, West's novel takes a haunting look at the dark side of the Great American Dream and envisions a doomed society for its inhabitants.*
Keywords*: apostasy, American dream, dystopian, existentialism, tribulations.*

In the history of every nation, certain periods become markedly peculiar and attain notoriety, due to a host of reasons. The depression years in American history, spanning across the decades of 1930's, engulfed the nation and its people with an agonizing crisis. The very fabric of American society got afflicted with a chronic feeling of uncertainty, fear, despair, and hopelessness, followed by a quite apparent collapse of the economic and political structure. Among such writers, mention may be made of such well known figures such as Nathanael West, John Steinbeck, and Scott Fitzgerald, these three giants of twentieth century American fiction in their works came to reflect a heavy dose of what is now known as the Californian Hollywood fiction of the late 20's and the entire 30's. The Jazz age, along with the preponderance of money, glamour, sex, and violence became cohesive with the reflection of sociological and economic degeneration and destabilization. It was against the backdrop of this scenario that Nathanael West came to be estimated as one concerned with the "the fatuous and machined dreams counterfeiting…reality" and foreseeing "the apocalyptic violence of warped and cheated humanity" (Widmer 97). As a veritable prophet of doom, West can be labelled as a writer much ahead of his times, justifiably to be considered as "…the prototype of the post-modernist" (Klug 17). What makes it really remarkable from the reader's point of view is that in spite of writing his works in the 1930's, West looked much ahead of his times, and in his vision and sensibility, he can really be called a hard-core modernist, even postmodernist, who with his futuristic stance became really ruthless in the indictment of modern man's total addiction to a massive system of evil. No redemption, no renewal: the fracture of society and civilization is envisioned as final and total in all the works of Nathanael

West.

A cumulative totality of *The Dream Life of Balso Snell* (1931) persistently projects: "… the world of nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion…the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly" (Frye 147). Keeping in view all these chronic propensities in Westian fiction, the author got hailed as a faithful recorder of the conditions prevailing in the 30's, presenting in his novels, "a world of dreams, hallucinations and fantasy" (Pells 219).

The Dream Life of Balso Snell (1931), Nathanael West's first novel, written with a futuristic vision is "a brilliantly insane surrealist fantasy that tries very hard to mock Western culture out of existence" (Podhoretz 67). Balso, the central protagonist, who seems sometimes to represent the romantic poet and sometimes the philistine American in his dream, comes across the Trojan Horse while wandering on the plains of Troy and literally gains entry into the very vortex of Western culture by entering the horse through the posterior opening of alimentary canal. What gets revealed is: "an encompassing vision of debasing American dreams…the totality of cultural decadence, even of the decline of West and the apocalyptic end of a whole civilization" (Martin 115).

Balso Snell exposes the dreams by which man strives to escape the violence and emptiness of effete existence and makes futile attempts to impose order in an irrational world, an apostatic world of tribulations and anarchic disorders. That's why Balso Snell has also been defined as "a shocking fantasy which has as its setting, the interior of the Trojan horse" (Peden 469). The Trojan horse, whose body Balso enters, epitomizes epic triumphs and an involvement with dangerous but successful adventuring: "Balso in one sense, emigrates into a landscape of anguish and horror, by entering the bowels of the Trojan horse and there investigating the mental geography of the Western tradition" (Martin 74).

The motive behind Balso's emigration is to present the destruction of the dream of art since it is disintegrated in an apostatic world. This is nothing surprising, as in a demonic human world and a degenerate society, human existence becomes base and perverted, thereby, leaving little allowance for any aesthetic appreciation or evaluation of art, especially pure art in its most refined and highest manifestations. Man's life as a picaresque entity, an existentially ironic odyssey that gets expressed in this opening epigram from the novel, "After all, my dear fellow, life, Anaxagoras has said, is a journey" (West 144). The fiction of journey, as an exercise in the picaresque, ingrained certain conventions or expectations, the chief of which as in *The Pilgrim's Progress*[1], is that a "journey" may symbolize a movement upward, towards illumination or purification, besides suggesting a moving outward, a rebirth. In *Balso Snell*, the movement of the hero becomes only a vagrant wandering in the form of a dream, an endless foray within the dream structure, blatantly grotesque at every level: "Employing the picaresque techniques in his first novel, West satirizes the classic myth of 'revelation', which the technique has traditionally illustrated" (Galloway 111).

Balso enters the alimentary canal of the Trojan Horse by penetrating through the asshole of this symbol of tradition and treacherous conquest, the famous Wooden Horse the Greeks. Reflection of Dada movement can be seen in the usage of The Trojan Horse as in *En Avant Dada: A History of Dadaism* (1920), Richard Hudsenbect had highlighted, "The word 'dada' was accidentally discovered by Hugo Ball and myself in a German French dictionary…dada is French for wooden horse. It is impressive in its brevity and suggestiveness" (Merill 171). West also considered the wooden horse to be a perfect sarcasm of classical innovation and modern deception by converting this magnificent symbol into a "real" horse, with an anus, hernias, and intestines.

The odyssey of Balso commences as he enters the anus of the Trojan Horse, but unlike 'Odysseus and Ishmael,'[2] there is no discovery of ultimate truth awaiting him at the end of his voyage. One very important feature of West's first novel that deserves attention is that in it we find the author's preoccupation with the tragic nature of life as a journey, the existential odyssey of humans, the search for truth, the final reality.

The dream life of the hero begins when he enters the "Anus Mirabilis" of the wooden horse, which was instrumental in the taking of Troy. Balso's journey proves to be adventurous since he meets a collection of dream grotesques, all of them, as Balso realizes midway in the novel, "are writers in search of an audience" (West 60). The satiric suggestion is implicit: pseudo-intellectuals and mentally effete writers eagerly hunt for an audience, a symbolic pharmakos, in order to cater to their so-called creative brilliance and literary urges. The first of the grotesques that Balso meets is a guide in the bowels of the wooden horse. They both argue heatedly over a variety of things, and eventually, the guide begins to harangue Balso with the philosophic proofs of the complexity and unity of Nature. Finally, Balso gets rid of the guide's hold on his collar and flees. The antithetical nature of Balso's temperament and ideology vis-s-vis the denizens inhabiting the bowels of the Trojan horse become apparent, when the hero encounters the second grotesque. He is a catholic mystic, Maloney the Areopagite. Balso's practical mind is unmoved by his spiritual yearnings and he continues his peregrinations, only to come upon a grotesque even weirder than Maloney. The new grotesque, like Maloney, yearns for the spiritual, but he is also aware of the duality of man's nature in which the physical and the spiritual seem natural antagonists. This complicated creature is John Gilson, a precocious eighth grade student. He writes 'Journals' and his Crime Journal tells a Dostoevyskian fable about an unmotivated murder of an idiot and ends with Gilson in the insane asylum. He sells a "pamphlet" to Balso. The "pamphlet" begins with Gilson's news that his mistress, Saniette, has died. It becomes obvious that Gilson's pamphlet constitutes a parody of the spiritual desires of man, besides the spiritual sterility afflicting modern humans as a corollary to dehumanization and the prevalence of false and artificial values.

Gilson's diary is meant to please Miss McGeeney, his teacher, who has displayed preference for art-lovers. She is writing a biography of a biographer, Samuel Perkins. Disgusted with the writings of Miss McGeeney, he hits her in the gut and pushes her in the fountain, and after this incident she stays within the limits of his fantasy, returning "warmly moist" to make possible the sexual climax with which the book ends, turning a dry dream into a wet one.

The other adventures of Balso's during his journey through the bowels of Trojan Horse are extremely confused and humorous. However, on one occasion, West delineates the basic pathos of the human condition. This essential pathos is perceived and conveyed through a dream-creature of Balso, named Beagle Hamlet Darwin. In a dream, Balso meets a gorgeous hunchback named Janey Davenport. She presents him with a letter which she has received from her lover Beagle Darwin. It explains his refusal to take her with him to Paris and also contains a fictionalized scenario about Janey's reactions to pregnancy and her subsequent suicide. Janey also shows Balso the second letter from Beagle which is a third person account of his planned reaction to Janey's projected death. It also accounts for a first-person soliloquy in which Beagle, now a hybrid Hamlet, fulminates upon the tragedy of man and flourishes in allusions to Greek playwrights, the Bible, Alexander Pope, and Francois Villon. This portion of Balso Snell ends as Beagle goes into his juggling act. Abruptly, the next section begins when the protagonist wakes up in the café: "The elaborate multi-storied Janey Davenport episode having collapsed like Alice's house of cards" (Wyrick 351).

The action in the final chapter of the novel, perhaps the wittiest and certainly brutally frank, culminates after some male and female coyness and some seduction poetry, in sexual climax. With Miss McGeeney lying flat on her back, her knees spread, Balso launches into a series of highly conventional and totally unnecessary seduction speeches. This is the climax of the novel coming in the form of wet dream. And it is a climax in the literary sense as well. The three main themes of the novel: art, dreams, and sex are here united in simultaneous and triumphant parody. This only highlights the grim reality of contemporary life which like the Trojan Horse oozes deceit in every form. In reality, these pretenses are only a ridiculous façade, conveying an ironic and disgusting rationalization for the end of procreation. A corollary comes in the form of another funny parody vis-à-vis the meaning of life: "The mystic doctrine, the purification, the syllable *Om*" (West 93). West's message rings loud and clear: human society is demonic, where base and perverted people perpetuate in real life. Balso's symbolic escape from the world of reality into a world of fantasy, thereby illustrates a scathing exposure of modern man's sheer inability and helplessness to come to terms with his inadequacies, failures, trials and tribulations, inherent in human existence.

II

In *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, it becomes problematic to separate symbol from the theme, because West repeats and embellishes symbols throughout the narrative in order to create thematic unity. His symbol-clusters and the resulting thematic patterns are circular rather than linear, in fact, they resemble inter-locking radical webs of meaning. For example, in the absurdly uninspiring figure of Miss McGeeney, the author first suggests the emotional, imaginative and sexual sterility of modern woman as well as the failure of sexual gratification. West entertained the belief that modern society, like Balso Snell in the horse's interior, moved without direction in an aimless and sequestered manner and this concept becomes the essence of his vision of man's comic nature.

The dream adventures of the protagonist Balso are therefore, treated in all the irrationality of their disconnectedness. Disgust dominates the tone of the novel, a disgust seen in the constant use of excremental images. For instance, Balso thus talks about such images, "written while smelling the moistened forefinger of my right hand" (West 14), followed by a vulgar joke, "a hand in the bush is worth two in the pocket" (18). Further disagreeable images flit across the narrative: "The intestine had burst through the stomach wall… what a beautiful name for a girl! Hornia Hornstein! Paresis Pearlberg! Paranois Puntz!" (18).

The style is not only vulgarly humorous but also highly varnished, brazenly oblivious to the grotesque and weird material it deals with. Being an existential fantasy, Balso Snell has no consequential consecutiveness of plot, characters are portrayed in highly distorted forms and magically change their shape. It seems that while writing the novel, West was spinning the web of fractured grotesquerie and highly repugnant nauseating images of psychic and mental disorientation and dismemberment. The Trojan horse whose body Balso enters, suggests the "deception, the deceitfulness of dreams and the life that these dreams symbolize" (Martin 127). What seems to be implied is that the inhabitants of a demonic human world become akin in their existential essence to the deceitful Trojan Horse and as such conform to a sociological cosmos, about which it can be said that: "Images of perverted work belong here too: engines of torture, weapons of war, armor, and images of a dead mechanism which, because it does not humanize nature, is unnatural as well as inhuman" (Frye 187).

These words also apply logically to the fantasy world of Balso's dream in which the

alimentary canal of the Trojan Horse becomes the dream equivalent of a real sterile existential wasteland, implicitly modern human society and the life of contemporary man, in which humans become merely living corpses, psychologically and intellectually effete, emotionally sterile and metaphysically dead.

Balso Snell enters his wasteland through a portal from which waste is evacuated. The Trojan Horse is made a brilliant symbol of art as a hoax, sham and hollow. It only lays bare the fact vis-à-vis Balso's erratic, uneven and fragmentary journey across the intestines of the horse, that human society is full of trials and tribulations. It emphatically highlights the idea that "the modern world is no more honest in the dreams it offers man than the Trojan Horse had been in the dreams of peace with which it tempted the besieged citizens of Troy" (Galloway 112). West obviously suggests a double analogy between the two Trojan Horses: West's modern one and Homer's epic Horse. The Homeric Horse symbolizes victory of deceit and artifice over innocence and complacency leading to destruction. Westian Trojan Horse represents the incipient absurdism of writers who simply become lethal and destructive and nowhere creative, and whose writings have no impact on a demonic human world. A nihilistic vision of art and human society becomes the index of Balso's dream-world, encapsulated inside the entrails of the Horse. All such connotations simply imply the prophetically ironic vision of West in terms of sheer absurdity, creative futility and intellectual sterility in a human world dominated by an irreversible erosion of art and socio-cultural sophistication.

To conclude we can say that West remained painfully aware of the misery which afflicts humans. He knew that mankind continued to exist in a world of grotesque distortions like the one Balso encounters in an apostatic and tribulatory world. The dreams get finally interpreted as desperate attempts on part of man to escape the emptiness and violence of his life. The adventures of the hero, in a grotesque and nauseating fashion, constitute the contemplation of sophistication and artistic excellence in an ironic mode. An ugly and brutal world can only foster sordid perversions and demonic fantasies. Perhaps, that's why a closer look at *Balso Snell* shows that it parodies the structure of romance, with the essential features as adventure and quest. This also brings into limelight the fractured and denatured existence of human society riddled with trials, apostasy and tribulations. Satan reigns supreme and humans become mere husks, zombies propelled and motivated by diseased minds and perverted psyches. West's carnival of evil becomes really impressive and convincing.

Notes

[1]In John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, the central protagonist, Christian, like Balso, undertakes a picaresque journey and encounters all kinds of bizarre and upsetting experiences.

[2] Both Odysseus, the central protagonist of Homer's *The Odyssey*, and Ishmael, the narrator in *Moby Dick*, written by Herman Melville, undertake a picaresque journey like Balso, but unlike the Westian hero, are able to understand the ultimate truth of life, they have been searching for.

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Ruling the Lawless:Rise of Authoritarianism in Times of Crisis in Ling Ma's *Severance*

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Abstract

The existence of a political authority is such a customary part of our daily lives that often we are able to ignore and even forget it. However, only when we imagine its absence from our lives via post-apocalyptic fiction, we realize the importance of a democratically chosen and built governance over what would have been an authoritarian rule. Similarly, Ling Ma's first novel Severance *with the eerie similarity of its events to the Coronavirus pandemic, is one of those works that shows us the unadulterated social and political chaos emerging from the lack of a central government or authority, through the story of nine survivors of a globally destructive disease. Moreover, since the emergence of an authoritarian rule during times of crisis is one of the key elements found in* Severance*, this paper aims to examine and analyze the ways in which the power of the leader turns into an authoritarian control during a global pandemic that resulted in the annihilation of almost all humanity.*
Keywords: *Post-Apocalyptic Novel, Authoritarianism, Biopolitics*

Being a part of a society more often than not includes being a part of a political system that expects its subjects to follow a certain way of life through the guidelines it sets in lieu of laws, which is a fact we do not actively acknowledge frequently in our daily lives. If we are lucky, the existence of an authoritative control over our lives is not made apparent; however, in times of crisis, economic or social problems, our attention is forcibly drawn to the authoritative powers we live by. The unfortunate yet undeniable existence of an authoritarian rule is an important discussion topic for today's world; especially when we come across deeply moving works like *Until We Are Free: My Fight for Human Rights in Iran* by Shirin Ebadi who is the first Muslim woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, or *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* by Svetlana Alexievich, another Nobel Laurate (the Nobel Prize for Literature, 2015) who depicts the unheard, yet authentic voices of people who witnessed the collapse of the authoritarian Soviet rule. As art mimics life, the appearance of authoritarianism in fictional literary works is to be expected and even welcomed, thanks to works such as *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez that takes place during the Trujillo dictatorship in Dominican Republic, or *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* by Jung Chang that portrays some oppressive social customs of the age through the life stories of three generations of women. Moreover, when we look at our own world today, we find ourselves questioning the very nature of authoritarianism and how it could develop from a democratic rule. Especially in the times of Coronavirus pandemic, the world population had to face what it means to be restricted by the-powers-that-be, and even though the aforementioned restrictions were set in place for the benefit of the public, it provided us with a taste of what could have been if this authoritative

power and control was in the hands of someone more malevolent, which is exactly what is portrayed in Ling Ma's 2018 novel, *Severance*.

Ling Ma was born in Sanming, China, but grew up in Utah and Kansas, from which she went on to complete her graduate studies at Cornell University ("Ling Ma" [*Bookreporter.com*]); her debut novel Severance was critically acclaimed as it earned several awards including, but not limited to the NYPL Young Lions Fiction Award and the Kirkus Prize ("Ling Ma" [*Department of English Language and Literature*]). Her novel *Severance* takes the readers along through the survival story of Candance Cheng in a disease-ridden world where she is treated as a commodity through her pregnancy as a result of the authoritarian rule of the group leader Bob, who uses his influence over the other survivors to establish dominance over Candace's body.

Without a doubt, a post-apocalyptic world shaped by a sudden and unexplainable disease is not a new concept in fiction; in fact, some of the most read novels of our time, Jose Saramago's 1997 novel *Blindness* is a great example of this phenomenon. Of course, the 21st century too, has already left its mark in what we consider to be "pandemic fiction" with novels like *The Dog Stars* by Peter Heller (2012), *The Dreamers* by Karen Thompson Walker (2019), *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel (2014), and *A Beginning at the End* by Mike Chen (2020), all of which has their own take of handling the aftermath of a disease that interrupts life as we know it. *The Dog Stars*, for example, pushes the plot forward by going back and forth between the pre-apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic world, while *The Dreamers* has the world population in a dream-like trance as a result of a contagious disease – both of which are parts of the plot elements we see in *Severance*. Moreover, according to Doherty and Giordano, one of the most common and consistent elements of a pandemic fiction is the struggle for power (2), which we can clearly observe in Ling Ma's novel, as *Severance* takes the readers through the life of Candace Cheng who is a Chinese-American woman working in publishing industry to create a more fashionable Bible for teenage girls. Candace is going through the motions of life without making a meaningful decision in her life; the job she doesn't like, the hobby and talent she neglects and even her distanced boyfriend are results of her tendency to avoid making serious decisions. When a new disease called Shen Fever emerges in China and spreads across the globe, imprisoning people within their memories and routines, Candace becomes one of the few people who is immune to the fever. At this point it can be assumed that her immunity to this fever, which makes everyone follow certain patterns in their lives like mindless zombies until they die, derives from the fact that even before the pandemic Candance has been living her life by going through the same motions and routines without complaint. Moreover, as the novel goes back and forth between pre-apocalyptic and apocalyptic times, we, as readers, get to witness Candace's deeply rooted inability to take action, as she becomes possibly the last person to stay in the city of New York during the pandemic that caused the evacuation of the city, simply because she does not want to disturb the monotonous routine she has established. She continues to go to work by going through the desolate cityscape everyday, continues to take pictures of the city and share them on her blog, and continues to worry about the future of her unborn baby. But just as she runs out of options and a way to take care of herself, she is saved by a group of people led by Bob, a slightly older man who has established authority over the group through his half-kept promises and religious convictions. Through a series of events that starts with Candace's arrival to the group and ends with her imprisonment in a desolate mall in Chicago, we start to understand how Bob's previously agreed-upon leadership takes the form of an authoritarian rule where he is even able to detain a pregnant woman for an undetermined amount of time thanks to his

unquestioned authority.

One of the most interesting aspects of the novel is its prophetic nature, as some of the details of the emergence and spread of Shen Fever in the novel are incredibly similar to our real word crisis with Coronavirus, which makes it easier to compare the events in the novel to the real situation we are still dealing with. For example, like Coronavirus, the Shen Fever in *Severance* has symptoms such as "headaches, disorientation, shortness of breath, and fatigue" which are "often mistaken for the common cold, [and] patients are often unaware they have contracted Shen Fever" (Ma 15). To continue with the novel's similarities to the real events, in Ling Ma's *Severance* (published in 2018, two years before the emergence of Coronavirus), the disease is not, at first, taken seriously and even is ignored by many, causing it to spread globally even faster, similar to the way Coronavirus was met with doubt and ignorance; explaining this phenomenon, Ian Mitroff argues that "denial and obfuscation are major parts of nearly all crises" ("Corona Virus") which explains the unreasonably underwhelming reactions of both the characters in the novel, and also general public in the real world. Moreover, another similarity between the events of the novel and our own experiences with Coronavirus is the abolishment of different aspects of daily life; this, in the novel, is seen in the disappearance of the populations with the Shen Fever, disrupting not only major industries but also social and political life. Likewise, during the pandemic, many critics argued that what we consider as the norm in our social, political and private lives is also going through a change; in support of this idea, David Chandler points out that "the virus ethically calls for the collapse of normal political and social life— that is the most striking aspect of the current crisis" ("The Coronavirus" 29). Furthermore, when we look at the novel, we understand that through this collapse rises a new sort of authoritative norm in the form of Bob, whose hunger for power and authority is made clear from the beginning. In fact, many critics like David Chandler, Panagiotis Sotiris and Daphne Halikiopoulou agree that emergence of an authoritarian regime is to be expected in times of crisis. Halikiopoulou explains that historically, many leaders in times of unrest have taken advantage of the situation at hand to gain more power and control, and the pandemic we are living through at the moment is no different, which could potentially cause long-term consequences to our understanding and experience of democracy, since in places and countries "where democratic institutions are weak, there is a serious risk of further democratic backsliding" ("The Pandemic is Exposing the Weaknesses of Populism, but Also Fuelling Authoritarianism"). Similarly, Sotiris points out that the steps China took to slow down and contain the Coronavirus pandemic were only successful because of China's ability to "implement an authoritarian version of biopolitics, which included the use of extended quarantines and bans on social activities, which was helped by the vast arsenal of coercion, surveillance and monitoring measures and technologies that the Chinese state has at its disposal" ("Against Agamben: Is a Democratic Biopolitics Possible?"), which makes it clear that the authoritative regime has distinctive connections to biopolitics. In agreement with these points, David Chandler acknowledges that not only "the biological is crucial to the bounded imaginary of the state" ("Biopolitics 2.0" 1) and also at a certain point in the spread of the virus "liberal rights and freedoms [become] a threat to public security" ("The Coronavirus" 27). Moreover, all these significant points made by various critics can be found within Ling Ma's *Severance* and in the character of Bob.

At the very beginning of the novel, Bob promises the rest of the group a safe haven for them to take shelter in, by casually bringing up the shelter he purchased years ago:

I have a place for us to stay, Bob said, puffing on his e-cigarette. The scent of French

> vanilla wafted through the night air.
>
> We sat around the bonfire, listening. It was this gigantic two-story complex in Chicago that he and some high school buddies had bought.
>
> For what? Janelle asked, blasé. Just in case the apocalypse happened?
>
> For when the apocalypse happened, Bob corrected. We always knew it would, though I personally didn't know it would be this early. (Ma 7)

With his answer to Janelle's question, Bob is implying that he has been preparing for some sort of apocalypse for years, which helps to establish him as the leader of the group since the others start to believe him to be the most capable member of the group and begin to rely on him to make the next decision. However, their error in judgement only makes itself known after they travel from New York to Chicago and come across what Bob considers to be his shelter built for the apocalypse.

> We were standing in front of Deer Oaks Mall, a beige complex with signs boasting a Macy's, a Sears, and an AMC movie theater with eight screens. This was supposed to be the Facility?
>
> Well, it is huge. He didn't lie about that, Evan said.
>
> All afternoon we had driven through the deserted canyons of the Chicagoland suburbs, crawling by deadened Olive Gardens, IHOPs, Kmarts, the H Mart with the parking lot littered with exploded jars of kimchi. And now this. On our road trip, we had passed so many other places. Many other places would have worked. Why here? (Ma 103)

This realization that the shelter Bob has been talking and boasting about throughout their journey is nothing, but a deserted mall makes it clear to the reader that just like the historical leaders Halikiopoulou mentions, Bob has also been taking advantage of the situation to bend the will of the group to his will through his empty promises of a well-stocked and safe shelter and delusions of divine grandeur. In a way, it can be argued that he uses the lack of a central government that could help with the disaster relief to his advantage in order to establish his authority over the members of their group. Furthermore, just like Sotiris' example about the Chinese government, Bob also uses his new-found authority to "implement an authoritarian version of biopolitics" ("Against Agamben: Is a Democratic Biopolitics Possible?") that consists of imprisoning Candance against her will by using her unborn baby as an excuse; through her baby, Candance as a biological being becomes part of the imaginary of the state, as Bob sees her baby as the proof of their divine status. His religious fervor is not a new aspect of his character, as he makes is clear from his previous interactions with Candace that he believes their group was protected from Shen Fever because of a "divine selection" (Ma 22); in fact, his authority over the group is already so well-rooted that his views about their survival is easily accepted, as we can gather from these lines "[t]o Bob, it all boiled down to his religious conviction that we were chosen. That's the story to which the group officially subscribed" (Ma 23).

Aside from his divine convictions about how Candace's baby would mean hope for their small community, Bob also gives two contradictory reasons for her imprisonment: on one hand, he suggests that it would be detrimental for her to come and go as she pleases by saying that "Candace, honestly, it's for your own good that we keep you in here. It's very dangerous out there" (Ma 107), however, on the other hand, he claims that Candace is also a threat to be dealt with by accusing her of being disobedient with the words "you've shown that you had no problem breaking the rules of the group" (Ma 108). Therefore, it is clear that Bob sees Candace both as an object to be protected from harm's way and also as a threat to be

defused for the well-being of the group, which is precisely how modern governments see their population during the Coronavirus crisis according to David Chandler. Chandler argues that people are seen both as individual threats to the health of the whole population – thanks to their potential to spread the virus – and also as subjects in need of protection against others and against themselves ("The Coronavirus" 28). Moreover, even though in a non-authoritative regime "the will of the individual cannot be sacrificed without consent" (Chandler "Biopoliticis 2.0" 2), under Bob's authoritarian rule, Candace's will and individuality is sacrificed for the sake of her biology, making her a part of Bob's biopolitics, as he becomes focused on the unborn baby her body is growing rather than her individual needs and rights. In this sense, as "liberal rights and freedoms [become] a threat to public security", "the shift to a new authoritarianism" (Chandler "The Coronavirus" 27-29) makes itself more obvious in the novel through Bob's abolishment of Candace's liberal rights and freedoms.

In order to gain a more profound understanding of Bob's regime, we can take a look at the general characteristics of authoritarian regimes, as James McCarthy lists some of the most commonly seen and used tactics of authoritarian leaders.

> They engage in direct and indirect assaults on the norms and institutions of democratic societies, including the rule of law, freedom of the press, and opponents' rights of speech and assembly—directly through the centralization and consolidation of power in the executive branch, efforts to test or even actively subvert resistant institutions, and punishment of political critics or opponents and indirectly through the contempt that they exhibit for norms, institutions, and people who oppose them. (McCarthy 303)

With these characteristics in mind, we can observe how Bob consciously attacks and abuses norms of democratic communities by not letting anyone else in the group have a say about his commands and by getting rid of or imprisoning his main ideological opponents who are Candace and Evan in the novel. He uses the trip Candace, Evan and Janelle took together – which ultimately caused Janelle's death – as an excuse to imprison Candace and marginalize Evan. He claims that they have broken the rules of their group by going on their own; however, it is interesting to note that both Evan and Candace have been the first ones to shy away from Bob and question his intentions; while Candace actively hides her pregnancy from him and avoids interacting with him, Evan is the first person to question the existence of the Facility that turned out to be a simple mall (Ma 70). To Bob, both acts are actions of disobedience and active resistance to his orders, which is why he makes sure that after Janelle's death, Evan is otherised and alienated to the point of committing suicide, whereas Candace's imprisonment and alienation is used as a means of silencing her voice and ensure that she has no connections to the outside world.

Overall, it can be said that Bob takes advantage of the unrest caused by the Shen Fever to establish his own authoritarian rule during which he not only creates his own religious discourse but also gets rid of his opponents through different means and tries to ensure that there are no other contesters to his leading position in the group. Including biopolitics in his rhetoric and taking control of people's liberal rights and freedoms through his – seemingly – unquestionable rule, slowly but surely, Bob builds himself an authoritarian regime in the midst of a global pandemic. While the similarities between the novel and real-life events are alarming to say the least, we can only hope that the current Coronavirus crisis

will not lead to the birth of a yet another authoritarian regime.

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Self-actualization in Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*

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Abstract

This paper on Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet *is based on Maslow's (1954) concept of self-actualization that states, "What a man can be, he must be." Self-actualization is the motivation, knowledge and feeling to prove a unique competence, creativity, desire for personal autonomy and ego gratification to become what one is capable of becoming. It is also the need to realize one's full potential as a human being while going through life. Only a few people possess the required self-esteem to reach the self-actualized state. However, Gibran was highly motivated to become a self-actualized individual, and he succeeded because he had the capability to realize what he aimed for. Confident, open-minded, empathic, and imbued with love for man, he undertook the onus of writing* The Prophet *with the hope of imparting valuable tips for a peaceful living, thus answering the call to be a parent to mankind and attain self-actualization.*
Keywords**:** *Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet, Self-actualization*

Introduction

The present study of Kahlil Gibran's (1881--1923) *The Prophet* is founded on Maslow's (1954) theory of self-actualization -- the awareness and the desire of a person to reveal exceptionable capability, originality, independence, self-esteem, and a sense of fulfilment to become what one is capable of becoming. Very rarely, individuals reach the self-actualized state because they lack the qualities required for the same. Having lived in the midst of personal, national and global turmoil, Gibran endured immense stress and strain. Nevertheless, he found refuge in the only antidote – love for man. He motivated himself to become a self-actualized individual -- a thought-process in sync with Maslow's concept of self-actualization.

Gibran was conscious that humanity needed a prophet; he had a call to be that prophet; it is his duty to take up the role of a prophet; and that he should qualify himself to be a prophet. Responding to that inner call to be a prophet, and instilled with the love for man, Gibran accepted the mission of writing *The Prophet* longing to offer treasured tips for a meaningful life, and thus qualified himself for the role of a self-actualized individual. "Though the venue of his (Gibran's) mission was Lebanon in the beginning, he embraced the whole world in concentric circles" (John, 2020, 107). The hypothesis of this paper is that Gibran possessed genuine self-esteem, competence, creativity, personal autonomy and the drive towards self-actualization which motivated him to take up the role of a prophet, as seen in *The Prophet*.

Literature Review

Self-actualization, according to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, is the highest level of psychological development wherein an individual's personal potential is fully realized after his basic bodily and ego needs are fulfilled. It is possible that even if an individual's needs are satisfied, he might experience a discontent unless he does what he is fitted for. For example, to be ultimately happy, an artist must paint, a poet must write. In other words, self-actualization is personal growth -- "the full realization of one's potential" and of one's "true self." Maslow (1943) defined 'self-actualization' as 'self-fulfilment' – the tendency for a person to realize his ability, that is, his longing to become more and more what he is competent of becoming (370-396). Maslow (1943) attributed the coinage of the term 'self-actualization' to the German psychiatrist, Goldstein, who used it to refer to the motive of realizing one's full potential.

As per Maslow (1943), self-actualized individuals have a mission to fulfil and they believe in personal autonomy; they are able to judge situations correctly on their own; they are confident of themselves not depending on others' approval; they have a sense of adventure and novelty; they are open-minded; they are true to themselves and accept others with their flaws; they appreciate life's basic goods; they have few friends but deep loving bonds with them; they value solitude and are comfortable being alone; they are socially compassionate; they have peak experiences frequently; and they have a sense of oneness with all humanity. According to Maslow (1968), 'self-actualization' is "a powerful, growth-oriented motive that sits atop a pyramid of needs." Rogers (1961) refers to "man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities" (350-351). In Rogers' theory of person-centred therapy, self-actualization is the on-going process of maintaining and enhancing the individual's self-concept to develop, change and grow.

The term 'self-actualization' is used in this paper to refer to Gibran's desire "to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1943, 370-396). For Maslow (1968), human beings are always in a state of striving. Very few people respond to the call to be a parent to mankind and reach self-actualization because not many possess the qualities for the same. Gibran possessed genuine self-esteem and desired to realize his full potential. This highest level of motivation for self-actualization was embedded in Gibran because he was aware that he is capable of achieving what he wanted to achieve.

The Preparation behind *The Prophet:* The Spadework for Self-actualization

As already mentioned, Gibran, at a very young age, believed that the humankind needed a 'prophet' and attempts compiling sections to rectify wrongs with "a passionate belief in the healing power of Universal Love and in the Unity of Being" (Bushrui & Haffar, 1995, xi-xii). It was this conviction that provided the momentum to design a series of counsels under the title, *The Prophet* (Waterfield, 1998, 337). As he (Gibran) set forth to right wrongs in his own country, he grew more confident in his "prophetic" role (John, 2007; John, 2020). Simultaneous with thought, he was also aware of the defects of his own personality (Bushrui and Jenkins, 1998, 200). At the age of sixteen, the embryo of *The Prophet* was conceived in his mind (Gibran and Gibran, 1998, 333-34). He had an Arabic original of the book but its publication was postponed several times because he could not complete it (Hilu, 1972, 323). About two decades before he published *The Prophet*, Josephine Peabody had written a

prophetic eleven-stanza poem on him, initially titled "His Boyhood" but later changed to "The Prophet." Gibran used to refer to his book as "The Counsels" but influenced perhaps by Peabody's tenderness and respect for him, finally decided on accepting her title. Gibran believed that if he needed to excel at something, he must strive for it. This inner desire found in self-actualizers urged him to venture out to compose the masterpiece. Thus, Gibran took further steps towards self-actualization.

The prophet in *The Prophet* is Gibran's voice given to Almustafa, the Prophet, who after having spent twelve years in Orphalese, waited for a ship to take him back to his birthplace. He had grown up in Orphalese and suffered pain and loneliness with the people there, and attained grace through them. The thought of the loved ones there, and equally loved ones at home, made him wonder how he could ever leave in peace and without sorrow (Gibran, 1923, 7-8). The people tell him that love knows its depth only at the time of separation; yet with great agony he decides to leave (Gibran, 1923, 9-13). As per the request of Almitra, a seeress, Almustafa divulges his knowledge in twenty-six counsels proving his love for mankind and meaningful parenting.

The Throes of Completion of *The Prophet*: The Stage Set for Self-actualization

Several factors contributed to the being and becoming of *The Prophet*. After writing it, he kept it aside. The incubation of the work is seen in the natural flow of dignified words and the perfection of the lines. The long gestation is also traced by Waterfield (1998) from Mary Haskell's Journal. Instead of writing with full vigour, compelling the words to issue forth, Gibran spent many years to spell out each phrase according to his inspiration (254). This being his "magnum opus" it was a preoccupation for a long period. Gibran had written to Haskell about it: "A voice is shaping itself in my soul and I am waiting for words. My one desire now is to find the right form, the right garment that would cling to the human ears" (Hilu, 1972, 264). Days later, he divulged even more information, "Yes, the big piece of English work I wrote you about has been brooding in me for 18 months or more . . . It is to have twenty-one parts; I have written sixteen of them" (Hilu, 1972, 303). For the first time Gibran referred to the title as "The Prophet" without giving any explanation for the change.

At this juncture, Mrs. Marie Tudor Garland, a widow from Boston invited Gibran to her Bay End Farm where her artist friends worked undisturbed in a cottage (Gibran and Gibran, 1998, 310). From Garland's Farm in April 1918, Gibran informed Haskell: "One large thought is filling my mind and my heart; and I want so much to give it form before you and I meet. It is to be in English -- and how can anything of mine be really English without your help?" (Gibran & Gibran, 1998, 314). He completed about two-thirds of the book but still he felt that he was not big enough to do it. Finally, he wrote: "In the past few months it has been growing and I began it" (Hilu, 1972, 303). During the twenty-four days at Garland's Farm, he almost finished the first draft of "The Counsels."

At one glance Almustafa is identified not just as the Prophet Mohammed but as Gibran himself, Orphalese as New York, Almitra as Mary Haskell, Almustafa's isle as Lebanon, and the twelve years in Orphalese, the twelve years Gibran spent in New York, before the publication of *The Prophet* (Bushrui & Jenkins, 1998, 224).

The Splendour of *The Prophet*: At the Summit of Self-actualization

The Prophet, a collection of twenty-six sections, emerging from the head, heart and

soul of Gibran, reaches the height of glory in these poetic counsels. This is to say that the inspiration behind this stunning success was not only physical and mental, but also emotional and spiritual. Gibran says he felt his whole self was being transferred into the composing of 'The Prophet.' "That is to be my life until it is done . . . it is my desire to live these ideals. It is not writing them that is my interest. Just writing them would seem to me false. I can only receive them by living them" (Jean and Kahlil 337). The desire to live a real life, instead of talking about it, was uppermost in Gibran's thoughts. Longing to integrate his life and work, and thus give a personal touch to the book is the self-actualization Gibran speaks of, and that the readers witness in Gibran.

The counsels in *The Prophet* reflect the process of self-actualization. Hawi (1972, 227) regards them hymns. The most acclaimed hymn is on "Love" for it exhorts people to follow love as it prunes, purifies and enables growth (Gibran, 1923, 16-17). Haskell was transfixed when Gibran read this passage to her saying, "Talking about them with you has made them clear to me. And one writes these things in order to find in them his own higher self. This poem . . . has made me BETTER" (Capital mine) (qtd. in Jean and Kahlil 316).

Only a self-actualized person can write the segment on "Marriage" -- the core of the celebrated statement on marriage (Gibran & Gibran, 1998, 310-11). Emphasizing the individuality of the married couple, Gibran says real happiness lies in mutual respect, maintaining its separateness (Gibran, 1923, 19-20). Peck (1990) maintains that it is the separateness of the partners that enriches the union of a married couple for true love respects the individual (180-81).

In "Children" Gibran requests parents to give children their love but not their thoughts because they have their own thoughts. (Gibran, 1923, 21-22). Peck states that Gibran's words on children are perhaps the finest words ever written about child-raising" (1990, 177). Modern psychoanalysis has proved that parents' extreme possessiveness and overprotection have made children lose their individuality. In June 1924, a woman in Michigan thanked Gibran "in the name of thousands of children" for having written *The Prophet* (5 June 1924 BP 426).

Gibran's philosophy of man and life is seen in "Giving" that says true giving is not parting with possessions but giving of the self (Gibran, 1923, 23). The stimulus for these lines comes from his personal experience of giving oneself wholeheartedly while writing *The Prophet*. He admits: "And now my whole being is going into 'The Prophet'" (Jean and Kahlil 337).

"Self-knowledge" says that the secrets of the days and the nights will be revealed in silence, not as 'the truth' but 'a truth' (Gibran, 1923, 63). Conscious of self-knowledge and his role as a prophet and a poet, he told Haskell that the difference between a prophet and a poet is that the prophet lives what he teaches, and the poet does not. The poet may write wonderfully of love, and yet not be loving (7 Oct 1922 BP 397). It is self-knowledge makes a prophet's truth different from a poet's truth.

"Good and Evil" reveals that evil is a transformed good, and that man is not evil when he is not good (Gibran, 1923, 72-74). Ghougassian asserts that Gibran discards the Evil principle, on the ground that life is Harmony, Beauty, Truth (Sherfan, 1971, 340). The awareness of good and evil marks the signal for Gibran's self-actualization.

"Teaching" expresses the thought that a wise teacher should lead the students not to his own wisdom but to the threshold of their own minds (Gibran, 1923, 64-65). Gibran has acknowledged to Haskell that his ambition in life is to teach because he is convinced that he is meant for that role. "I want to be a teacher (18 Dec 1920 BP 356).

"Time" contains the oft-quoted words, "Yesterday is But Today's Memory, and

Tomorrow Is Today's Dream" (Gibran, 1923, 70-71). Gibran's self-actualization is recognized when the President of Colorado College asked Gibran's permission to engrave these memorable words on the master bell of the chapel Naimy, 149).

"Work" affirms that work is love made visible (Gibran, 1923, 31-34). Gibran's desire for meticulous work and the subsequent self-actualization is seen in the acceptance of the masterpiece by the public. The congratulatory letters and the favourable reviews even in the Chicago Post triggered the sale. Copies of it were sold out in no time. The whole of *The Prophet* was read in St. Mark's church (26 Nov 1923 BP 417-19).

"Talking" indicates that too much talk is the result of lack of peace with one's thoughts, and in such talk, thinking is absent (Gibran, 1923, 68). As characteristic of self-actualized individuals, Gibran, loved solitude deeply but he also knew what to talk about, when, where, why, how and how much -- all at the right time: "I am trying my best not to be a talker about things . . . I want to live reality. . . I want some day simply to live what I would say, and talk to people (18 Dec 1920 BP 356).

"Houses" symbolizes places of protection in which heart-to-heart talks take place. If a house does not safeguard secrets, it does not guard anything (Gibran, 1923, 40). Naimy (1964) speaks of Gibran's humble surroundings in which he lived and interacted while notating the master work of art, a pointer to a self-actualized individual's concept of shelter within the four walls wherein building up of relationships can happen.

"Pleasure," a combination of giving and receiving, is explained with the example of a bee and a flower. If a bee derives pleasure in receiving honey from a flower, the flower also derives pleasure in giving its honey to the bee. In fact, the pleasure of giving and receiving is a requirement and a bliss for the bee and the flower (Gibran, 1923, 79-82). From a self-actualized viewpoint, pleasure is more in giving than in receiving.

The Prophet was the outcome of Gibran's desire to play the role of a prophet for the sake of humanity. He wanted to redeem Syria and then America, and subsequently, the whole world. Writing *The Prophet*, he began to realize he was himself becoming the prophet, Almustafa. Jean and Kahlil Gibran record that at a particular stage nothing concerned him except 'The Prophet.' He called it: "the first book in my career -- my first real book, my ripened fruit" (qtd. in Waterfield 337). Even Gibran admits to Haskell: "This is not I, but the Prophet" (30 Aug 1921 BP 366). Naimy (1964) confirms that Gibran never once "intended to parade before men in a prophet's mantle" (193). Hawi ascertains that although Gibran was, from the beginning, taking on the role of a prophet, he was not actually proclaiming it until 1914. *The Prophet* that has now been translated into more than hundred languages and remained one among the ten best-sellers for fifty continuous years, speaks of the courage, initiative and independence of thought and action to exercise a higher responsibility towards mankind and lead a life of service as a prophet to mankind.

The Success of *The Prophet*: Gibran's Acceptance as a Self-actualized Prophet

The launch of *The Prophet* was unexpectedly dramatic. Though the title was finalized by June 1919, and the book completed in 1921, it was preserved for four years before bringing it out. Gibran's dream came true when at the end of September, a small black book, neat but unassuming, and costing $2.25, made its appearance on the overcrowded New York book market (Naimy, 1964, 194). Thus, *The Prophet* reached the readers modestly; conquered the hearts of the people secretly; boosted up the sale of the book rapidly; and overwhelmed the author and all around him. Haskell notes that the book with its 20,000

words, philosophical in nature and mystical in tone, was not expected to attract so much attention of the public but it actually did (Bushrui & Jenkins, 1998, 224).

Several copies of *The Prophet* were sold, year after year, and by 1944, it was Knopf's second bestseller. After 1950s the book was like an underground bible on the college campuses, and in North America alone, it was sold at a phenomenal rate (Waterfield, 1998, 257). Thus, with this eponymous work, Gibran gained acceptance as a self-actualized parent to mankind.

Conclusion

This study, based on Maslow's (1954) theory of self-actualization, states that Gibran was highly motivated to become a self-actualized person. He believed that it is his responsibility to respond to the call to be a parent to mankind, and he was convinced that he could fulfil it. He was successful in his determination because he had the features that self-actualization demands: challenges to one's highest abilities, opportunities to demonstrate unique competence, chances to exhibit creativity, and a longing for personal autonomy. These attributes in Gibran signify his basic ego gratification of living up to one's highest image of oneself, and becoming all that one is capable of becoming. He wrote *The Prophet* in order to provide his readers with some parental tips for a peaceful living, thus satisfying his desire to be a self-actualized prophet.

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Forms of Emotions and Experiences of Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Sula*

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Abstract

Critical historical explorations of Afro-Americans lay bare the fact that mothering and mother's roles are sacred to their community. Toni Morrison's Sula *portrays unconventional and distinct relationship between mothers and daughters. Eva and Hannah, Hannah and Sula- the two mother-daughter pairs are central to the theme of the novel, displaying a wide range of emotional powers for a critical exploration, historicizing oppressions of black women at different levels. This Paper will focus on mother-daughter relationships in Sula, bringing forth the unconventional expressions of maternal love and its impact on shaping the daughter's self.*
Keywords*: Slavery; Mothering; Othermothering; Community mothering*

Slavery deprived black mothers of any assurance to raise and nurture their biological children but the tradition of revering motherhood as a sacred task ensured a safe motherhood by supporting practices of 'othermothering' and 'community mothering' in black community. Children were taken care of by biologically unrelated older women of the community or grandmothers and great grandmothers, when their mothers went to work in the fields and could not mother their own children due to hostile conditions. Mother-daughter roles and maternal functions extended beyond the biological bonds and blood relations. There were many mothers to a black girl child, and many daughters to a black mother, explicating the role of community in supporting

In *Sula* female characters are given a chance to shape and rearticulate their subjectivity on their own terms. Morrison has tried to challenge the idea that in African-American context, motherhood causes damage to a black woman's identity. Mothers and daughters in *Sula* redefine the conventional form of mother-daughter bond, deeply informing, affecting and shaping each other's subjectivities. It is often displayed in instances when daughters in Morrison's fiction measure their mothers as 'good mother' or 'bad mother' to relate with, and recognize their own self to solve intricacies of this relationship. Simple, yet portrayed through difficult and intriguing expressions, these depictions and their nuanced presentations cannot be solved by using pre- conceived stereotypical images and conventional understanding of mother- daughter relationship.

Mothers in *Sula* are neither marginalized nor romanticized. Eva Peace, the first mother- figure is introduced as an abandoned wife. Her husband BoyBoy leaves her, and she is left with "1.65$, five eggs, three beets and no idea of how and what to feel. The children needed her and she needed money to get on with her life". Overwhelmed with her feelings of helplessness and anxiety for her children's needs, she manages to "postpone her anger for two years until she has both time and energy for it. She was confused and desperately hungry" (32). She is helped by her community members during these days because she does not have enough means to provide sustenance to her family. "There were very few black families in

those ow hills then. The Suggs, who lived two hundred yards down the road brought her a warm bowl of peas, as soon as they found out, and a plate of cold bread. She thanked them and sked if they had a little milk for the older ones. In this way, things went on till next December" (*Sula* 32).

Left alone with her four children, Eva Peace takes the responsibility to take care of the physical, emotional and psychological well- being of her family because, "People were very willing to help, but Eva felt she would soon run her welcome out; winters were hard and her neighbors were not that much better off. She would lay in bed with the baby boy; the two girls wrapped in quilts on the floor, thinking" (*Sula* 32). Eva decides to act according to the situation. She leaves her three children with her neighbour, Mrs. Suggs who plays a little, yet significant role as per the African-American traditions of mothering. She reminds us of Baby Suggs in *Beloved*. A parallel can be drawn between the two characters in their role as 'othermother' to Sethe and Eva's children during their absence. Eva leaves with a promise to return on the next day but she returns after eighteen months. Mrs. Suggs helps by taking responsibility of Eva's children and proves a great help to her while she is away from them, exemplifying that for Morrison, motherhood has transgressed strict definitions of biological maternity.

Miriam Johnson in her article "Strong Mothers, Weak Wives" writes, "As per Matrifocality, mother have some degree of control over the kin unit's economic resources and is critically involved in kin- related decision making processes" (226). *Sula* brings out the potential of Eva-as distinct individual- proving how motherhood and individuality complement each other. Eva returns to her people with a missing leg after eighteen months and not much is known about the reason of this loss. "Eighteen months later she swept down from a wagon with two crutches, a new black pocketbook, and one leg. First she reclaimed her children, next she gave the surprised Mrs. Suggs a ten-dollar bill, later she started building a house on Carpenter's road, sixty feet from BoyBoy's one-room cabin which she rented out" (*Sula* 35). She is now the head of her family, an authoritative position as a mother, symbolizes and redefines maternal power of a black mother, and creates her own center in a world that marginalizes black motherhood.

Patricia Hill Collins's views render an understanding of such evolving and progressive mother figures- like Eva:

> African American mothers have long integrated their activities as economic providers into their mothering relationships. In contrast to the cult of true womanhood, in which work is defined as being in opposition to and incompatible with motherhood, work for Black women has been an important and valued dimension of Afrocentric definitions of Black motherhood. ("Motherhood" 48)

Eva's conditions evidence how she "could not afford the luxuries of motherhood as non-economically productive, female occupation" (49). Her role proves that in black people's culture and community, motherhood is emphasized over wifedom. Eva's missing leg remains a mystery through which Morrison has subverted the dominant socio-cultural and historical dimensions of motherhood as oppression for a black mother. Eva exploits her body positively as a response to her priorities and combats with adversities. She resists the definitive images constricting black mothers within cages of unproductivity like black soil; rather, she arranges for modes of sustenance and emerges as economically and psychologically productive woman. She exposes herself to the extremities of life and death situation and returns triumphant even when achieved that at the cost of self-mutilation. This new Eva is not a disabled woman but a mother who is much more able than other able bodied mothers whose

spirits are crushed beneath burdens of slavery. Her anger against the dictums of society is expressed in emotions of unsaid anger- taking form of resilience-articulated in her decision to sacrifice her leg. This boldness is one of those rare choices that a black mother retorts to, and redirects her powerlessness and redefine her individuality as a black woman and mother.

Although a mode of resistance, such violent choices and their experiences do not save them from their repurcussions and often complicate their image as mothers in the family and society. Already combating with life, Eva faces a new inquiry when frequently questioned on her maternal love, either by her daughter Hannah, or granddaughter Sula. Hannah confronts her mother, not only on her brother Plum's death, but also demands a clarification to Eva's dead expressions of her maternal love. She asks:

> Mamma did you ever love us?....So she all right. 'Cept Mamma. Mamma the only one ain't right. Cause she din't *love* us.
>
> "You settin' here with your healthy- ass self and ax me did I love you? Them big old eyes in your head would a been two holes of maggot if I hadn't."
>
> "I didn't mean that Mamma. I know you fed us and all. I was talkin' 'bout something else. Like. Like. Playin' with us. Did you ever, you know play with us?"
>
> "…I'm talkin' 'bout 18 and 95 when I set in that house five days with you and Pearl and Plum and three beets, you snake eyed ungrateful hussy…Don't that count? Ain't that love?" (*Sula* 68-9)

The above lines reveal the irony of a mother's life who displays her potential by her power to fulfill her children's responsibilities alone, yet is doubted by her own daughter who fails to read the unsaid miseries of her mother who had to make a choice between singing lullaby and/or hunting food. Does this justify Eva's position or is her relationship with Hannah still a locale of pain? This question can be answered through Dayle De Lancey argument that:

> Eva must withhold some love from her children because she has neither time nor the energy to give it. The rigors of improving her family existence have led Eva to adopt a severe manner that distances her children from her. The struggle for survival has given her love for her children a hard edge which has nearly destroyed her relationship with them. ("Motherlove" 17)

De Lancy's view elaborates upon Eva's possessive and domineering attitude that drives her to an edge where she can think about nothing, but only "survival", "existence" and "sacrifices" matter for her. Home, family, affection-all become mythic site of pain steering her expressions of maternal love to a territory unexplored-of an oppressive culture where desire to nurture and resist; expressions of violence and love; experiences of failure and victory as a mother; ferocious resistance and wordless articulations of unconventional maternal love; all coexist to redefine motherhood for black women. With such choices and conflicting terrains of maternal expressions, Eva carves her own space through her choices and, in the words of Trudier Harris, she " chooses over self- sacrifice, borders on immortality, and therefore becomes free" (*Fiction* 34).

Hannah has raised two specific questions to her mother Eva, "Did you ever love us? Did you ever play with us"? (*Sula* 69) Hannah's questions cannot be answered within the normative discourse of natural and traditional expressions of love and care. According to her, if her mother plays with her and/or spends time with her, she loves her. Her childhood is unaware of the racist practices and ideologies which affected her mother's ideologies of mothering. She could not comprehend the underlying cultural and historical dimensions behind such unconventional emotions of mother's love. Playing, caring, expressing love- they all are natural and traditional forms that articulate a mother's love for her children. But as De

Lancey argues, "Eva has no time to lavish traditional displays of affection upon her children ("Motherlove" 17). She was working at the expense of time that she could have spent with her children. But Hannah was unable to understand any countenance of love other than the one that normative and governing ideologies accepted and expressed. Eva's physically impaired state and her attention on her family's economic condition snips away those precious moments and energy that she could have earmarked for her kids. But she cannot be criticized merely on the basis of her insensitive and unnatural mothering. We feel pity for her state of poverty that impels her to sacrifice her body's part, yet degrades her to the level of an immoral and unnatural mother. Her love is interpreted as hard- edged and neither Hannah, nor anyone else is capable to see her when she is "sitting with three beets", busy making arrangements for her children's life. (*Sula* 37)

Such portrayals are very commonly found in Morrison's novels. In her novels, mother- daughter relationship appears with a lack of compassion and warmth or any other natural and accepted expressions of maternal love which are often found in white ideals of motherhood. But the question that whether this is love or not is put up by the writer herself in Eva's discourse, "Don't that count? Ain't that love"? (*Sula* 69) In "The One and Out of Sequence": An Interview with Toni Morrison", Morrison answers:

> [I] t's problematic playing with children when you don't know how to stay alive. The children are always hostile about it, but then they carry the same thing on. That kind of sentimental love for children is not possible except in a certain kind of loving society, where you can relish it. Children are easy marks in aggressively oppressive societies. (Koeneon 69-70)

Sula not only redefines mother-daughter love as a culturally determined experience, but also, through an inquiry into Hannah's question, reveals that the act of preservative love too justifies Eva's maternal love. However, Hannah's relations with her mother draw wedge between her mother and herself. She weighs her mother's unconditional love against her conditioned expressions of love and judges her as a "good mother" or "bad mother" as per her fragile notions of motherly love; ignorant of how racism and racist ideologies alter stereotyped expressions of maternal love for a black woman.

Eva's life-risking attempt to save Hannah from burning to death is another act which justifies her love and (dis)ability to prove that her weakness can also be transformed into her strength: "She rolled up to the window and it was then that she saw Hannah burning. The flames from the yard fire were licking her blue cotton dress, and make her dance. Eva knew there was time for nothing in this world other than the time it took to get there and cover her daughter's body with her own. She lifted her heavy frame up on her good leg, and with fists and arms smashed the windowpane. Using her stump as a support on the window sill, her good leg as a lever, she threw herself out of the window. Cut and bleeding, she clawed the air trying to aim her body toward the flaming, dancing figure. Stunned but still conscious, Eva dragged herself toward her firstborn, but Hannah, her senses lost went flying out of the yard gesturing and bobbing like a sprung-jack-in the box . . . ..Then somebody remembered to go and see Eva. They found her on her stomach by the forsythia bushes calling Hannah's name.. (*Sula* 76). The passage determines and confirms Eva's dauntless devotion to her children. Interesting to note how Eva accepts and emotionally reacts -by freezing or in frenzy- respectively to her son's and daughter's death. If Plum's death is silently accepted by Eva as a way to provide him solace, Hannah's death is marked by her agonizing cries on her failed attempts to save the total annihilation of her mothering. But ironic to see that though Eva

succeeds in all her attempts to secure her children's life, she fails to nurture in them a sense of life.

A critical commentary on mothers and daughters is not restricted to Eva-Hannah relation only, but also extends to Hannah and Sula. While the question of mother- love concerning the first generation is centered on Hannah's question, the second generation's pattern can be visualized in Sula's disappointment, which is similar to Hannah's observation on her mother's concern for her. She says: "...I love Sula, I just don't like her. That's the difference. Guess so. Likin' them is another thing. Sure, they different people you know" (*Sula* 57).

Hannah's mothering transforms Sula's personality and makes her an independent woman. She also proves herself as Eva's granddaughter in the incident where she exhibits her outstanding courage and defiance by cutting her finger to scare a group of boys in order to defend herself and her friend Nel. When Sula's personality is contrasted to her mother Hannah whose life revolves only around her relationships with other men and her own sexuality, we can see that "Hannah's candour helps [Sula] distinguish herself from her mother, giving her the right to live independently" (*Sula* 375). Her honest statement expresses her dislike for her daughter Sula and paradoxically benefits her in the outrageous development of her own self. Like her grandmother Eva, she has also learnt survival strategies and stands with her own distinct identity in her town. Her behaviour and distinct characteristics exhibit her masculine qualities and existentialist strategies. She proves her heroic qualities like her grandmother Eva. Keeping aside all these parameters of Hannah's mothering, the central question regarding the mother- daughter relationship persists and cannot be discounted.

Hannah's unmet expectations and her dislike for Sula also raise one more question- why will not a mother like her own daughter? Is there any bond that will complete and complement each of them, but which Hannah finds missing in Sula or, does Sula reflect Hannah's imperfect and incomplete mothering? Satisfactory answers to all these questions can be explored through a psychological perspective on mother- daughter relationship. But is it not true that we try to involve a mother in mother- blame for a daughter's psychological and emotional problems? Though there are no specific reasons and instances that are produced by the writer in this text to support this hostile parenting as the cause of Sula's unhealthy psychological development, still the readers and critics find apposite answers to this problem in Hannah's disconnections from her 'motherline' and her ancestral properties which are observed in Sula also. Eva's role as a bread- winner of her household robs her of that time which she could have spent with her children. Further, her mutilation fills her with a physical loss which cannever be compensated. Both these conditions nurture an environment that orphans her children and bereaves her from their sincere love, trust and gratitude. Eva's loss takes its hold on Hannah, reflected in her long and oft- quoted discourse on maternal love. Hannah's maternal failure confronts her in Sula's silent, yet unacceptable act of watching her mother Hannah burning to death. Hannah's death and Eva's dreadful but failed attempts to save her daughter stamp an end to Sula's connection with her "motherline". Eva's injuries towards the end of the novel become a metaphor for those unhealed wounds and unshared pain that she carries buried inside her to the grave in the end.

Sula's dismissal and her detachment from her 'motherline' boldly announce her disruption from any and every association to it. Neither the critics, nor does the text offers any clear explanations on this observation. Through our reading, we can infer that the main cause is Hannah's comment and simultaneously Sula's immaturity in misreading or misinterpreting

it. She says: ". . . love Sula, I just don't like her. That's the difference. Guess so. Likin' them is another thing. Sure, they different people you know". (*Sula* 57)

Hannah expresses her wish for a distinct identity of her daughter. Mother's love is unquestionable and undoubtedly selfless and unconditional. Though in some cases it may be influenced with the prevalent social discourses, they may not like their children's personalities. There may be something disliked by a mother-as by Hannah too- but as a child, Sula had to believe in her mother's love for her. Although Hannah's statement is an "honest expression", rather than pathologizing her statement she is criticized as a bad or an insensitive mother. Hannah's statement confirms a mother's rejection, which is very similar to Eva's explanations of her own insensitive and untraditional mothering to Hannah. Nevertheless, Sula responds to her mother's remark by detachment.

> This pronouncement sent [Sula] flying up stairs. In bewilderment, she stood at the window fingering the curtain edge, aware of a sting in her eye. Nel's call floated up and into the window, pulling her away from dark thoughts and back into the bright, hot daylight. (*Sula* 57)

After hearing Hannah's confession, Sula runs with Nel to the river. A discourse between the two friends marks their initiation into heterosexuality. According to Morrison, the event finally shapes the development of her selfhood:

> Hers was an experimental life- ever since her mother's remarks sent her flying up those stairs, ever since her one major feeling of responsibility had been exorcised on the bank of a river with a closed place in the middle. The first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on either. She had no center, no speck around which to grow. (*Sula* 118-119)

This 'centre' and 'speck' refers to the absence of any connection with her mother's memory that she can authentically claim as her own. She is unable to reclaim any spiritual or psychic reconnections with her lost and displaced maternal rearing. Non-existence of such reclamation is a major factor for Sula's disordered and disoriented individual identity. She fails to find any pillar to hold on, any memories to claim as her own and any face to remember when she feels psychologically or emotionally crippled. She has neither strong ancestral properties, nor any firm grounding which can teach her respect or love for her tradition.

Ideologies of black mothering are very distinct from white or Eurocentric ideologies of motherhood. Black mothers aim at rearing their sons and daughters as strong and resisting individuals who can resist the oppressive society. But as a mother, Sula does not meet Hannah' expectations and triggers her disappointment, actually rooted in her self-centeredness and love for sexuality. The true cause of such patterns of like and dislike between mother and daughter-Hannah and Sula- can be traced in Eva's love for maleness as, "it was man-love Eva bequeathed to her daughters" (41). Eva is a strong and dominant personality who is raised to the pedestal of a 'community mother' but Hannah never lived without men after her husband Rekus' death and "she rippled with sex" (42). On the contrary, after her husband BoyBoy leaves her alone, Eva starts hating all men. In the company of males, it is not her desire but a sense of triumph.

While Eva tested and argued with her men, leaving them feeling as though they had been in combat with a worthy, if amiable, foe, Hannah rubbed no edges, made no demands, made the man feel as though he were complete and wonderful just as he was- he didn't need fixing- and so he relaxed and swooned in the Hannah- light that shone on him simply because he was. (*Sula* 43)

The above comparison between the mother and the daughter is important because it

also draws our attention towards how a mother's negative influence may inform and shape a daughter's personality. Trudier Harris writes that, "in any world but the one Morrison has created, Hannah Peace would be considered a slut" and Morrison creates Hannah in the image of "acceptable embodiment of pleasure principle" (*Folklore* 75). As a result, Sula is unable to reclaim any spiritual or psychic reconnections to her lost and displaced maternal rearing. Non-existence of such reclamation is a major factor for Sula's disordered and disoriented individual identity. She fails to find any pillar to hold on, any memories to claim as her own and any face to remember when she feels psychologically or emotionally crippled. She has neither any strong ancestral properties, nor any firm grounding which can teach her respect or love for her tradition.

For Sula also, witnessing such actions does not give birth to any intimacy, but only fulfils her desires and pleasantly answers her curiosity. The tendency to satisfy primitive desires without cherishing any relation destroys her love for her grandmother Eva and becomes the major cause of Eva's tragic death. Sula's defiant attitude inculcates feelings of indifference and unconcern for her own people. Her independence turns her into a non-sensitive daughter, who is critical of her mother's care and love. Finally, this fragmentation builds a barrier between Sula, an independent woman, and Sula, the daughter.

Woven with threads of diverse relationships, *Sula's* story can be read as a fabric of dark and devouring shades of maternal bonds gravely affect daughter's personality and identity. Morrison brings the story of mother-daughter pairs and displays a wide range of emotions from violence, resistance, stern acceptance to rejection, dislike and unspeakable pain of dark maternal love. These forms of maternal emotions unshackle the stereotypical ideologies of mothering, ascribing a culture specific image to black mothering and maternal identities.

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Reading Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* as a Posthumanist Narrative

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Abstract

The posthuman discourse is an ongoing process of different standpoints and movements to redefine the human condition. As the anthropocene marks the extent of the impact of human activities on a planetary level, the posthuman focuses on decentering the human from the primary focus of the discourse. In tune with anti-humanism, posthumanism stresses the urgency for humans to become aware of their actions pertaining to an ecosystem which, when damaged, affects the human condition as well. In such a framework, the human is not approached as an autonomous agent, but is located within an extensive network of relations. In this expanded horizon, Cormac McCarthy's The Road *foregrounds that any types of essentialism, reductionism or intrinsic biases are limiting factors in approaching such multidimensional networks that exceed political, social and biological human realms. The paper discusses how* The Road *gestures towards future patterns of thought and 'modes of being' which go beyond humanism. As the nameless characters- the man and the boy, traverse a nameless road after the holocaust has reduced the city into cinders, it is clear that the aftermath of the apocalypse has marked a posthuman shift. The paper focuses how the entire novel is a dialogue between the fading humanistic world and a budding posthuman world.*
Keywords*: posthuman, anthropocene, apocalypse, modes of being*

Literature has the potential of evoking different emotions about the human condition in the readers. Likewise, survival of the species, especially survival of the humankind, plays an important role in thinking about the future of the world. Since we "love ourselves best of all" as David Ehrenfeld says, "a literary work's success in evoking a sense of extinction may shake us from our ungrounded belief that things will be all right in the future" (qtd. by Love 226).

In envisioning possible scenarios about the future of the earth, literature and literary imagination unquestionably play prominent roles. In such a context, posthumanism offers significant ways to rethink possible existential outcomes. Although posthumanism investigates the realms of science and technology, it does not recognize them as its main axis of reflection, nor does it limit itself to their technical endeavours, but it expands its reflection to the technologies of existence. Humans are perceived as material nodes of becoming; such becomings operate as technologies of existence. The way the humans inhabit this planet, what they eat, how they behave, what relations they entertain, creates the network of who and what they are. Within the current philosophical environment, posthumanism offers a unique balance between agency, memory and imagination, aiming to achieve harmonic legacies in evolving an ecology of interconnected existence. Timothy Morton's ecological vision of the world through the analogy of "the mesh" which "does away with the boundaries between living and non-living forms" also emphasizes the interconnectedness of things ("The Mesh"

22). In this sense, I situate my argument that it is imperative to consider how the human fits into the natural order, rather than drawing the human into a competition with the natural order. The disruption of the natural order and the lack of the 'animal gaze' in the text, does not venerate the human!

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* presents both a dystopian and a utopian view of the posthuman world by means of dialectic between the two nameless characters - the man and the boy. The man, a traditional humanist, is hopelessly tethered to the past and mourns the loss of meaning in the "ashen scabland" (15). The boy, "carrying the fire" offers meaning, hope and altruism in this new world (83). The man's pessimism stems from the nihilistic belief that God has abandoned the world; the boy holds out the hope of liberation and renewal of humanity stripped of the trappings of culture, civilization and memory. The lack of any divine figure implies that the postapocalyptic world is denied the kind of transformation offered in a biblical apocalypse. The boy, though ostensibly naïve, understands that the devastation is of human origin and is irreversible. He comes much closer in achieving intimacy with the much larger web of life in the new world that must rest on reciprocity, balance and responsibility. He is aware that old building blocks of meaning have dismantled and newer and non-linear meanings will have to evolve – in consonance with the vast interconnectedness of life. The utopian posthuman world, set apart from the known world, is yet to be conceived and achieved. While the man, a product of a world of natural order and meaning, is convinced that the utopia is already lost and a dystopia is in the making; the boy, who was born several days after the apocalypse, hopefully imagines a utopian posthuman world with alternative epistemologies.

In Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, humanism has become a denigrated idea. Although humanism is not necessarily an optimistic, progressive doctrine which can take on diverse forms, it does presume that humans have some unique significance and power to affect their environment. McCarthy, both directly (through explicit references) and indirectly (through allusive motifs) invokes the spectre of historical events, like the dawn of the nuclear age responsible for overturning the belief in human progress. In an interview with David Kushner, McCarthy declared that although he had not given the reason of the apocalypse in *The Road*, he believed that it would be the humankind who would bring the world to its end, considering the growing amount of violence and environmental crisis we came across everyday (7). It can be argued that his authorial choice to focus on the decimated world itself leaves the reason of apocalypse in the novel to the reader's imagination. The text does describe "a long shear of light and then a series of low concussions" which give rise to a "dull rose glow" (52) that lend credence to this idea.

In *The Road*, we face the potential collapse of humanity and the living world itself in an unrecognizable time and place. McCarthy's characters are an unnamed father and son duo, whose journey carves out the space of this novel. All people and creatures have been subjected to a holocaust, remains are far more common than living beings, and the detritus of an all-consuming fire seemingly contaminates the entirety of the earth. In this setting, a dust cloud surrounding the Northern Hemisphere has rendered the process of photosynthesis null, killing almost all edible plant life. As a direct result, almost all animal life is also destroyed and many humans, in their desperate struggle for life, have resorted to enslaving and cannibalizing one another. This validates Michel Foucault, who writes: "As the archeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And perhaps nearing its end" (qtd. Wolfe xii). The remnant of 'whatever reduced the landscape to a wasteland' permeates every inch of the novel's setting. Calling to mind the fallout of a nuclear explosion and the

cinders of bodies burnt in the Nazi death camps, this motif alludes to historical events that undermined the efficacy of humanism and progress by seemingly devaluing the dignity of human life, cheapening the power of human reason and dimming the prospects for the future. The father and son flee from sanctuary to sanctuary taking on the characteristics of concentration camp inmates themselves.

In *The Road*, the whole human world is reduced to ashes, seemingly beyond resurrection. When the father and son explore a town, they find no people. The only thing that moved in the streets was the blowing ash. Humanity has gone the way of the dinosaur and become a mere fossil, an assembly of rocks and relics. Nuclear war, genocide and disaster have reduced life to ash, depriving it of individuality and agency. The fact that the novel's narrator does not reveal any of the characters' names further draws attention towards the post-apocalyptic loss of human individuality, as names place us in a human lineage.

As McCarthy paints the green world gone grey, the adumbration of daylight alludes to the dimming of hope that follows humanism's death by nuclear fire. All paradigms collapse. The man cannot remember the names of objects; he forgets the appearance of all hues, save shades of grey and cannot recall what bygone foods looked and tasted like. Human inventions have become purposeless, valueless; expensive electronic equipment now unfunctional; electrical appliances and tools are scattered by the side of the road. The discarding of tools is particularly significant because for a long time the use of tools was regarded as what separates humanity from animals. By making tools and human creations redundant, the world of *The Road* seems to negate everything that once made humans unique. N. Katherine Hayles in her book *How We Became Posthuman* chronicles how the advent of information technology has radically shifted the way we define ourselves. As we see the body as the "original prosthesis" (3) and do not see embodiment as an essential part of being human, Hayles wants us to "put back into the picture the flesh that continues to be erased in contemporary discussions about cybernetic subjects" (5).

Again, the annihilation of plants and animals, but not humans, does not ennoble the humans. What is man if he cannot be described as something distinct from the animal? "Removing the animal from the world, from Derrida's perspective, might further McCarthy's posthuman thought experiment. For without the animal, man loses that linguistic dominion which the Biblical narrative gives him in the world … Derrida aptly explores how the practice of naming is an attempt to unduly control and limit the world" (Pless 63). *The Road* lacks animals, not necessarily because the human world has destroyed them, but to eliminate human identity from naming and relating to a living other. When the man tries to explain a distance to his son, he uses the expression "as the crow flies," the meaning of which is clearly lost on the son (156). "There's not any crows. Are there?" his son asks. "No. Just in books" (158).

The man often resorts to animal metaphors in his speech and thoughts. Like domesticated creatures bred to die, they seem incapable of changing their living conditions, able to do little more with their lives than kill time before slaughter. McCarthy uses an animal simile to illustrate the dreary toil of human existence in the post-apocalyptic world when, describing the grim progress of the pair upon the road, he writes: "They went on. Treading the dead world under like rats on a wheel" (273). The lines are a succinct reminder of the lost human status of the duo.

This fear, that in the absence of any meaning or destiny, the human life span will become a mere drudgery, as tedious and directionless as a rodent running in a wheel, runs throughout the text. In a constant state of anxiety, labouring to satisfy basic needs for food,

water and shelter and fleeing from perceived threats, the protagonists, in many ways, become like haunted animals. In the father's view, all other humans appear similarly inflected by animalistic behaviour. He detects reptilian calculations in the eyes of a road agent, the first human being other than the boy that he had spoken to in more than a year. The man regards his interlocutor as a beast, whose gaunt, conniving appearance gives the impression of an animal inside a skull, looking out the eye holes. Unable to reason in any manner other than reptilian and instinctual drive for self preservation, survivors of the catastrophe have lost something long thought to be distinctly human: the ability to respond ethically to others. Though the animalization of humans is a common trope in McCarthy's fiction, it is the fate of characters, who cross the fragile boundary separating the civilized from the uncivilized in *The Road* that takes on a particular urgency. When there is no boundary to delineate the civilized and the uncivilized, no humanistic philosophy to grant homo-sapiens a purpose, can anyone be fully human?

As *The Road* propels the reader along a horrifying journey to the nuclear winter of post-apocalyptic America, the readers breathlessly watch the father and son through the fiercest and bleakest of landscapes, battling inconceivable odds in their simple quest for survival. In as realistic a context as possible, McCarthy examines not only the physical but also the psychological consequences of cataclysm. His is a world where not only the planet collapses, but civilizations as well; speech, writing, oral tales, memories and dreams disintegrate and decay, as do almost all articulations and representations of language.

The lack of names, apostrophes and quotation marks in the text also provokes an eerie sense of displacement. The main protagonists are known only as "the man" and "the boy". The boy loses his toys and picture books early on in the novel and the father too can possess nothing extraneous. Even the old photograph of his dead wife is eventually left behind. The boy's flute – a wonderful trope for sound, beauty and language – also gets unremorsefully thrown away. As father and son abandon all but the most essential – food, water, clothing and gasoline, so does McCarthy do away with punctuation marks.

What is also rather interesting is McCarthy's use of the word "okay" in their dialogue, a word that falters in conveying complex meanings and emotions. The word occurs an impressive one hundred and eight times and ends a total of thirty two conversations and most of the times it is a pleading call for existential reassurance:

> Can we wait a while?
> Okay. But it's getting dark.
> I know.
> Okay…
> There's no one here…
> Okay.
> Are you still scared?
> Yes.
> We're okay.
> Okay. (204)

The two reaffirm their status as the good guys, the ones who do not eat people, thus maintaining their moral integrity and thereby their humanity:

> We wouldn't ever eat anybody would we?
> No. Of course not.
> No matter what.
> No. No matter what.

Because we're the good guys.
Yes.
Okay. (128-129)

Much as the father uses the fragments of old epoch to create 'new posthumanistic tools for survival,' new words and meanings are also carved out of the old. This is all in an ironic service of the portrayal of a world where old words die; but where words like "illucid" (116), "parsible" (88) and "salitter" (261) rise out of the ash, embodying the new lyricism that emerges from a fallen and forlorn world. Neologisms and kennings are dotted throughout the text to illustrate the vast, deafening, sullen chaos that subsumes the duo. Ironically, the 'new posthumanistic tools' are a refreshing of the flawed, self-reflexive, older humanist thought, for the father cannot escape his older understanding altogether. While the father is bound to think in 'taken-for-granted modes of human experience' and tries to pass on to his son a linguistic understanding of the world in his older categories, the son escapes such categories. This is best represented in the child's own relationship with language. In the beginning of the text, the boy is excited about communication; the father has been painstakingly teaching the alphabet to his son. The two share lessons, conversations, memories and dreams. However, as time progresses, we see the boy retreat from speech. Whereas previously the child clamoured for the father's tales that persistently and consistently reaffirmed their moral status as the good guys who don't cannibalize, he ultimately rejects his father's stories as untrue:

Do you want me to tell you a story?
No.
Why Not?
Those stories are not true.
They don't have to be true. They're stories.
Yes. But in the stories we are always helping people and we don't help people. (268)

It is apparent that their previous cheerful and comforting discourse has gradually fallen into a numbness of frozen silence. The boy retreats deeper into himself as he distances from stories. Concomitantly, anytime the duo discovers a book or a library, it is always within a context of destruction. The library, as it appears in its ruin, was essentially a space of expectation. Dying words become the un-mourned victims of the apocalypse. All books in this novel are swollen and shapeless, water-damaged and faded, found, glanced at, and without exception, tossed away. They are ignored and dismissed as useless artifacts from a bygone era. Words have faltered and language has failed in this posthumanist culture where the self-deceptive centrality of the human is laid bare with the collapse of human culture:

The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colours, the names of birds. Things to eat. Finally, the names of things once believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was already gone? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. (74-75)

Rune Grauland suggests that the narrative of the novel bears nothing similar to the classic American road-stories, claiming that although the man and the child are always on the move, "they are not going anywhere" since it makes no difference whether "one moves or stays put" due to the universal decimation of the world (67). There is neither a thrill of adventure, nor nostalgia for returning to home, for there is none; only a constant fear of survival. "But the roads are still there," the son observes to his father (43). "Yes. For a while," the father adds (43). "There's nothing to uproot them so they should be okay for a while" (43). The universe doesn't seem to care for the future of humankind:

> He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it. (138)

The Road offers a dialogue between the fading humanistic world and a budding posthuman world. The boy is a thought-experiment in what a posthuman could look like. The father, symbolic of the old humanistic order endeavours to 're-humanize' his son with his old stories: "They sat warm in their refuge while he told the boy stories. Old stories of courage and justice as he remembered them until the boy was asleep" (41). However, he realizes "that he could not enkindle in the heart of the child what was the ashes in his own" (154). He eventually forsakes such an effort because he realizes that, in imposing the past upon his child, he only condemns him to unfilled desire-turned-despair.

> Maybe he understood for the first time that to the boy he was himself an alien. A being from a planet that no longer existed. The tales of which were suspect. He could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than he. (153-154)

Shortly before the father dies, he observes his son in front of him on the road of time, both physically and metaphorically: "Looking back at him from some unimaginable future, glowing in the waste like a tabernacle" (273). For the father, death is a humanistic boundary, marking the end of a conscious existence; for the son, there is continuity in death, only a redistribution of our atoms into the rest of the world. He also asks his father about Mars and the potential for life on another planet: "There could be people alive someplace else (244). The boy's life is directed towards survival. In this becoming- posthuman world, the anguish of philosophizing, fretting, thinking, planning is replaced for the boy by an in-the-moment existence. "No list of things to be done. The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later" (54).

To see the world in a posthuman way means not only to undo the meaning making strategies of the past, but to know that life goes on outside of the meaning we can make. While the novel follows the man and boy on the road, it does not end there. The survivor that meets the boy upon his father's death explains that they must get off the road as they did not lead anywhere. Human life needs to become something other than a linear journey. Intimate existence in the world, off the road, is where survival is possible. In a powerful ending, McCarthy writes, not about man, boy, or future, but about trout in the past:

> Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains … On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (287)

While finitude and death are emphasized as key constituents of posthumanism, the posthuman condition also urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we actually are in the process of becoming. While old meanings turn to ash, new meanings have to be made, and a new kind of existence has to be imagined. Depending on how we choose, our posthuman age will either be one that represents the humanistic age in a more technologically updated manner; or one where a reciprocal, responsive and responsible interconnected relation is in progress between humans and the rest of the world; or a "prehuman world, where nature takes the ultimate precedence, portending as it was, so it shall be" (Jackson 76).

The Road adequately derails the long held perception of the human being as

occupying a natural and eternal place at the very centre of things. The very machinery that humanity distinguished itself from and the belief in a unique essence are all but blatantly questioned in this posthumanist work. In the humanist account, human beings are exceptional, autonomous and set above the world that lies at their feet. In contrast to this, McCarthy presents humanity without humanism; a species without purpose, dignity and destiny. He reflects on how the effects of and on the contemporary techno-culture and bio-technology force through a rethinking of the integrities and identities of the human. It is humanism, not the human in all its embodied and prosthetic complexity that is left behind in posthumanist thought.

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Socio-Economic Justice and Women's Movement: A Study of Arundhati Roy's Select Writings

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Abstract

This paper argues that women's movements for social, political and economic justice have been modern world's most important emancipatory projects that extended and deepened the horizons of ethical responsibility towards people of various identities, particularly women. Based on the universal ideas of justice, equality and human dignity, this movement questioned and critiqued the coercive and unequal configurations of power relations accruing in various cultural and social formations, especially those affecting women in particular and underprivileged groups in general. I maintain that women's movements did this not only by launching effective socio-political movements but also by examining and unearthing many stereotypical, patriarchal and racist assumptions underlying male dominated cultural traditions and knowledge forms. Women's movements and the philosophical thought developed by them sought to revise the hegemonic canons of knowledge and cultural forms in order to create a "room of their own," and to imagine and construct an alternative world and systems of knowledge that would take into consideration aspirations of various sections of the society for justice and equality. This has been argued by particularly looking at select writings of Arundhati Roy as an exemplar of feminist commitment to social, political, and environmental justice and equality.
Keywords*: Women's movement, Ethical responsibility, Power, Justice, Patriarchy.*

Throughout human history and across cultures disenfranchised socio-economic and political sections of societies have not only started a number of movements for justice but have also provided critiques of coercive and unjust relations of power. Those movements, based on egalitarian ideas, fought for inalienable rights of underprivileged groups, and succeeded in creating better societies than our ancestors lived in. Enslaved people of African descent and colonized societies started anti-slavery and anticolonial agitations in various parts of the world and ended the inhuman structures of slavery and colonialism which had provided grease to the machinery of world-wide colonial and imperial formations of exploitation. These revolutionary movements overthrew empires and brought political and cultural independence to the most of the world.

One such progressive movement that provided a deeply systematic and systemic critique of problematic power relations accruing between men and women and the world views on which such relations were based was transnational movement launched by women. This socio-political and intellectual movement envisioned an alternative world of justice and equality. Although this movement was not a homogeneous structure, but, and in spite of

different socio-cultural markers, the pivotal demands and aspirations were the same: realization and establishment of a world based on justice, equality and freedom. Women of all the nations, whether colonized or colonizer, black or white, slave or free, organized themselves to fight for their rights. They critiqued ideologies like patriarchy and racism that had been used to justify and naturalize their 'inferior' status in relation to men. In order to do so they drew on various local and global cultural, political and philosophical traditions not only to unearth prejudiced assumptions underlying those very traditions but also to construct the systems of knowledge that would take into consideration aspirations of various sections of the society for justice and equality.

Arundhati Roy is one of the leading literary voices in the global movement for environmental justice and women's rights. Her first novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) set the tone for Roy's subsequent activism and literary works in which her love for human and non-human world clearly emerges as a manifestation of her ethical responsibility and commitment to the underprivileged sexualities, castes and classes. Her works not only provide highly insightful critiques of unequal power relations occurring between different socio-economic groups at national level, but also expose the exploitative nature of capitalist relations that negatively shape the human and nonhuman world. Roy's Booker Prize win helped draw critical attention towards her writings and that has generated, from different theoretical and critical perspectives, a constant stream of scholarly criticism ever since. Among many other perspectives some look at "theoretical developments in postcolonial studies, Marxist criticism and the concept of the subaltern, feminism and gender studies, linguistics-based approaches and criticism that draws on ecology and environmentalism" (Tickell 67).

Roy's socio-political essays focus on a variety of issues faced by the global community. Casteism in India, oppression of religious minorities around the globe, gender discrimination, political dispossession, state and non-state terrorism, and the rise of neo-fascist politics find a critical treatment in her writings. Her nonfiction prose has focused in detail on the connections between the corporate globalization, imperialism, war on terror, and neo-liberal policies of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries that have an intensifying effect on the already prevalent oppressive gender, social, economic and political structures. Though Roy has expressed herself on a number of important issues, a common thread linking her fiction and nonfiction is the importance given to the subaltern groups. Therefore, representing and the marginalized voices of individuals and groups like women in her writings is one of her chief concerns.

The humanist and democratic ideal of "recentering of the individual" in the context of Arundhati Roy's writings is theorized by Emilienne Baneth-Nouailhetas in her essay, "Committed writing, Committed writer?" According to Baneth-Nouailhetas, Roy focuses on the ordinary and powerless sections of society like women and small things as against the bigness of history, and this lends a "remarkable ideological continuity" to her work (Baneth-Nouailhetas, 95). Roy's act of representation of the subaltern thus becomes an act of recuperating from oblivion those oppressed voices which are relegated to the margins of power centers. This in itself becomes an act of resistance initiated by the author to understand and unearth different factors and social relations which underlie the unequal relations between individuals, social classes and nations. Against the histories and actions of the states and the ruling elites Roy seeks to foreground the narratives of those underprivileged individuals and groups – like Ammu, the children, women, tribals, dalits and politically dominated religious minorities - whose voices usually find no space in the mainstream

discourse that sets societal priorities. Even when Roy writes about big issues like corporate globalization, neoimperialism, and terrorism, at the basic level her writings deal with the brutal inequalities faced by the ordinary person for whom "peace is a daily battle for food and shelter and dignity" (Roy, *The Checkbook*, 110). Locating her humanistic practice within the universalism of values of justice, equality, and freedom for all, she writes that "if it is justice we want, it must be justice and equality for all – not only for special interest groups with special interest prejudices. That is nonnegotiable" (Roy, *Field Notes*, 117).

In her critical analysis of the coercive and undemocratic practices of the modern neoliberal and capitalist state, Roy points out that the marginalized individuals and groups are virtually non-existent and invisible. They are non-citizens "who survive in the folds and wrinkles, the cracks and fissures of the official city" (Roy, *End of Imagination*, 182). According to her these underrepresented groups need to be represented and talked to, and for which, she argues, "a new kind of art" is needed, an "art which can make the impalpable palpable, the intangible tangible, the invisible visible, and the inevitable evitable" (Roy, Algebra, 215). In the context of Roy's feminist intellectual commitment to the representation of the marginalized individuals and social groups, an integral part of the women's movements for social and political justice, it is very important to understand that her representation of the marginalized is a move towards solidarity and empowerment of the peoples she represents. This act of representation on her part is never intended to take agency away from them. For her it is an act of speaking with and not speaking for or about someone. Though she argues that she does not "feel responsible for everybody" (38), she nonetheless affirms that "what is happening in the world lies, at the moment, just outside the realm of common human understanding. It is the writers, the poets, the artists, the singers, the filmmakers who can make the connections, who can find ways of bringing it into the realm of common understanding" (Roy, *Power Politics*, 32). In other words, it is the job of intellectually committed writers to communicate, based on the universal ideas of justice and equality, to the people what is happening in the world.

The second important strand of women's movement and thought that has at its core the ideals of justice and equality is the global environmental justice movement to which women writers and activist have contributed immensely. Worldly renowned feminist writers like Arundhati Roy have argued that the natural environment and its inhabitants, especially marginalized groups like women, endure capitalist and imperialist hegemonic encroachment on them under the facade of development and progress. Roy has made connections between socio-cultural and economic subtexts and environmental deterioration. In other words, she has argued that capitalist and neoliberal economic policies are closely related to the environmental destruction that is threatening the very survival of the humanity itself. Her critique of the dynamics of capitalism and neoliberal globalization in her writings springs from her fierce sense of justice and equality that has shaped her writings and activism as one of the leading voices of global women's movement.

Roy focusses on the invisible costs and consequences of global capitalism, and tallies its devastating impact on environment and on the world's, particularly India's, rural poor. According to her, the "structure of capitalism is flawed. The motor that powers it cannot but vastly increase the disparity between the poor and the rich globally and within countries as well" (qtd. Wheatley and Frieze, 162). Capitalism and the profit-driven growth associated with it are the main structural reasons behind the unprecedented environmental disintegration at the global level. Such critical attitude towards capitalist formations places her writings within the larger framework of postcolonial environmental feminism that crosses the local

borders of nation-state, gender, religious, and caste hierarchies to underscore the link between hegemonic power structures and the deterioration of environment. In her essay on Arundhati Roy's activism in environmental justice movements "How to Tell a Story to Change the World," Susan Comfort writes that mega-dam projects in India and nuclear bomb tests have come under Roy's critical lenses out of which an environmentalist critique emerges that operates on several levels. One underscores the "loss of a sustainable way of life and ecological poverty on local level, while another critiques the development state as an agent of capitalist expansion and bourgeois appropriation at the national level as well as in a neoliberal global context" (Susan Comfort, 129-130). Most significant aspect of Roy's work in this regard is "its postcolonial critique of environmental degradation and injustice; that is, one that looks at forces both outside and within India – at both global capitalism and configurations of state power, ideology, and capitalism within India" (118).

Arundhati Roy as an active member of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), an environmentalist organization headed by Medha Patkar, has highlighted profound disruptions, both environmental and cultural, that are caused by the big dam projects in India. For example, her thoroughly researched essay "The Greater Common Good" registers the limitations and shortcomings of big dam projects and highlights their negative impact on the lives and livelihood of Adivasi communities. Aghast at the destruction wrought on the land of indigenous people by the forces of profit-driven global capitalism, Roy levels an assault on what she ironically terms "the fruits of development". She unveils the subtle cruelties entailed in the "growth" oriented "development" which has continued the displacement and demise of millions of people (Roy 41). Her writings puncture the theory that large-scale dams are requisite for development, and according to her,

> Big Dams are to a Nation's "Development" what Nuclear Bombs are to its Military Arsenal. They're both weapons of mass destruction. They're both weapons Governments use to control their own people. Both Twentieth Century emblems that mark a point in time when human intelligence has outstripped its own instinct for survival. They're both malignant indications of civilization turning upon itself. (Roy, *The Cost*, 80-81)

Roy's environmentalist critique does not only limit itself to enumeration of the social, economic and environmental costs of growth-oriented projects and policies of the development state. She also points out the capitalist ideology and its social relations that underlie it. As Susan Comfort has pointed out, Roy "focuses in particular on the role of the state as a facilitator in this process" (Susan Comfort, 134). In this context Roy concurs with what Samir Amin, an expert on global capitalism and its ideology, has persuasively argued in his book *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization* (1997). According to him capitalism is often mistaken for development and that the two concepts are sometimes used interchangeably, when, in fact, capitalism is always guided by the search for profits, not by the goals of equality and justice. Roy makes the same argument when in *The Cost of Living* she states that dam building in the Narmada Valley (India) is not about development, but dispossession and repression:

> For twenty years in most areas there has been no sign of 'development'— no roads, no schools, no wells, no medical help. [. . .] The 'fruits of modern development,' when they finally came, brought only horror. Roads brought surveyors. Surveyors brought trucks. Trucks brought policemen. Policemen brought bullets and beatings and rape and arrest and in one case, murder. (Roy, *The Cost*, 41)

Throughout her writings Roy has suggested that the capitalist system of development results

in uneven development which imposes a callous structure of domination and exploitation on the world's poorest communities like indigenous people of India. In such conditions "India's poorest people subsidize the lifestyles of her richest" and "Indian villages live only to serve her cities" (24). This, according to her, is a form of internal conquest and colonialism similar to the one perpetrated by colonial Canada against its Native populations, and "two centuries on, we of the Real India have found less obvious ways of achieving similar ends" (20-21).

This paper has made a general case regarding the contribution made by women's movements to the cause of establishing a just and equal world. Women's movements and feminist thought has done this by critiquing the coercive power relations accruing in the cultural traditions and knowledge forms. Finally, a special focus, exemplified by the works of Arundhati Roy, has been given to the feminist commitment to the representation of the interests of underprivileged groups, and to the eco-consciousness by critiquing the capitalist models of development. It has been therefore argued that women's movement is an attempt to extend and deepen the ethical horizons of society so as to recognize and respect the difference of the other.

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The Politics of Success: Unravelling the Streaks of 'Cricket' in Aravind Adiga's *Selection Day*

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Abstract

Aravind Adiga's oeuvre is characterized by his satirical portrayal of the everyday realities which inform the lives of the denizens of modern Indian society. Pilloried for his depiction of India, in his own terms and the consequent trenchant criticism, Adiga's pen continues to spell the horrid realities which are otherwise encountered by everyone without realizing how these have been ingrained into our psyche. The present paper focuses on his novel, Selection Day (2016) to explore the crude reality that lies behind the glamorous game of cricket. The game that seems to have colonized the entire world is not devoid of the materialistic designs hanging like an Albatross around the necks of those who play, underplay and overplay. The paper also examines how the glitter, resulting out of the performance of players, tarnishes the psychological upbringing which stunts individual freedom and dreams.
Keywords: *individual freedom, malaise, human psyche, satire, game of cricket*

Aravind Adiga's entry into the world of fiction through journalism has provided him with the advantage of comprehending varied nuances of the ills that assail Indian society by unravelling the undeniable truths lying behind instant fame and flights to lustrous life. His third novel, *Selection Day* (2016), with the backdrop of cricket, negotiates with several issues ranging from ambition to obsession, resulting in unknown fears affecting the lives of two promising cricketers who suffer the ignominy and anguish of all sorts. It is not the first time that Adiga tends to explore the angst and actions of the marginalised individuals. The sufferings of individuals, in the quest of achieving new Indian dream, have been one of the most prominent aspects of Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) also. "In this respect, Balram is a subaltern figure of satirical exaggeration, vilifying the normative codes of morals and ethics through his metropolitan hypocrisy, nourished by the exuberance of the New India" (Detmers, 2011, 543). What distinguishes *Selection Day* from all other novels of Adiga is how the game of cricket, which "for most Indians is much more than a game" (Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 2004, 1450), plays a prominent role in regulating the psyche of people in general and the behaviour of players in particular. The setting of *Selection Day* happens to be in a space where everything is measured in terms of loss and gain; success and failure; fame and obscurity. Kamila Shamsie acknowledges Adiga's portrayal of an absolute materialist regime in these words: "At the end, there was only one question I wanted answered: does Manju love cricket? […] It is always there, drowning out everything, even love" (Shamsie 2016).

Adiga is conscious of the complexities of modern life manifest in the lust for power,

consumerist culture and materialistic pleasures. The desire for power includes human strivings for excelling in and competing with people ensconced in lofty positions with their elevated life styles and a comfy existence in society. The novel under discussion is an exegesis of power politics for success through the gentleman's game of cricket whose influence has percolated throughout the world. The novel in particular talks about cricket which camouflages the deeply rooted divisiveness and malaise dominating passion and dampening the spirit of cricket and denting the established traditional family values. Srinivasan Ramani, in his article "Cricket, Excesses and Market Mania," has depicted how cricket has a lot to play with the economy of India:

> Cricket in India has become the only sport that has captured widespread mass and media attention. The popularity of the sport has increased in leaps and bounds and the way the sport has been managed and administered has reflected the dominant mode of economic transactions in the country. (Ramani, 2008, 13)

In an interview at Edinburgh International Book Festival Aravinda Adiga rues that Cricket has become 'opium for the masses' of India and forced them away from their nature, and further avers that Indian people have two true religions namely "Bollywood and Cricket" (Adiga 2017, 2:33). People, involved in the game of cricket have become part of it rather than making the sport a part of their life. Likewise, Shashi Tharoor, in a slightly different tone and tenor, regards Cricket as one of the "two great British colonial legacies" and "an Indian game accidently discovered by the British (*An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* 2016, 287, 292), which has turned out to be the cause of stress against its athletic value that was to provide with entertainment and relaxation.

The story of *Selection Day* revolves around the family of Mohan Kumar, a chutney seller, who is determined to make both of his sons world class cricketers. In order to fulfil his ambition, Mohan Kumar leaves no stone unturned and makes all sorts of sacrifices. Every summer the family visits the shrine of 'thousand-year-old God of Cricket, Subramanya' (19) to remind the deity of the 'secret contract of making one 'the best batsman in the world, and the other the second best' (20). Mohan Kumar, obsessed with his passion for cricket explores all possibilities, such as: going to Mumbai, finding coaches to provide his sons with the opportunity to play with other boys, enabling them to pick up gentle manners and making them become 'Young Lions.'

The young cricketers' father though poor manages to take a loan of 50,000 rupees to provide his sons 'hygienic location' and secure their future. The father's craze for the admiration and infatuation with cricket is not devoid of material risk. Unaffected with barbs and derogatory remarks about his ambition, Mohan Kumar is confident that there cannot be any other way than to sign a contract with Anand Mehta who can claim 'one third of all future earnings' of 'Master Radha Krishna Kumar and Master Manjunath Kumar' in 'return for his commitment to sponsorship' (41). While the contract shows Mohan Kumar's helplessness, it is, of course, a sort of security- cover.

Mohan Kumar seems to have been dominated by the force of reversing the order of power. He wants to be rich and successful like the people who control the game of cricket by 'screwing' them. In this quest, he ironically screws the life of his sons. Mohan is in continuous search for a tool to revenge the people in power rather than working on the idea of abolishing the politics involved in controlling a game that plays a dominant role in controlling economy of a country.

Marx believed that the state, if it was taken over and controlled by the proletariat, would lose its political character: "When class domination ends, there will be no state in the

present political sense of the word" [...] Therefore, because political relations are derivative of class relations, once these are abolished, then, strictly speaking, political power no longer exists. (Newman, 2004, 141)

At this point, the question that needs to be asked is—Is Mohan looking to end the hierarchy and if he is interested in the idea of Marx to make 'political power' non-existent? Or does he just want to change his position upward with the poisonous ambition of elevating his social as well as financial status? The novel suggests that he is quite disinterested in the first question.

Mohan Kumar stands firm in his commitment and devises some rules of cricket to be followed by his sons. The degree to which Radha and Manju are regulated in the novel happens to be identical to the degree Émile Durkheim talks about the cause of fatalistic suicide,

> Fatalistic suicide is associated with a societal state in which there is such excessive regulation of need fulfilment that "futures [are] pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline" […] Discipline is oppressive both because the passions are insufficiently nourished and because the regulating authority is morally external to the individual. (Lopreato and Chafetz, 1979, 117)

A martinet to the core, Mohan Kumar considers indiscipline a violation of his contract with God. He is against his sons' shaving until 21 and driving a car without permission. His compendium of cricket rules prohibits his sons from having junk food and discussing their past. Citing examples of veterans, namely Sachin and Kambli, the proud father of two sons repeatedly warns them against 'premature shaving, pornography and car driving' (63), which according to him, can bolt their careers. Mohan Kumar is egged on by coach Sawant, Tommy Sir and Anand Mehta—the trio who believe to have the keys to the future cricketers of India. The intensity of regulation by Mohan Kumar on his sons offers a semblance to Michel Foucault's idea of power mechanism: "[Power] that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations." (Foucault,1976, 137) Hence, the father is not the only culprit in the degraded situation of the sons in *Selection Day*. After all, "[It] is society which, fashioning us in its image, fills us with religious, political and moral beliefs that control our actions." (Durkheim, 1951, 170)

Manju attracts the attention of the selectors after giving an exemplary performance even with his broken thumb. It so happens that his elder brother Radha loses his wicket and Manju bats extraordinarily though to the discomfort of others. Radha's proximity towards Sophia and his relationship with her make Mr. Mohan anxious. He always considers it as an impediment in fulfilling his mission. Mohan always remains vigilant and his spying upon Radha results into bitterness and fills the latter with utter disregard.

Materialism has gripped the psyche of Mohan Kumar so much that he is oblivious to the everyday basic needs of his sons. It is not out of context to quote Floyd who says, "Humans require sufficient caloric intake for nourishment and they experience hunger when that need is unsatisfied. Analogously, humans require sufficient levels of tactile affection, and experience what might be thought of as a hunger for affection when that need is unsatisfied." (Floyd, 2014, 387) In *Selection Day*, the materialistic hunger and external world of glory has colonised Mohan Kumar to an extent that he even refuses to acknowledge the 'tactile hunger' of his sons and forbids them to form any kind of human relationship which he believes may distract them from their goal. Mohan is incapable of understanding the fallible and fatal aspects of pseudo glory that are, most of the times, decided by madding crowd. The crowd

happens to be capable of cheering something up that bears no resemblance to what is meant to be celebrated in a rational human world. Tanjil Rashid pertinently refers to 'hypocrisies and contradictions' of the crowd as follows:

> *Amnesty* lays bare Australia's hypocrisies and contradictions. Immigration props up the economy yet is subject to the most draconian restrictions in the west – a region the country claims membership of against all geographic evidence. Society is so leerily insular that crowds cheer on sea patrols as they arrest incoming refugees (Rashid 2020).

Manjunath Kumar, according to the sponsors and selectors, possessed better skills and techniques than Radha and Javed. The mix of classical and contemporary footwork in his style predicted him to make a mark in the history of Bombay cricket. His outstanding record of 497 in an innings made him popular in cricket circles and was reported in the Mumbai Sun. Manju was amazed at the sudden announcement of his name recommended for scholarship through which he could visit England and learn subtle tricks of cricket to create sensation in India on his return. Founder Ali's announcement of Manju's name was a surprise to him and a shock to Radha and his admirers. This scholarship started creating gap between the two brothers and provided Javed with a chance to fish in troubled water. While the younger Kumar got elevated, the elder one faced hard times and not only did his batting average fall below 40 but he did also develop a 'weight transfer problem' which seemed to affect his cricketing career.

Both Mohan Kumar and Manju knew that the latter had stolen his elder brother's chance. But Manju though, pensive at times, gathered reasons in support of his success. Radha grew jealous and hurt himself as well as his brother at times. With praises all around, talks of his playing for IPL were also agog. His mentors loaded him with epithet: 'English gentleman.' Mehta, intoxicated with his investment, drove at midnight to see Manju and wanted him to talk British. The untimely visit and abnormal behaviour of Mehta amazed Manju and filled him with many unknown fears. Not only Manju but Radha too apprehended that they were not merely being paid by Mehta but had mortgaged their souls for the sake of cricket. The aforementioned realization represents a similarity to the situation of men in T.S. Eliot's “Hollow Men”. Nikhil Kumar in his article “A Tale of Cricket and Shattered Dreams” points out:

If one reads 'Hollow Men' after having completed *Selection Day*, it would seem the author had set out to represent the poem in the form of a novel. This T.S. Eliot poem established his reputation as a “poet of post-World War I disillusion and despair”, and has often been read as a representation of failed pursuits. (Kumar 2016)

The most devastating nature of power is not that it corrupts but that it also intoxicates and alienates. Manju's rise to eminence cost him dear as it distanced him from Radha and drove the latter to a sense of insecurity. Radha's performance dwindled and it filled him with anger and hatred for everyone. When his expectations in the practice match fell short of Mehta and others' hope, he also attacked the bowler Deennawaj Shah and decamped to his village for fear of being caught by the police. Manju started feeling himself responsible for everything and at times felt like bidding adieu to cricket. A feeling of disgust and malaise gripped him not only for his father but also for Anand Mehta and Narayanrao Sadashivrao Kulkarni. He also sympathized with his father whose hopes of seeing his sons shine now depended on him alone. The father had signed the Devil's contract and was bound to pay Anand Mehta's loan.

Through *Selection Day*, Adiga adumbrates the obsession cricket has created among

people especially in India. While the game gives rise to heavy commercialism and tends to involve parochialism at all levels, it affects the psyche of aspiring youngsters who in their penchant for worldwide attention sacrifice the simple joys of life. They destroy their formative years and become victims of fishing, fixing and finicking. Radha and Manju in *Selection Day* are the glaring examples of the offshoots of their father's obsession, which destabilizes the family, providing their mentors with the opportunity to make hay while the sun shines. Left with no personal choices, the brothers face all sorts of predicaments and feel trapped. Both Radha and Manju become the worst victims of power politics and their personal growth seems thwarted. Radha's failure though becomes Manju's success yet the latter fails to enjoy his success. Cricket seems to have affected the brothers' psyches to an extent that at times the guiles of the game disillusion them too. Tommy Sir, in particular seems perplexed and through him Adiga delineates:

> Because Tommy Sir knew many things, but he did not know how to lie—and especially did not know how to utter the one big lie required today of everyone involved in the game of cricket, a lie that is dragged out over ten excruciating hours every match day by our chipmunk TV commentators, but which really boils down to a single deceitful statement: 'Cricket in India still smells good.' (139)

Anand Mehta, though an Indian, pursues dreams of having everything foreign in his country. He is averse to Indian life style and believes 'everything's illegal in India.' An ardent lover of cricket, Mehta rues the fact that while five out of ten countries of the world play cricket well, India should play football. He floats on imagination of leading a 'good life—servants, a big flat, a wife, home-cooked food,' as well as 'Rotary clubs and Blood Banks on every street.' All of his high aspirations, to his great discomfort, fritter away in India. He finds his investment both in cricket and in power plant becoming a white elephant as they are not paying off well. To his utmost shock, he realizes: "If the stock market crashes,' Mehta said, summoning the waiter over, 'I make a lot of money. If the world ends,' he winked, ' … I make a killing.'" (257)

Mohan Kumar doesn't have any moral compunction and has signed a contract about both of his sons becoming the legal property of Shri Mehta, in return for his commitment to sponsorship. He is also of the view that even if his sons failed, yet they could make money in IPL by playing for Bangladesh.

Thus, through *Selection Day*, Adiga satirizes Indian masses in general and Mohan Kumar and his compatriots in particular being trapped in the politics of success where cricket becomes "vision of life" (Adiga 2017, 4:59). The blind imitation of cricket, the betting and whispering of lies, practice of embellished life style, the nexus between sponsors and selectors are devices to pollute human psyche. Ambition, material progress, instant fame and all other blandishments in life are but illusions which disturb human's peace of mind and give rise to numberless problems. Manju, the mind-reader, has finally been able to realize this fact, and his return to cricket can be seen as a return to the joy and satisfaction of his father, his brother and also to Tommy Sir and Anand Mehta— who could find their lives 'rounded with a sleep'. The realization that all instant praise and popularity finally comes to nothing, gains momentum once we want to decolonize ourselves from the malaise we carry within.

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Jaspreet Singh's *Helium*: A Study of anti-Sikh Violence and Trauma

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Abstract

The year 1984 was one of the darkest periods in the history of Independent India. The year witnessed an orgy of bloodshed not only once but twice, first, during Operation Blue Star at the holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple, Amritsar and second, during the anti-Sikh violence, generally termed as genocide, in the wake of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination. This violence left an indelible mark on the psyche of the Sikhs as well as many Hindus. Jaspreet Singh's Helium *(2013) is written in the backdrop of the communal violence of 1984, when thousands of Sikhs were massacred following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards. The paper attempts to bring to the fore the brutality, agony and trauma of the people associated with violence in one way or the other. The communal violence against the Sikhs has not only affected the victims but also the witnesses as well as the perpetrators. This paper seeks to critically analyse the different manifestations of violence and the resulting trauma affecting the various characters in Helium.*
Keywords: *Genocide, Communal violence, anti-Sikh violence, Trauma, Denial, Justice, Massacre, Rape*

The novel *Helium* (2013) by Jaspreet Singh deals with the extremely brutal acts of violence in November 1984 in the aftermath of the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination by her own Sikh bodyguards. Its repercussions were borne by the innocent Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere, who had nothing to do with the assassination. Thousands of Sikh families were ruined. Sikhs were mercilessly murdered, their women raped, some were even gang raped. Their houses were looted and set on fire in the Capital and in many other parts of the country. Some commentators have classified the 1984 riots as genocidal in nature as only the Sikh community was targeted. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood in *Fighting for Faith and Nation* (1996) writes:

Both the explicit targeting of *amritdhari* [initiated] Sikhs as traitors following Operation Blue Star and the clear earmarking of Sikh residences and businesses in the post assassination carnage speak to an incipient genocidal campaign (138).

From the available evidence and eye witness accounts, it is clear that only the Sikhs were at the receiving end. The text *Helium* shows how the Sikhs became the target right after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's death. There were mobs shouting: "*Khatam kar do sab sardaron ko. Khatam kar do saanp kay bacchon ko* . . . . 'This is the way to teach the Sikhs a lesson'" (31). There were "dozens of Sikh bodies on fire . . . . . Gurdwaras on fire, Guru Granth on fire" (32). In this connection, Pav Singh in his book *1984 India's Guilty Secret* (2017) writes: "The ensuing attacks on the Sikh community– a perennial minority outside of the state of Punjab –were shocking in both their ferocity and their coordinated nature" (17). The initial reaction after Mrs. Gandhi's death could be termed as spontaneous, however, "a definitive pattern began to emerge within twenty-four hours . . . by the next morning a new *modus operandi*

–initiated in what can possibly be described as state-sanctioned, large-scale organized terror unleashed on innocent citizens – had spread to all four corners of the capital and surrounding rural areas" (17). The way the Sikhs, their shops, houses, even Gurudwaras were attacked, ransacked and burnt to ashes proves that it was a well-planned and an organized pogrom. Thus, the Sikhs became the victims of the brutal violence unleashed against them.

Violence can manifest in many ways; it may be direct or indirect. Johan Galtung introduced the dynamics of direct and structural violence in his article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" (1969). Direct or personal violence, according to him, is "where there is an actor that commits the violence", and on the other hand, structural or indirect violence is "where there is no such actor" (170). In the former case, there is direct and intentional involvement of people to harm others and its effects on the victims are overtly visible whereas indirect violence such as structural violence remains either less visible or invisible. It is such a process in which some groups of people are slowly denied their basic needs (health, education, employment etc.) that gradually these inequalities and disparities start appearing to be normal and natural in a society. This abstract form of violence is so deeply rooted in our social, political and economic structures that most people tend to overlook and accept it as it does not appear to be violence at all. People remain unaware of being victims of such a system. Violence, in fact, in any form or due to any reason, affects the people – physically as well as psychologically.

The communal flare up of November 1984 is an apt example of direct violence. The Sikh community was intentionally and openly targeted immediately after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's death. Raj, the narrator of the text *Helium*, remembers and recalls the violence he had witnessed on the railway platform. His professor Mr. Singh was abused and burnt alive; just because he was a Sikh. He was attacked by an angry, drunk mob shouting, "*Khoon ka badla khoon say*. *Give us that traitor sardar*" (29). The students tried to save their beloved professor, however, a "thug" had gotten hold of him and threw some petrol and a rubber tyre around his neck (30). The man shouted, "Sardar, you sister-fucker, you killed our mother. Gadar, now we will kill you" (30). When Raj saw the policemen at the station, he urged them to help him save his professor. But he was shocked to see that the abettors of violence were none other than some political leaders, government officials and the police, a "Congress leader . . . guiding the mob like the conductor of a big orchestra" (31). At that moment, he wished his father were there to help him save the victims. However, he later on found out that many such mobs were deliberately incited to kill the Sikhs by some government officers, including his own father.

Mr. Singh had a huge portrait of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in his office and like many other Sikhs, he too respected her. His reaction: ". . . no one deserves to die like that . . . . To disagree with someone doesn't mean you assassinate them" shows that he abhorred violence and condemned her assassination (29). In fact, the professor had named his daughter Indira as he had been an admirer of the Prime Minister. This becomes ironic that despite having a strong admiration for Mrs. Gandhi, he was targeted and killed.

Raj could not believe his own senses because everything seemed unreal, the burning bodies of the Sikhs, the stench of burning wool, tyres and human flesh. To him "the black cloud of smoke" (32) that touched the sky was akin to the majestic interface of the Eiffel Tower. The tragic irony of Raj likening the billowing smoke to the Eiffel tower in Paris is quite poignant since the actual Eiffel Tower is symbolic of love, whereas, the "Eiffel Tower" of smoke in the text symbolizes hate, hate for fellow human beings (32). Even though Raj was not subjected to any physical violence personally, the mere sight of the brutality kept tormenting him for the rest of his life. After completing his graduation, he went abroad for higher studies and

returned after twenty-five years. The author employs the cinematic technique of analepsis when he shows Raj getting flashbacks of the horrific events of 1984 on his return to the country after such a long period. At the same railway station immediately after his return, he relived those tragic moments which had compelled him to go abroad. Earlier, he had smelled the burning human flesh, this time, he could smell only "human shit, peanuts and marigolds" but felt a "burning sensation" inside him (230). His memories, fluid and flowing, were like the flow of complex materials. Being a specialist in rheology, he could easily relate his memories to deformation and the flow of complex materials: "Water, for instance, does not have memory, but blood remembers its past", like volcanic lava and clay, memory carries "some deep traces of unresolved past" (7). The memories of all the bloodshed, burning of the bodies, and destruction that Raj had seen never faded, they rather kept haunting and compelling him to confront the truth from which he had run away initially.

On the day when the professor was burnt, Raj felt paralyzed to see him burning. Later on at one point he admitted that in his wildest thoughts, "I did wish my professor dead once or twice" (156). This is a clear admission of some kind of Oedipal situation into which Raj found himself entangled. His wish to see his professor dead perhaps did not let him do anything to save the father figure. He was guilty of having an affair with Nelly, his professor's wife which started as "pure lust", as Raj admitted that she was the "love of my life (whatever it meant)" (155). The immensity of the guilt that troubled him was perhaps responsible for his leaving India and never trying to contact Nelly for a very long time. He left the country and did not even come for the funeral of his mother. He left his wife in Ithaca and came to India after two and a half decades. He was troubled by the thoughts of Nelly and after meeting her, he was obsessed with the idea of gathering evidence of the horrendous events of 1984.

It is clear that Raj could not overcome the memories of the brutality he was a witness to and the fear that attended on these memories. Raj's remembrance of all this raises a pertinent question: If he, a mere witness could not forget all that he had seen, how could then the victims of that violence forget what they had gone through? Nelly, the professor's wife, after losing her husband and then children had shifted to Shimla and was working in the archives. She could never come out of her grief. Her working in the archives is symbolic of her desire to keep the records and memories of the violence alive with the hope of getting some justice someday. Nelly was actually making sincere efforts to bring the hidden truth to light. She had been a victim of both direct and structural violence. Her husband was brutally murdered, her daughter was mercilessly thrown in the fire in front of her eyes, her brother was killed by the mob, her son suddenly disappeared and her house was ransacked and burnt. When Nelly heard the news of Mrs. Gandhi's demise, she wept like many other people. According to her, the Sikhs were not given time to mourn the death of the Prime Minister, rather they were given so much pain and tragedy to mourn for the rest of their lives. She had lost all she had.

Structural violence, as Susan Opotow writes, is "gradual, imperceptible, and normalized as the way things are done; it determines whose voice is systematically heard or ignored, who gets particular resources, and who goes without" (102). In the absence of a definable perpetrator of violence it is not possible to fix the responsibility. That is why structural violence does not look overtly harmful. The unequal distribution of social and economic resources such as education, medical facilities, wealth etc. is the main cause of structural violence. Since economic, caste and class hierarchies are accepted in the name of distribution of labour, social Darwinism, and are even attributed to the Karmic burden in a country like ours, people tend to turn a blind eye to the injustices and inequalities resulting

from these hierarchies. Ideological mystification occludes the structural violence which is an integral part of an unjust society.

Nelly was a woman and in addition to that she belonged to the Sikh community, one of the minorities in India. After the death of her husband, she became a widow too. First as a female in a patriarchal society, then as a member of religious minority, and last, but very importantly she was rendered a widow after her husband's brutal, unnatural death. Structural violence against women and widows is known fact against women in a patriarchal system. She was an easy target of structural violence on many counts. She had lost everything and spent rest of her life to get justice but she died without getting it. She represents thousands of women who are "the ones most betrayed" (264). She believed that "The women die every day, they relive the trauma over and over. Just because they survived, outlasted, they feel the weight, the guilt, they bear the burden of shame, witness the shamelessness of the conductors of the pogrom" (264). Even long after the horrible events of 1984, she was tormented by those nightmarish memories almost every day. She had been a part of the system which never granted any security to the victims, rather she was constantly reminded of her being a victim as well as a survivor of the violence. When she agreed to record her statement, she was attacked with acid. The reaction of people, "*An irate lover threw acid on the beautiful 'Sikh librarian'*" is an evidence of her vulnerability as a member of the accursed society she belonged to (171). As a woman and as a widow she is looked down upon and denied subjecthood and agency. Nelly, too had to "endure the 'normal' invisible everyday violence" (142). Her attempts to keep alive the personal and collective memories of the anti-Sikh pogrom through archival retrieving of the past can be understood in terms of her struggle to intervene in the course of history; in other words, she seems to be aspiring for agency as a subject. However, her subject position first as a woman and then as a widow deny her agency.

The only hope that sustained Nelly was that of getting justice and that she believed would be possible by keeping the evidence alive and safe. While working in the archives, she was threatened and attacked several times as she bore a testimony to the violence in 1984, however, she managed to survive. The attacks on Nelly or on all those who had tried to preserve the evidence and had sought justice show how badly the government of the day wanted to destroy the traces of the violence it had inflicted on its own people. Nelly's commitment to quest for truth and preserving it proves her to be a figure of resistance. Even the archives were under the control of the influential people or the government itself. Many attempts were made by the government officials to destroy the evidence or threaten or bribe the witnesses. The National Archives in Delhi and the Police archives, as mentioned in the text, "had destroyed many files connected to the violence" (168). Suraj a gate keeper at the archives told Raj that the politicians "destroy what they don't want to remember" (116). Talking about the power and politics involved in the idea of archives and the act of archiving, Sarah Tyacke in "Archives in a Wider World: the Culture and Politics of Archives" (2001) writes that the state archives:

> Reflect the histories of those governments and countries and give evidence of how power has been used, sometimes by the absence of records owing to deliberate destruction in sensitive areas or the almost obsessive total recording of activities in others" (20).

Obviously the government would never want the common people to know the truth. The records were altered so that people would not be able to find out how the government agencies were used to perpetrate the atrocities. Thus, the archives itself became the target.

Nelly believed that "As long as you are alive your story is alive" (136). That is why, she had

desired to work independently to preserve the ghastly stories of barbarity against the Sikhs especially the Sikh women. Nelly wanted to locate the stories of the "dead" and of those who "saved lives" (137). These stories needed to be told. Because of some non-governmental organizations and the efforts made by people like Nelly, many testimonies remained safe. She had "digitized everything" (204). She worked tirelessly and saved all the documents before her retirement. But on the day of her retirement, she found herself to be in an untenable situation. She had to welcome the chief guest, who was one of the ministers "accused of conducting the November 1984 pogroms" (178). He was the same man "who destroyed the life she had assembled, everything that was meaningful to her" (118). It was like raking afresh the psychological wounds that she carried deep inside. And she could not do anything about it.

The text makes it amply clear that the then government did not do anything to assuage the hurt feelings of the Sikhs. Rather, it allowed "the state to collapse for over seventy-two hours" (218). The wounds that the Sikhs had received after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination were never allowed to heal. The public transport was used for "paid mobs". For identifying Sikh homes and businesses, the mobs were provided the "voters lists" along with "instructions-money-liquor-kerosene by senior leaders" belonging to the "Congress Party" (219). The police even "disarmed Sikh citizens" if they had any arms so that the paid mobs could "perform their operations seamlessly" (219). Even the weapons of Nelly's brother, who was a Wing Commander in the Indian Air Force and a recipient of Maha Vir Chakra, were taken away by the cops, who assured protection. When the police disappeared, the mob attacked him. They made him "sing the national anthem and bow before a calendar image of the goddess Durga and cut his hair and his beard and cut his penis and cut his testicles and doused kerosene on him and burned him" (132). This sure was not a fiction; such tactics were actually employed by the perpetrators of the pogrom. Manoj Mitta and H. S. Phoolka's *When a Tree Shook Delhi* (2007) provide details of the anti-Sikh violence based on the findings of Nanavati Commission. They call the act of disarming the Sikhs as "tactical" as Veer Singh Tyagi ordered the Sikhs, "to surrender their weapons, saying that the police were there anyway, to provide security". But in reality, "their intention was not to save the Sikhs from further attacks" rather "the opposite: to disarm the besieged community" (26). The Sikhs believed though reluctantly and soon, as the text *Helium* reveals, the capital of the country turned into "a killing field" (219).

The text also exposes the how justice was not only denied to the victims, the very perpetrators of violence were rewarded for their role in unleashing the violence: "Medals were awarded in '85 to police officers for meritorious, distinguished or gallantry work performed in 1984" (143). According to the eye witness accounts, H. K. L. Bhagat, Information and Broadcasting Minister, who had come to distribute blankets in the relief camp, was the same person who, "had ordered his men to kill thousands of Sikhs and rape their women" (134). He was later on rewarded by the new Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. He was actually responsible for instigating people to take revenge as the soundtrack of the telecast of the Prime Minister's death on National TV was not mournful, rather it was the "music of the mob" (127). No one stopped the crowd from chanting those inflammatory slogans, rather they were repeated several times. Thus the text exposes the double standards that govern juridical and penal systems in the country. It also lays bare how various institutions that should act as bulwark against injustice and state tyranny have been compromised by the ruling elite.

The violence in November 1984 undoubtedly destroyed thousands of lives, which

not only included victims but the perpetrators also. Raj had already been suffering from the traumatic experience of witnessing violence, and now he found himself to be an "unfortunate son of a mass murderer" (200). Raj's father was an IPS officer at the time of the carnage in 1984 and he was one amongst many others who led the marauding mobs to kill the Sikhs. As a child, Raj wanted to become like his father, "big and significant" (231). Raj's father had always been an ambitious person. At the very initial stage of his career, he got two quick promotions after marrying Raj's mother who at that time was pregnant with the child of the Chief of Police. Since abortion was not possible after five months of pregnancy, the Chief wanted Raj's father to marry her. He accepted the offer. He made of a lot of money during his posting at the border areas. He became an "overnight hero" (221) for allowing the force to behave "criminally, unconstitutionally" (221) in 1984. For Raj, his father betrayed, "the Constitution, his oath, his profession; more important, he betrayed me" (232-3). Raj felt betrayed by his own father. He held his father responsible for the trauma he had been going through since the death of his professor. Raj was already unable to forget his past and now he could never forget and forgive his father for his involvement in the anti-Sikh violence of 1984. Even Raj's mother had also protested against his father's complicity in facilitating the violence in her own way. She "denied" his father physically as well as emotionally (225). That incident created a huge hiatus between the husband and wife. This shocked Raj and he started hating his father. This drastic change in his relationship with his father reflects the horror with which the sensitive people like Raj responded to what their parents had done to other fellow beings.

Raj took his father to the streets of Delhi to show him the consequences of his deeds. Though he himself "didn't strike a match", did not kill anyone or raped any woman, however, he misused his position and "enabled" all that happened in 1984 (255). It would not be a lie to say that the "sons of the dead fathers have grown up to become drug addicts and gang members" (256-7). He made his father read articles and look at the pathetic pictures to awaken his conscience. Raj took his father to the slum, the resettlement colony where the "worst massacres took place" (255). The father started shaking and was angry but remained silent. He then tried to justify himself by saying, "I had no choice" (259). Though Raj found it a lame alibi yet Raj's father believed that he was justified in his own way. He should have saved the Sikhs or prevented the massacre of the Sikhs but he did not. He became a "monster" for his son, Raj (264).

This has parallels with Hannah Arendt citing the case of Adolf Eichmann to underscore the banality of evil in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1964). Adolf Eichmann was mainly involved in the mass deportation of Jews to the extermination camps in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe during World War II. Hannah Arendt attended Eichmann's trial where she observed that he was "terrifyingly normal" as he defended himself by suggesting that he had just performed his duty (276). She further writes about what Eichmann "fervently believed in was success, the chief standard of "good society"" (126). This makes the evil banal. No monsters are required to commit evil; anyone who is committed to his duty can be evil. In a way, Raj's father was also not a "monster" as he just performed his duty. This banality of evil really makes evil frighteningly all pervasive.

But Raj, in order to get rid of his own guilt, wanted to expose his father. He was so disturbed and frustrated that he told Nelly all about his father. He was so enraged that he wanted to kill his own father, "honour killing of sorts" (264). He went back to Ithaca after his recovery. He invited Nelly who by then had established an "oral history institute in Delhi" (270). She spent some days there. After Nelly's death, Raj came to know that Nelly always knew the truth about his father but never let him know that. Even during her interviews, she

never mentioned that she knew that his father was also involved. She might have wanted him to find the truth himself.

Thus, in conclusion, we can say that the text is a study of the heinous violent acts against the Sikhs in 1984 and how this catastrophe left many individuals traumatized for lifetime. Raj, who was deeply affected by the sight of violence, was forced to go into the roots of the truth and expose his father. Nelly made every possible effort to preserve the truth. The text also highlights the anguish of the Sikh community as they have been denied the justice even after more than two and a half decades. Many have died and many are still living in the hope of getting justice.

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Spatial Stories of the Everyday and the Ordinary in Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor*

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Abstract

This paper explores Anuja Chauhan's The Zoya Factor *through the lens of urban spatiality, and analyzes the protagonist, Zoya's connection with Delhi through the spaces of everyday living. A sense of lost grandeur and culture hangs heavy over Delhi narratives like Khushwant Singh's* Delhi: A Novel *and Anita Desai's* Clear Light of Day*, but Chauhan's novel set in post-liberalization Delhi does not carry the baggage of historicity or a mourning for the past. There is a shift to focus on mundane realities of urban life through narratives of common people. The novel does not aspire for a grand narrative of the country or the city, instead it focuses on a particular locality, Karol Bagh, and depicts the negotiations of the characters/social actors through its spaces. A new narrative of the city is unfolded at the intersection of the magical and the mundane in a language that carries generous sprinkling of Hinglish, advertising slogans and movie lyrics.*
Keywords*: Everyday spaces, Hinglish, Delhi, narratives of city, code mixing*

The narratives of urban young women in contemporary Indian novels often revolve around struggles of balancing careers, friendships, relationships and the pressure to "settle down" into marriage. Representing the aspirations of single women in their twenties in post liberalization India, these novels are often categorised and marketed as chick lit. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) is internationally the first novel to be characterised as chick lit and the genre has become a transnational phenomenon and its Indian avatars began to appear in early 2000s and are seen as emergence of a new feminine subjectivity. One may contest that chick lit can be viewed as subset of the romance genre, or that is a form that is constantly adapting and mutating, but what is common to these works is a single woman in the city caught in dichotomous pulls of modernity and tradition, arranged match versus love marriage, conflicts between the self and the family that create tension. While urban location is central to chick lit, the genre has not vigorously been examined from the perspective of the dynamism between the female protagonist and the city of her location. This paper explores Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* through the lens of urban spatiality, and analyzes Zoya's connection with Delhi through spaces of everyday living.

Advaita Kala's *Almost Single* (2007), Meenakshi Reddy Madhavan's *You Are Here* (2008) and Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008) are amongst the major Indian chick lit novels that have popularized the theme of "single girl in the city" staying away from family where the plots revolve around the professional and romantic travails of the protagonists. The focus of this paper is on the latter, *The Zoya Factor* where the protagonist lives in her hometown, Delhi with her family even as the action traverses across cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Dhaka, Sidney, Melbourne and Gold Coast. Zoya's work as an advertising executive takes her

to other cities and her love affair with the Indian cricket captain, Nikhil starts away from Delhi and has its share of misunderstandings, but it strengthens and consolidates in hometown while negotiating the everyday spaces of her locality.

Zoya Solanki's contested connection with her city space is conspicuous in the novel, and she identifies herself not just as a Delhi girl but specifically as belonging to a particular area, Karol Bagh. Zoya's colleague, Neelo remarks, "You can take a girl out of Karol Bagh but you can't take Karol Bagh out of the girl" (Chauhan 42), firmly linking her identity with that area. Karol Bagh was set up in 1937 as a Delhi Improvement Trust scheme "to accommodate the spill overs from what was regarded by the British administrators as the increasingly congested city" (Sengupta 107). Narayani Gupta in "Delhi's History as Reflected in its Toponymy" discusses that areas to west and north of Shahjahaanbad were laid as gardens, which survives in their names like Karol Bagh (102). Zoya's house, "Tera Numbar" as she calls it (interestingly the number is considered unlucky and the novel revolves around Zoya's luck factor), was built by her grandfather in the 1930s, and her grandmother says that Karol Bagh was a happening address back then but the Punjabis post-partition "ruined the neighbourhood" (Chauhan 18). People who have been living in Delhi before the partition often echo this sentiment, and feel that the refugee Punjabis changed the character of the city for the worse, but the younger generation, midnight's grandchildren, do not seem to carry these prejudices, Zoya in fact loves the "Punjabi-ness of Karol Bagh" (Chauhan18). Often criticized for being loud and brash, the Punjabis are powerful economically, the "drive, patience and competitive spirit" (Datta 298) of the Punjabi refugees have plenty of rags to riches stories; Zoya refers to the "enterprising Karol Bagh boy who lives down my road, *still*, even though he now owns houses all over Delhi, *including* one in Golf Links, the poshest quarter in the capital" (Chauhan 4).

If we place *Zoya Factor* in the literary history of Delhi novels, one can trace a perceptible change in the pattern of the protagonist's relationship with the city. In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, "a sense of lost grandeur hangs heavy, and can only be recalled through tales of a glorious past" (Sethi 164), and Khushwant Singh's magnum opus *Delhi: A Novel* is a history of Delhi spread over several centuries with multiple narrators. In contrast, Chauhan's novel set in post-liberalization Delhi does not carry the baggage of city's historicity or attempts to represent an all-encompassing view of the city or to showcase its monumental spaces, instead the plot revolves around spaces of everyday living. Marianne Hillion in "Re-imagining Delhi as an Ordinary City" maps the shifting contours of writings about Indian cities through writers like Aman Sethi, Sampurna Chattarji and Siddharth Chowdhury. She suggests that

> Far from casting the advent of "New India" and its shining cities as a sudden catastrophe, these writers undermine the very notion of event by focusing on daily life in Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai, critically writing globalization through its everyday local effects rather than through macro-narratives of tumultuous convulsions.
> (Hillion 2)

Hillion's argument about the "re-invention of Indian cities through an anti-spectacular prism" (2) is pertinent to Chauhan's writing where the mundane realities of urban life are explored through narratives of common people.

Chauhan's imaginative map is not geographically all encompassing, and does not unfold action at the landmarks of Delhi like India Gate, Connaught Place or Qutub Minar, and it moves beyond the discourse of loss of Old Delhi culture in Desai's *Clear Light of Day* and *In Custody*. As the city that has expanded and exploded exponentially, the focus shifts to regions

of Delhi, West versus South. Zoya is conscious that her Karol Bagh address of West Delhi "sounds uncool" (Chauhan 182) and her classy aunt, Anita Chachi wants the family to sell the kothi and move "South" which is associated with being posh, sophisticated and hip. Zoya on the other hand has a conflicted allegiance to Karol Bagh, she is both proud and embarrassed of it. She is aware that "when all the snooty ad-people think Karol Bagh, they imagine a pushy wannabe in a chamkeela salwar-kameez with everything matching-matching" (Chauhan 4), and yet loves the place "because Karol Bagh has Soul" (4) and a lively spirit.

The indomitable "soul" of Karol Bagh and people's association with it comes out during Zoya and Nikhil's visit to "the famous all night Monday cart-market. Pedestrians only" (Chauhan 186). While maps physically define and demarcate streets and places, it is the people walking through them that create personal, authentic stories. Michel de Certeau underlines the role of people's everyday practice in making space in the city that runs parallel to or in defiance to the spatial order of planners defined by maps and schemes. The space of the city is not inert, the social actors in the market, the buyers and sellers against the soundscape of music and bargaining turn it into "gay street carnival, with vendors selling every conceivable food and toys on carts lit with cheerily hissing hurricane lamps" (Chauhan 185). While Zoya has visited this place numerous times over the years and carries happy memories of it, Nikhil is caught in the wonder and excitement of the first visit. The place is unravelled at the intersection of the gaze of the local and the visitor, response to mapped and unmapped spaces, sale of familiar and strange goods, and negotiation of street markings and mental maps. Karol Bagh market is particularly well-known for wedding shopping, especially saris and jewellery but the place is transformed at night, it bears a carnivalesque air, with small scale sellers occupying spaces in front of the large showrooms.

The market description is a marked contrast to the malls and the boutiques. Nikhil remarks, "there's so much energy in the place" (Chauhan 187) and Zoya adds, "KB [Karol Bagh] Monday night market is my most favourite thing on the planet" (187). It is important to mark the disparity in spaces negotiated by Nikhil, just an hour ago he was judging the Miss India Final Contest at a five-star hotel. Walking through the market, Nikhil is surprised at the range of stuff being sold, from sponges to wooden spoon sets to children's shoes, and frocks to digital watches to mosquito nets. Ajay Gandhi in "The Hermeneutics of the Bazaar" uses the metaphor of *chakkar* to describe activities of the bazaar,

> its unceasing, entangled and multifaceted quality. Social life is experienced and expressed in an ever-evolving now whose prospective shape is not foreordained. To relate is to be enmeshed with others such that reflection and navigation will incorporate plural perspectives. (Gandhi 134)

The place's appeal lies in selling local specialities, both in goods and food as opposed to standard products of multinational companies. The couple enjoy their "date" not by having coffee at Starbucks or burger at McDonald's, but by relishing street food, hot tikkis where the seller offers complimentary tea while they wait for the order to arrive.

The variety of street food and the range of wares at the bazaar create a spectacle, a vivid theatre of diversity and energy of the streets. Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1964) argues strongly against moves to "unidiversify" the street, where new architectural forms remove social life from street, doing away with fluid use of urban space, making places dull and unsafe in the process. The ballet of streets for her lies in near-strangers negotiating space, of order beneath the apparent disorder and in little sidewalk contacts. Jacobs describes the complex order under the apparent disorder of city,

This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art,

> we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance — not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. (Jacobs 50)

Governmental "ordering" of space is generally a move towards controlling the heterogeneity of space. This often takes the form of removing vendors from streets either through cleaning missions or for security concerns. There are strong counter arguments in favour of fluid and heterogeneous use of space: it makes purchasing easier for customers, it is advantageous for small scale sellers, it lends unique characteristic to bazaars, and the eyes on street add to safety. The Karol Bagh night market is a fluid use of space, the space transforms when the big stores pull down their shutters. The small sellers subversively occupy the pavements in front of showrooms that they cannot afford to rent, and use these spaces to sell their quirky goods through unusual sales pitch.

Improvisation and heterogeneity are the keys to space usage in the novel, and these ideas are applied to food as well. While Nikhil and Zoya enjoy the tikkis in the bazaar, the effect of globalization is evident in "fusion foods" at Zoya's home, Rinku Chachi Indianises the pizzas, "loaded with tandoori chicken, achari paneer, Amul cheese and hara dhaniya and no Italian would ever recognize them, but they rocked" (Chauhan 93). Food items, especially Chinese and Italian dishes, have changed beyond recognition in Indian restaurants, they have been appropriated in the form of tadka noodles and paneer tikka pizza. The global food companies like McDonald's have tried to cater to local tastes by introducing items like *aloo tikki* burger.

The metaphor of intermixing is extended from food to language, while food experiments create hybrids of global and local tastes, the language enterprise involves code-mixing and switching between English and Hindi. Mixing was earlier a phenomenon of spoken language but post-liberalization there seems to be a new acceptance for code mixing and use of Hinglish, this is most apparent in news, advertising and Hindi film dialogues and songs. Jon Mee discusses masala mix of languages and cultures:

> From this point of view, English is implicated in the polyphony of Indian languages, its colonial authority relativised by entering into the complexity which it describes. Yet translations between the languages that participate in this polyphony are not likely to be an easy process of matching like to like. (Mee 330)

He further elaborates on playfulness of language in contemporary novels where there are no anxieties attached to usage of language, and the writers are secure enough to experiment with language. In *The Zoya Factor*, there is a liberal inclusion of Hindi idioms, colloquial terms and mispronunciation like "kali-peeli," "shapper-own" (chaperone), "sikorty" (security), "band-bajoed" and "patli galli-ing". The written text mimics the Hinglish of spoken language, and depicts the characters code switching with ease, it eases the rigid boundaries of language. Code switching and Hinglish are especially popular in advertising slogans and both the writer, Chauhan and the protagonist, Zoya share advertising background and express their deepest emotions through Hinglish ad slogans and movie lyrics. Zoya feels that fusion of language lends it a delectable flavour that is missing in monolingual communities, she wonders in Australia: "a First World country clock-full of unilingual white people…People who knew only one language…which was *weird*. Because, hello, what would they switch to if they started getting pally, or angry, or fell in love?" (Chauhan 207).

And when Zoya falls in love with the captain of the Indian cricket team, her struggle is not just choice of language. Rather than a happy coupling of cricket and love, it brings the

two into conflict. Cricket, still largely a masculine sport gets the largest sponsors, huge media attention and is associated with passions of the nation in India. Sanks, Zoya's boss, says that Zoya finds herself "caught between two Indias" (Chauhan 403). Charmine Carvalho discusses the tensions involved in the two Indias, the "duality is crystallised in the characters of Nikhil and Zoya, who are pitted against each other as belief in the self versus belief in luck, rationality versus emotions, head versus heart, Western versus Indian (Carvalho 11). Zoya is mythologized as a "lucky charm"; she was born at the exact time when India won the Cricket World Cup in 1983 (and narrowly missed being named Kapila Devi Solanki), and reminds one of Saleem Sinai's birth at stroke of midnight in Salman Rushdie's *The Midnight's Children*, connecting his life with the birth of the nation in the magic realistic narrative. However, the bestowing of human charm status onto Zoya robs her of free will and agency, from an independent career woman she is reduced to a talisman that needs to mark her presence at breakfast table with the Indian cricket team on the day of a match to ensure their win. The initial contract drawn up by the Board contains clauses that restrict her from sexual activity and getting married, it seeks a command over her body, and she is to defer completely to the cricket management. Zoya's brother Zoravar makes her realize the nefarious plan of the board to discredit Nikhil by hyping her up.

While the World Cup is still going on, Zoya renounces the role of lucky charm for Team India and returns to her job as an advertising executive, thereby asserting her identity as a career woman and not just being the ambassador of the cricket board. In the process she rejects deification that sought to maintain her "purity" by restricting her sexual activity and refuses to play a role in the grand narrative of the nation and its favourite sport. Zoya returns from place of action, passion and media publicity of cricket to Delhi- to her modest job, home and locality. Chauhan's writing does not aspire for a grand narrative of the country or the city, instead it creates a new narration of the city by focussing on a locality, and representing the social actors participating in the ordinary everyday planes of Karol Bagh, say a mini-Delhi. The energy and chaos of Karol Bagh is reflected in Zoya's house as well. The architecture of the house mirrors the unplanned and haphazard growth of the city. The division of the two-storeyed bungalow among the three brothers has resulted in eccentric corners, kitchen in a garage and a dining room that has to be entered through a washroom; and passions that mimic the crazy energies of the city. Zoya's personality is shaped by the "*dhik-chik, dhik-chik* music-loving soul" (Chauhan 4) of Karol Bagh, generous dose of melodramatic Hindi movies, and her "unladylike" (33) *pataka* obsession is at odds with behaviour expected from women.

The romantic encounters between Zoya and Nikhil in Delhi puncture the idea of stereotypical places of dating in post-liberalization Delhi such as café, theatre and shopping malls. Zoya, the Karol Bagh girl, shares her love for the place by taking Nikhil to the night bazaar, having street food, shelling peanuts in the park, sharing intimate moments under the madhumalati, having Boost milk in the house garden. The ordinary creates play of meanings and unexpected delights in the encounters between Nikhil and Zoya. Carvalho credits Chauhan with crafting an Indian aesthetic "through a distinctive writing style that mimics everyday speech, pays keen attention to the absurdities of quotidian life, and draws on the magical realism tradition" (Carvalho 3). The quotidian events, the chaotic sprawl of the house, the generous sprinkling of Hinglish and advertising slogans, the walk through the bazaar and Zoya's bursting of crackers are the ways of the ordinary world; but they also brim with possibilities where the mundane reaches up to be enchanted, and at these intersections the protagonist negotiates her identity with the city.

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Subversion of Stereotypical and Supremacist Structures in Gurdial Singh's *Parsa*

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Abstract

Subversion of stereotypical and supremacist structures is the hallmark of the fiction of Gurdial Singh. Be it Nandi, Thola and Bhani in The Last Flicker*, Bishna and Daya Kaur in* The Survivors*, Moddan in* Night of the Half Moon*, all these minor as well as major characters resist the repressive structures that tend to efface their existence as free human beings. Parsa and Basanta of Gurdial Singh novel,* Parsa *bears no exception. The present paper seeks to present a subversive outlook as reflected in Gurdial Singh's novel* Parsa*. Different characters of the novel exercise agency of resistance to subvert various repressive structures. In the light of the above-sketched scenario, the present paper attempts to delineate the definitional contour of the key terms used in this paper. Thereafter, it sketches out fictional tapestry of the novel Parsa and locates the fiction of Gurdial Singh within Punjabi Literature. Subsequently, it aims to analyze the rationale and repercussions of subversion of stereotypical and supremacist structures in Gurdial Singh's* Parsa*. Ultimately, it aims to sum up the discussion.*

Keywords*: agency, class, resistance, structure, subaltern, subversion*

Introduction

Subversion is one of the most prominent attributes of a postcolonial novel. Being a postcolonial novelist, Gurdial Singh, in most of his novels, offers a postcolonial critique of dominance of structures of power, hierarchy and authority to the detriment of the subaltern and a consequent subversive bearing of his subaltern characters towards biasing stereotypical and supremacist structures.

The postcolonial fiction of Gurdial Singh bears testimony to the fact that social, cultural, economic and political structures, borne out of orientalist binarism, have been tilted in the favour of elitist strata of the Punjab's rural and semi-urban society. These structures are the breeding ground for discrimination, abuse, misery and torture of the low class/caste subalterns. Under the sway of these structures emerge certain audacious individuals from amongst the submissive subalterns who seek to subvert these structures and pave way for their

autonomy. Almost all his (Gurdial Singh's) fictional characters, without an exception, are fighters, in true-blue Punjabi style, and they simply refuse to be cowed down by the forces inimical to them (Nayar 209).

Keeping pace with the tradition of creating audacious character in his previous novels, Gurdial Singh's *magnum opus Parsa* which was penned down in 1999 and later translated into English by Rana Nayar in 2000, introduced intrepid individuals, Parsa and Basanta, who dared to subvert stereotypical and repressive structures by blatantly defying their inherent prejudicing ideologies so as to transform the biasing social order. This is by dint of this undaunted stance, the novel *Parsa* seeks to "create its own logic of emancipation or liberation" (Nayar 241).

Definitional Contours of Key Terms

Derived from the Latin word *subvertere*, subversion is often defined as a process of contradiction or reversal of biasing ideologies, values and norms embedded in the structures of power, hierarchy, and authority so as to bring about social parity. Deep rooted in the orientalist discourse of Edward Said, orientalist binarism is used as an umbrella term that comprehends, in its fold, all biasing binaries, i.e., pairs of opposites. Such binaries entail violent social, economic and political hierarchies in which one term of the opposition is always dominant and the other always subservient. Binary oppositions establish a relation of dominance. To exemplify a biased distinction between centre/margin; colonizer/colonized; upper class/lower class, upper caste/lower caste; powerful/powerless represents the violent social, economic and political hierarchies. (Singh 56) Similarly, the word agency is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices (Barker 448).

Editors Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash in the book *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia* define resistance "as those behaviours and cultural practices by subordinate groups that contest hegemonic social formations, that threaten to unravel the strategies of domination ... "(3). Likewise, structure is the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available (Barker 2005).

Fictional Tapestry of the Novel *Parsa*

Parsa, the protagonist of the novel, is a very brave and physically strong man like his father Sarupa. His wife Biro dies due to some illness, leaving behind three sons Jetha, Pohla and Basanta to whom Parsa rears in keeping with the wish of his wife. Two of Parsa's sons are engrossed in studies. However, Basanta, his youngest son, evinces no interest in school. Parsa does not force him to study and permits him to do farming with him in their fields.

Parsa's elder son Jetha is shown to have settled in England and got married there. He sends some gifts for Parsa to which he does not accept. Pohla becomes a *chota thanedaar* in Punjab Police and marries his senior DSP's daughter. He often comes to meet his father but he (Parsa) does not like his newly acquired urban decorum. He has by now decided to break off with both of his elder sons. Meanwhile, Basanta is shown to meet Naxalite Movement activists and get fascinated by their ideas of economic parity.

Parsa goes to Haridwar leaving behind the responsibility of the fields to his son Basanta and his farm-hand Tindi. In Parsa's absence, Naxalite movement activists often start coming to meet Basanta in his fields and make him the member of their party. In Haridwar,

Parsa meets a widow Mukhtiar Kaur on whose request he develops physical relations with her to give her a child through *nirvana*.

When Parsa returns home, Tindi tells him about the death of Meena and the arrest of Basanta by the police. Parsa remains apathetic and starts living the routine life of a farmer. Mukhtiar Kaur one day sends Parsa a message to come to her village to own her property. At her house, Parsa identifies her maid Savitri, to whom he was once to be engaged. Parsa returns home and after a few days he learns that Basanta has been killed in an encounter with the police. Parsa remains indifferent and does not discard his normal behaviour over the death of his dearest son.

Parsa mends his old house in the village and shifts there with his cow and Tindi. After some time, Sant Narang Das calls Parsa to Haridwar and reveals him that Mukhtiar Kaur has died while giving birth to his male child. Parsa apathetically accepts his son and sign a paper to legalize with Mukhtiar Kaur according to the religious customs. Narang Das asks Savitri to go along with Parsa because there is no other member in Parsa's house to look after the child.

Locating the Fiction of Gurdial Singh within Punjabi Literature

Until the times of Gurdial Singh, two diametrically opposed ideologies viz., a brand of naïve romanticism and an indigenous form of realism had continued to exert pressures and counter-pressures upon the content and/or form of the Punjabi novel (Nayar 213). However, Gurdial Singh radicalised the Punjabi novel or re-inscribed its ideological and/or aesthetic space by infusing into it a new consciousness about the underprivileged and the oppressed (Nayar 214). Therefore, the fiction of Gurdial Singh began to "probe the class and caste structures in Punjab's rural and semi-urban society" (Dutt 2012).

Gurdial Singh "paved the way for the sub-genre of Dalit Fiction and other subaltern writing in Punjabi" (Hindustan Times 2016). He changed the very tenor and substance of its discourse, more than 50 years ago, with the publication of his path-breaking novel *Marhi Da Deeva*" (Nayar 2016). His novels, *Marhi Da Diva, Unhoye, Rete Di Ik Muth, Addh Chanani Raat, Annhe Ghode Da Daan and Parsa,* rendered into English as *The Last Flicker, The Survivors, A Handful of Sand, Night of the Half Moon, Alms in the Name of a Blind Horse and Parsa, c*ontributed substantially to the growth of postcolonial novel in Punjab.

The fiction of Gurdial Singh reflects the true picture of the society. In his interview given to Rana Nayar, the novelist said, "I must portray what I either see or experience for myself. I would not like to give an unfaithful picture of our society" (Singh 2000). He added that there is "the tradition of protest and dissent in Punjabi literature" (Singh 2000) which finds echo in the fiction of Gurdial Singh in the form of resistance and subversion.

Rationale and Repercussions of Subversion of Stereotypical Structures by Various Characters

Being a social realist, Gurdial Singh detects, in rural as well as urban Punjabi society, a prevalence of stereotypical funeral rites and rituals at the time of death of a person, such as, not getting the food cooked in one's own house, picking out bones from her burnt-out body; pouring *gangajal* into the mouth of the deceased, and setting the dead body down on the floor, breaking into a loud lament, breaking an earthen pitcher as a part of a funeral rite, funeral ritual of putting the bones aside, and not cooking food at the house where death has occurred. Thus, he, through his daring characters, such as, Parsa, Basanta and Mukhtiar Kaur, not only

exposes but also subverts these cultural practices strengthening the repressive structures in his novel *Parsa*.

Similarly, as "an activist and a catalytic agent of change" (Singh 2000), he also lays bare and lashes out at various caste/ class-based cultural practices, namely, not getting food to be cooked by the low-caste, not living with an outcaste, loving and caring for them, not eating the food cooked by low caste giving nominal rights to women and oppression of the powerless by the powerful through the medium of his novel *Parsa*.

In-depth analysis of the novel *Parsa* brings to light a tussle of various characters to protect a sense of agency of resistance so as to subvert oppressing structures. Their agentic assertiveness is operationalized with their jerking off the casteist juggernaut, junking vacuous *brahminical* rituals and jettisoning the rotten socio-ethical gospels stemmed out of the prevailing repressive and prejudicing socio-cultural structures.

Not only the male characters but also the female characters – both major and minor – audaciously assert their agency of resistance and subvert biasing and repressive structures. Sarika Goyal encapsulates the nature of subversive demeanor of female characters stating that "His (Gurdial Singh) female characters when love, break the social shackles and when they hate, reduce everything to ashes" (Goyal 6-7).

Subversion of Stereotypical Structures by the Protagonist Parsa

Throughout his life, Parsa defies all those stereotypical socio-cultural structures which he finds worthless, repressive and unjust. And nobody has the audacity to halt him. He flagrantly flouts the dominant socio-cultural ideology orchestrated by these structures. No social force can bind him to a biasing structure-ordained behaviour. His assertive free-mindedness deviates him from behaving according to the specific social customs. He rebels against them in every situation.

Parsa's vehement assertion of agency of resistance through subversion of socio-cultural structures finds an early echo in his blatant denial to perform stereotypical funeral rites and rituals at the time of death of his wife Beero, his son Basanta, his friend Pala and father of his farm-hand Tindi. For instance, he does not let anyone weep; he gets the food cooked in his own house. He does not even pick out bones from her burnt-out body; he does not deem any socio-religious ritual necessary for her salvation. He does not pour *gangajal* into the mouth of his dying wife and not even set her down on the floor after death.

The following dialogue between Parsa and *Taayi* Boby vindicates Parsa's subversive standpoint in which he is shown to shun funeral stereotypes blatantly:

> Parsa was about to offer fodder to the cattle when Boby came rushing in. The moment she entered, beating her thighs, she broke into a loud lament.
> 'You have left us and gone, O daughter!
> What time have you chosen to leave…
> O my queen of a daughter!'
> 'Taayi!' Parsa virtually chided her in a loud gruff voice, 'Just drop this. I won't allow any such nonsense. Do you understand?'
> ….
> 'Weh Parsia, my son, why did you do this? Such a blunder! How will she attain salvation, cursed by her own Karma. ..
> 'Taayi, you'd better stop being ridiculous now. Go and sit quietly in the corner. And don't shoot off your mouth again.'

> Boby's entire body was quaking with fear as she stepped out. She was heard saying, 'what a blunder! What a sin!'

In a yet another dialogue between Parsa and Kashi Ram, Parsa ripostes harshly to Kashi Ram, the family priest, who guides him to break an earthen pitcher as a part of a funeral rite. In this way, he resists subversively another prevailing funeral ceremony as shown in the dialogue below:

> When they reached the pond, sliding up to Parsa and looking around, the family priest Kashi Ram said, 'Stop here, we have to break the earthen pitcher.'
>
> Kashi Ram was no stranger to Parsa's temper but he hadn't imagined that on such occasion he would behave so. Darting an angry glance at him Parsa said,' Everything that was here is with me, Panditji Maharaj! Nothing has been lost. So this ritual is unnecessary.' (9-10)

The ensuing dialogue between Parsa and Tirath Ram, on returning from the pyre of Beero, reveals Parsa's subversive point of view. in this dialogue, he abjures the predominant funeral ritual of putting the bones aside:

> 'Did you put the bone aside?' ….
>
> Surprised, Parsa said, 'Which bone?'
>
> 'The one that is set aside so that it can be buried nearby. What else?'
>
> 'She wasn't such a fool, Tirath Ram, that she would rise and walk away either with a nincompoop like you or someone who dabbles in black magic.' (14)

Again, Parsa fearlessly subverts the practice of fake mourning in the following words:

> "Look at them! They think they are the only mourners. For six months when her bones were rattling against the mania no one offered her a drop of water. And now they've come to flaunt their affection" (11).

In another instance, Parsa asserts his agency of resistance daringly and subverts the practice of not cooking food at the house where death has occurred. He orders food to be cooked on his own *chulha.* Thwarting all casteist taboos, he calls Santu, the barber and his wife, to cook food for all. He does not even care about those who go unfed because of their casteist reservations.

Parsa junks these customs at the time of the death of his favourite son Basanta with the same strength that he had shown at the death of his wife Beero – the fact stands corroborated in the dialogue cited below:

> This time too, Parsa had not allowed anyone to wail in grief. The women of the family sat on the *kucha* track, but none was allowed to break into the ritualistic lament. A few old women kept sniffling though, discussing this gloomy house in soft murmurs. Some did grumble as well but no one dared raise her voice.
>
> '*Hai, hai,* daughter, what sort of men are they? He was young, and it's such a tragic death, but still Parsa hasn't allowed anyone to grieve as much as one does over the death of a cat or dog. Some people are scared of the world, others of God but they seem to bother about neither. (235)

Parsa also rebuffs to permit anyone to collect Basanta's ashes. He immerses them in a nearby distributary and does not perform a single ritual. Parsa even arranges for an *Akhand Path* the very next day. He flouts all the objection of the *biradari* and does not inform any of his relatives.

At the death of his friend Pala Ragi, he does not let Ragi's bed donated to a *dakot*. Thus, once again, he eschews the entrenched post-funeral practice, asserts his agency of

resistance audaciously and parts way with the society.

Parsa asserts his agency of resistance by subverting the socio-cultural structure supporting orthodoxical and biasing stereotypes of caste system. For instance, in spite of being a *brahmin*, Parsa nurtures Tindi an outcaste, as his own son. He loves him and cares for him. He also eats the food cooked by low caste Tindi (*Majbi*). So much so, he and Tindi sleep together.

Parsa asserts his agency of resistance and subverts the conjugal stereotypes stemmed out of the socio-cultural structure and develops sexual relationship with Mukhtiar Kaur to help her attain motherhood. During his visit at the *dera* in Haridwar, he meets Mukhtiar Kaur whose husband, Ghula Singh, had been ill for several years and, according to Sant Narang Das, "much before that he was impotent as well" (185). Therefore, Ghula Singh was incapable of fathering a child and died. After the death of her husband, Mukhtiar Kaur takes initiative and makes physical bond with Parsa and becomes pregnant.

It is worth mentioning here that Parsa asserts his agency of resistance and subverts the conjugal stereotypes of the socio-cultural structure not for his lust but for his sense of responsibility towards a needy. His humanitarian concern goads him into helping Mukhtiar Kaur through the practice of *Niyoga*.

It has been observed that the trait of exercising agency of resistance for subversion of prejudicing and repressive structures inculcates a strong determination and self-confidence in Parsa. This trait of Parsa proves instrumental in his crusade against the parochial stereotypical structures. Such stance saves him from having an agitated mind of a hapless victim.

Subversion of Stereotypical Structures by Basanta

Following his father Parsa's footsteps, Basanta also asserts his agency of resistance against the injustice. When he finds rampant oppression of the powerless by the powerful, he asks Tulhi to make a pistol for him after the promise that he would not use it "against a poor or an innocent man" (74). He also protests vehemently against the ill-treatment that Gangi was meted out with by her brother. He even sacrifices his life for wagging a crusade against the noble cause of giving equal economic rights to farmers. As long as he lives, he asserts his agency of resistance to subvert the biasing economic and political structures.

Basanta asserts his agency of resistance against the exploiters of the peasants. So, he decides to fight against the establishment by joining the Naxalite movement. When Basanta happens to meet the workers of the Naxalite movement during his stay in the prison, he instantly gets spellbound by the Naxalite ideology teaching him the real difference between the exploiter and the exploited.

Subversion of prejudicing social, cultural and political structures by Basanta through his agency of resistance instills a sense of strong fortitude and self-assurance in him. It elevates him to the status of a martyr for the cause of social justice.

Subversion of Stereotypical Structures by Mukhtiar Kaur

Mukhtiar Kaur pines for a child to attain her motherhood. However, her husband, Ghula Singh, is impotent. Want of a child has subjected her to a psychological wretchedness. This is why, after the death of her husband, Mukhtiar Kaur asserts her agency of resistance and subverts the norms prescribed by socio-cultural structures for a widow and makes physical bond with Parsa and becomes pregnant. Consequently, she gives birth to a son.

Conclusion

Characters of Gurdial Singh's novel *Parsa* resist subversively for upholding and safeguarding their right to equality and freedom from prejudicing principles and practices prevailing in the society as well as the state. Through such characters, Gurdial Singh's novels "project a questioning of value structures and social systems." (Jain 8)

In this regard, Parsa sets forth not only to challenge but also to change the stereotypical structures smacking of oppression and exploitation in the society. Similarly, Basanta remains jubilant even in the jail because he fights the injustice rather than giving up acquiescingly. Likewise, Mukhtiar Kaur asserts her agency of resistance and defies the conjugal norms of the socio-cultural structure and, therefore, attains motherhood – the status which, otherwise, was next to impossible because her husband Ghula Singh was impotent.

Gurdial Singh, in his interview, had once remarked that a writer has a responsibility towards society. He has to do what he can to change the way we either look at ourselves or think about ourselves. He is an activist and a catalytic agent of change (Singh 2000). Implementing this ideology, he created such characters that espoused and promoted the cause of bringing about social change that goes a long way in establishing the society based on egalitarian ethos. Various characters of his postcolonial fiction urge us to exercise our agency of resistance to subvert the biasing structures that seek to smother us. Conceived as victims of social/historical tyranny, most of characters of Gurdial Singh fight back even in face of an imminent defeat. He strongly believes that man's ultimate *dharma* is to fight the tyranny and oppression built into his/her situation. This is what often imbues his characters, even his novels with a definite sense of tragic inevitability. (Nayar 215)

Finally, Gurdial Singh has exquisitely scripted the success stories of the subalterns in their bid to emancipate themselves from the repressive structures. In this regard, Rana Nayar has aptly remarked that in *Parsa*, he (Gurdial Singh) is certainly in a far more transgressive mode as he manages to create here, what one may only describe as a 'narrative of liberation" (Nayar 241).

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In Search of 'Her' Nation: The Herstory of Abduction in Saadat Hasan Manto's Select Partition Stories

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Abstract

Through a close study of Saadat Hasan Manto's select short stories, this paper argues that Manto's fiction debunked the tropes of 'rape,' 'chastity' and 'honour' that were used to extenuate the State's failure in curbing the gendered violence during Partition. In doing so, the paper claims that Manto's Partition narratives, written as early as in the 1940s, expose the sexual double standards promoted by the two-nation theory. It is significant to note that Manto's Partition stories were one of the earliest attempts at addressing the feminist aspect of Partition. He could be proclaimed as one of the precursors of present-day discourses on the abduction issue, as his short stories on Partition challenge the dominant discourse of religious nationalism of his time. In discussing his portrayal of abduction in select short stories, the paper foregrounds Manto's strategy to challenge the normativity of gendered violence and the corollary religious nationalism of Partition that was leveraged by the two-nation theory.
***Keywords**: Partition, Manto, two-nation theory, trauma, sexual violence.*

Introduction

Sexual violence against women, since time immemorial, has been an inherent part of patriarchal ethno-nationalism. At the time of India's Partition, women, irrespective of their religious identity, were subjected to unimaginable sexual assault. Moreover, a large number of women were abducted during the exodus and were forced to 'realign' their 'identities'. On being 'rescued', arrangements were made to relocate them to their 'real homes' which might as well be across the border. This nationalist enterprise was thoroughly gendered: whereas a man's national identity was determined by his religion, a woman's nationality had to comply with that of her 'rightful' patriarch. Since late 1990s, historians and academicians have come up with noteworthy works, which have been systemically instrumental in addressing this particular aspect of Partition that had received less critical attention earlier. Recent studies in anthropology and history, as well as in Memory and Trauma studies have attempted to reveal the psycho-anthropological ambiguities that were brought in by the binary notion of the two-nation theory, which held that Muslims and Hindus should constitute separate nations due to their incommensurable differences (Svensson 47). Ayesha Jalal in her book *The Pity of Partition* states:

The British decision to split up India had usually been attributed to irreconcilable religious differences between Hindus and Muslims, and the intransigence of the Muslim League leader, Mohammad Ali Jinnah. I showed in The Sole Spokesman that the end result of partition must not be confused with the aims of Jinnah and the Muslim League

to win an equitable share of power for the subcontinent's Muslims. (4)

In *Partition in Ireland, India and Palestine - Theory and Practice*, Dr. T.G Fraser has stated that by the 1937, Jinnah was mentally prepared to advocate the 'Two Nation Theory', an idea that was gaining a lot of attention in the contemporary Muslim circles (72). He further adds that Sayyid Ahmed Khan, the man who had a substantial contribution in initiating the Indian Muslim Renaissance in the late nineteenth century, delivered a series of speeches in 1887 and 1888, claiming that India was a pluralistic society, consisting of several nations, Muslims constituted one of them. In a speech delivered in Meerut, he said that once the British leave India, it would be impossible for the two communities to share the throne and favours equally. One had to conquer and overpower another (72). This period in the history of India saw a plethora of incidents that in some way or the other tried to promote the idea that Hindus and Muslims in India were incapable of coexisting owing to differences that were irreconcilable. Hence they needed two separate nations. Fraser claims that the poet philosopher Muhammad Iqbal was the link between Sayyid Ahmed Khan's embryonic concept of the Two-Nation Theory and Jinnah's adoption of the same later on (73). However, it shall be incorrect to say that Muslims, and not Hindus, primarily wanted to split into a separate nation. While discussing Bhai Parmanand's pamphlet "The Hindu National Movement" in his book *Pakistan or Partition of India* (1945) B. R Ambedkar quotes him: "Thus, the things that divide are far more vital than the things which unite"(18). What is noteworthy in these discussions is that the signifiers Hindu and Muslim primarily denote Hindu 'men' and Muslim 'men' respectively. Women, mostly clubbed together with children, were the flotsam and jetsam in nation-building. Ritu Menon in the introduction of her book—*No Woman's Land* (2004) writes that "Not only do women have no country, they cannot even call their bodies own" (7).

Abduction: The Context

The pernicious impact of the Partition was widespread; it played havoc in the apparently stable lives of people. The two-nation theory that seemed quite a feasible idea, showed horrific consequences in its execution. The state had technically placed the nation's honour in the bodies of its women which in turn established the female body as the chief site to administer communal hatred. Strangely, there had rarely been any legal actions taken against these abductions, as the governments did not perceive these kidnappings as criminal offense. They were rather treated as mistakes committed by impulsive men due to their 'natural' desires that were triggered off during Partition, something that was discussed in legal proceedings in a matter-of-fact manner (Das 27). Amidst the outcry of Partition, the warring governments found it necessary to address the problem of women's abduction and find a way to resolve it. The women and children who were taken away had to be returned by means of a format chalked out by the two countries after mutual consultation. In this entire programme, there was no space for these women's opinions or consents in selecting their patriarchs or their nations. Anthropologist Veena Das in her book *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* calls this the nation state's strategy in building a masculine image of the nation (13). To substantiate her argument, she states that the social disorder that had been taking place across the two nations was being given a façade of a sexual disorder (21). In the late 1990s, there has been considerable works on the historical reconstruction of Partition with the primary intent of filling up the much-argued lacunae in its popular historiographies.

The works of authors like Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Urvashi Butaliya, Kavita Daiya, Veena Das and many others have significantly contributed in providing a feminist perspective to Partition history, rereading the discourses that projected the sacrifices of these women as shameful and insignificant, only worthy to be silenced.

Partition and Manto

It is this chaotic, disconsolate backdrop of social injustice, political apathy and uncanny silences, against which Manto's Partition stories are set. Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) practised a clinical frankness while depicting the trauma inflicted by the Partition. Pretermitting the opinions of people who found his stories obscene due the use of abusive language or sexual explicitness, Manto continued to pour out his heart in his stories. The following section deals with Manto's select short stories which are, arguably, some of the strongest critiques of the two-nation theory and of gendered violence during Partition.

Manto's short story "*Khol Do*" (translated as "*The Return*" by Khalid Hasan) employs a rare economy of words to express how the horrors of abduction during the Partition worked at multiple levels. Repeatedly, scholars have used this story as a fictional representation of the unimaginable trauma created by the Partition on the psyche of its victims. Debunking the dominant discourses on Partition abductions, Manto presents a macabre shard from the devastated households of the subcontinent—the story of an old man whose teenage daughter is lost in the humdrum of migration, as they tried to flee to Lahore during Partition. After earnest requests to liaison officers and uncountable prayers, he finds his abducted daughter in a shabby makeshift hospital amidst the refugee camps in an exanimate state. Tragedy strikes when the corpse-like Sakina shows signs of life on the utterance of the words "Khol do"—an instruction to open the window, given by the doctor to her father so as to allow some light to enter the tent. In his translation of the piece, Khalid Hasan writes: "The young woman on the stretcher moved slightly. Her hands groped for the cord that kept her *shalwar* tied around her waist. With painful slowness, she unfastened it, pulled the garment down and opened her thighs" (10). The story 'ends' with the reactions of the two onlookers: The father shrieks in joy that his daughter is alive; whereas the doctor deciphers her symptoms as the effect of repeated rape and hence breaks into a cold sweat. The doctor's reaction is predictable to some extent. But the father's joy is apparently disturbing since hetero-patriarchy is supposed to feel dishonoured in seeing its violated daughters alive. Sakina's father strikes a different chord amidst the stereotype established by the communal havoc. Whereas the said motive of the communal violence lay in protecting the chastity of its 'own' women and in violating the ones who belonged to the 'other'—the father breaks the stereotype by rejoicing the meagre sign of life rather than lamenting for the 'lost' honour as hinted by the daughter's gesture and the doctor's response. Veena Das observing the same in her book *Life and Words-Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* writes: "…this father wills his daughter to live even as parts of her body can do nothing else but proclaim her brutal violation" (47). Moreover, by hinting the violence to be of intra-communal in nature, Manto debunks the conventional discourse of nationalism that put the entire onus of criminality on the 'communal other' as his writing reveals that he "understood the disturbing power of chaotic libidinal energies in the transformation of psychic and political life" (Kaul 24).

The next abduction story that invites discussion is '*Thanda Gosht*' (translated as "*Colder Than Ice*" by Hasan), another milestone in Manto's literary career and ironically, another reason for incurring hatred and insult from the academia, primarily from the writers

belonging to the PWA (Progressive Writer's Association) and of course from the governments on both sides of the border which found this story quite damaging for the prevailing moral climate. Though the explicit sexual content of the story gave sufficient reasons to the detractors of realism to resist the piece from being made available for mass reading, the perspective on abduction, which the story reveals, has been consciously subdued. The story is about Ishwar Singh, who on returning home one night, tries to make love to his beloved—Kalwant Kaur—but is unable to do so as he suffers from erectile dysfunction. This might not sound alarming as such but after some banter, followed by considerable altercation with Kalwant, she fatally attacks him out of rage, as she doubts his fidelity. Ishwar finally reveals that while plundering a Muslim house, he killed six members of a family of seven—deciding to take away the seventh member. The seventh member was a beautiful girl whom he desired to enjoy first and kill later. He confesses: "…so I carried her over my shoulder all the way to the canal which runs outside the city…then I laid her down on the grass, behind some bushes…first I thought I would shuffle her a bit…but then I decided to trump her right away…" (Hasan 21). When the resentful yet curious Kalwant asks what happened next, Ishwar blurts out that "she was dead…I had carried a dead body… a heap of cold flesh" and what is spoken without words is that Ishwar tried to ravish a dead body and it was as if in return of his heinous crime that he is left impotent. His desperate attempt to arouse Kalwant was his way to reassure himself of his masculinity. His inability to 'produce his trump'—to use the couple's metaphor—is supposed to highlight the permanent scar that the crime had left on his consciousness and had taken a toll on his masculinity. In his last words, with which Manto ends the story, Ishwar Singh asks for Kalwant's hand. Kalwant finds his hand to be 'colder than ice'—symbolic of the cold, dead girl whom he had tried to violate. Ironically, Kalwant strikes him with the same dagger, which Ishwar had used to kill those six Muslims. To Ishwar this appears as poetic justice: "'You act impetuously,' he said, 'but what you did I deserved'". (Hasan 20) His guilt allows him to accept his death in a stoic way; his morality that was debauched by unrestrained libidinal desire is reconstructed as it were. For Manto, the perpetrator of violence has no face, no religion. For him they are followers of an erroneous ideology. Manto's writings reveal that he had full faith in the basic goodness in people, which was brutally dismembered by Partition.

Manto's "*Losing Proposition*" is a virulent satire on the state's hypocrisy in unofficially legitimising the commodification of women in order to appease patriarchal ideologies. Two boys 'buy' a girl during the humdrum of partition for 42 Rupees. After enjoying her, they find out that she belongs to their own community. On interrogating her, they come to know that the pimp had lied to them. They realise that they have been duped and hence want a refund. Manto deliberately keeps us away from the religious specifications of men and woman only to prove his point that in case of gendered violence, sectarian difference could only be a means to an end.

In "*The Woman in the Red Raincoat*" we see the repercussions of abducting an elderly woman by a man who decides to pick a woman during the partition riots, not because he was an evil man, but because that's what young men did to kill boredom and also, in a way, help in retaining communal honour in those days. He goes out, stops a woman who was driving a car and brings her to his house. He particularly asks if she is an English woman and asks nothing about her ethnicity. Sitting in a dark room, hesitant about his 'decision,' he tries to seduce her into a consensual physical intimacy. The woman, who was hesitant at the beginning, gradually gives in. However, when the servant brings a lamp and Mr. S sees her to be an elderly woman, he immediately rejects her and tells her that she may leave if she wishes to.

The woman leaves and dies that night itself. It could be argued that there was no communal hatred involved in this case. The woman is offended twice; once by the abductor who forcefully brings her to his place because he wanted to have her – though he tried to do better by seducing her rather than raping her – and then by a brutal rejection. Though Mr. S had no ethnic hatred towards Miss M: a renowned artist, principal of Art College and a man hater (the narrator reveals the lady's identity to him later), the moral climate of that time legitimised this mindless activity of his that ultimately resulted in the murder of two women, as the narrator tells him: "One, who is known as a great artist, and the other who was born from the body of the first woman in your living room that night whom you alone know" (42).

The last story in this discussion is "*The Dutiful Daughter*". Manto shows the effect of a Muslim girl's abduction on her mother. A liaison officer had been running into her often—an old woman in tattered clothes looking for her lost daughter who was abducted during the riots in Patiala. There were probable chances that the girl had been killed, but somehow the woman refused to believe it. As long as her daughter was in India, she could not leave for Pakistan. The officer had seen the woman several times by now; for the last time he saw her in Amritsar. He had received news that an abducted girl was being hidden in one of the Hindu households there. As he sees the woman there again, he also comes across a Sikh man accompanying a young girl. On seeing the old woman, the man falters and shows her to his companion as he says, "your mother". The girl looks for a second and hastens to leave as she says to him, "Let's get away from here". The mother instantly recognises her and frantically calls her by her name. The officer finally confronts her and assures her by saying: "I swear on God your daughter is dead". Reminiscent of the last scene of "*Toba Tek Singh,*" the woman collapses on listening to this dreadful news sworn on God and dies. Her daughter seemed to have accepted her condition and found it fit to ignore the mendicant in rags— her mother. It may be assumed that the daughter had been living in a non-Muslim household and had probably acquired a new name. Her mother and her real name 'Bhagbari' could get her into further trouble, which she could no longer afford. Hence, she moves on with her abductor, leaving behind her yearning mother who had waited all these days to find her and then leave for Pakistan. Here, Manto explores the dehumanising effect of the Partition that made the entire operation of handling the abduction issue look like an 'import-export trade.' By showing the mother's love going unreciprocated, Manto tries to indicate that in a situation where physical violence against women is so rampant, people hardly care about psychological violence whose scars are still being borne by the survivors of the Partition.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that Manto employed his poetic imagination to analyse those aspects of Partition, which were seldom discussed during his time. He wanted to reveal the hypocrisy lying beneath the political historiography of Partition that projected it as an unavoidable 'tragedy.' If East Pakistan's struggle in 1971 for a separate nation-state based on ethnicity and language was an outright rejection of the two-nation theory, Manto's Partition narratives, written in the 1940s, expose the sexual double standards which got promoted by this theory. His thoughts on the state of affairs is voiced by the narrator in the short story "*The Dutiful Daughter*" when he says: "It always amused me to see that such enthusiastic efforts were being made to undo the effects of something that had been perpetrated by more or less the same people. Why were they trying to rehabilitate the women who had been raped and taken away when they had let them be raped and taken away in the first place?" (Hasan 73) Urvashi

Butalia, in her documentation of abducted women during Partition in her book *The Other Side of Silence* states that when an abducted woman who had settled down with her abductor, was asked to return back by the social workers, she asked: "Why should I return ...Why are you particular to take me to India? What is left in me now of religion or chastity?" (148). The question exposes the hollowness in the words 'religion' and 'chastity', abstractions that determined the fate of two nations and the fates of their women. Irrespective of her nationality, a woman's fate would still remain the same. Whereas Butalia records this in 1998, Manto, as early as in 1940s, articulated the plight of the abducted women. His short stories discussed in this paper show different cases of abduction, where none of the perpetrators succeeds in justifying the abduction as a communal or nationalist need. His stories are cynical interrogations to people who think that the Partition was inevitable and the violence that accompanied it was its obvious corollary. Sakina is ravished by the protectors of law, who might have belonged to her commune. Ishwar Singh attempts to rape a dead Muslim girl and was necessarily motivated by libidinal drives and not by any nationalist or ethnic urge. By withholding the religion of the abducted girl in "*Losing Proposition,*" Manto indicates that her fate would have been the same irrespective of her religion. Miss M who is ultimately seduced by her abductor, is rejected because she does not fit into his idea of a desirable woman; again, there were no communal drives behind this abduction. 'The Dutiful Daughter'' depicts the disruption of human relations during Partition—so much so that the victim feels safer with the abductor rather than getting back to her mother.

In this paper, I have argued that Saadat Hasan Manto is the poetic precursor of present day discourses on the abduction issue, as his short stories on Partition challenge the dominant discourse of religious nationalism of his time. As historian Ayesha Jalal states, Manto was a strong proponent of civic nationalism and he detested this petty identity politics that was promoted in the name of religion (58). With the aid of his incisive yet poetic inflection, Manto tried to fill up those lacunae in his own unique way, which the contemporary literati found to be raucous. By means of a close reading of Manto's stories, the paper has argued that Manto's faith in the basic goodness of humankind and his scepticism towards religious nationalism made him question the two-nation theory, one of the principal ideological justifications behind the formation of Pakistan. His technique of hiding the communal identities of his characters (by using Mr. S or Miss M to denote the protagonist) promotes his idea that it was humanity which suffered during the Partition and there was no way one could mathematically prove which community had suffered more. Moreover, the sufferings of women were what was hushed up by both the nations, as that would calumniate their national honour.The paper foregrounds Manto's unparalleled sensibility, not only in understanding the angst of the female victims of Partition violence, but in turning it into a voice of protest against the normativity of gendered violence and the corollary religious nationalism of Partition. John Marx rightly describes Manto's skill by saying that "His writing inscribes the possibility, even a tendency, of state failure at the very inception of Independent Indian administration" (624). Manto's herstories unequivocally claim that the two-nation theory assigned negligible subjectivity to women and his cynicism was his lone tool to unmask the laxity of the states in letting this injustice happen in the name of nationalism during Partition.

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A Traumatic Testimony: Saadat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh"

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Abstract

The desire of expressing one's trauma and the compulsion to resist revelation is an ongoing conflict within an individual. Saadat Hasan Manto's narrative in "Toba Tek Singh" is a negotiation between the two, not just for himself but for an entire people as he manages to evoke a discussion between silence (loss of language) and testimony. His text reiterates that it is difficult to separate personal and collective trauma. Originally written in Urdu, this short story is a narrative of the dilemma of Bishan Singh, who in post partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, wants to know on which side of the borderline his village Toba Tek Singh is?
Keywords*: trauma studies, testimony, partition literature, religion, Saadat Hasan Manto, Sigmund Freud, seduction theory.*

The 1990s stirred the development of Trauma studies into motion. This first wave relied heavily on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of trauma. Also referred to as the traditional trauma model, it was pioneered by Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman. They put forth the idea that trauma is essentially a suffering that is beyond representation. The traditional model of trauma had a profound impact on the concept of trauma in literary criticism especially with the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Kali Tal's *World of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* which pioneered the psychoanalytic post structural approach. But trauma studies were eventually enriched by alternate models and methodologies that offered revised claims. There was a major shift as these new models made the suggestion of determinate value existing within traumatic experience. A key development in this context was the emergence of the pluralistic model of trauma, that it is by dint of a variety of representational modes that knowledge and value are located in traumatic experience.

One of the most poignant and candid voices in the Partition discourse is that of Saadat Hasan Manto who believes in telling the story as it is and lives up to the task which Shoshana Felman assigns to a historian as envisaged in her essay "Benjamin's Silence:"

> . . . the task of the historian is to reconstruct what history has silenced, to give voice to the dead and to the vanquished and to resuscitate the unrecorded, silenced, hidden story of the oppressed. (213-14)

Manto's stories, originally written in Urdu, translated in English and anthologised as *Kingdom's End and Other Stories* capture a telling tale of the devastating Partition trauma. The story, "Toba Tek Singh" too embodies this trauma and tragic dilemma of the protagonist, Bishan Singh, an inmate of the lunatic asylum in Lahore, wants to know where his village Toba Tek Singh is, in the face of the inevitable division of British India into two entities –India and Pakistan. A dark comedy set in post partition, "Toba Tek Singh" touches upon the ridiculousness of the aspect of colonial India having been divided upon religious lines as the the governments of India and Pakistan discuss the exchange of the inmates of lunatic asylums, much like the prisoners.

Manto's in spite of his leftist-socialist beliefs, is stingingly satirical in his presentation of lunacy in a new light, thus turning it into an extended metaphor of institutional insanity. Partition was a horrific event that scared generations with the unprecedented violence in the form of riots, massacres, rapes, abductions, forced migrations, displacement, exile, refugee crisis, forced suicides, and extreme helplessness in the face of it all. This left behind victims, eyewitnesses, and memory. In the story under scrutiny, Manto depicts the aftermath of these events and castigates those who had engineered the violence. He creates a discourse against the criminal impostors who had taken refuge in the asylum in order to evade conviction.

It is not the experience itself that produces traumatic effect but rather the remembrance of it. The Lahore lunatic asylum inhabits a number of patients who seem to be dealing with a traumatic past. And to put it in Jean-Max Gaudilliere's words "They are the event" (*Listening to Trauma* 83). Or just as Francoise Davoine states, "These people *are* the memory" (*Listening to Trauma* 83). And it is noteworthy how Manto creates the identity of these persons based on religion. In a rather tongue in the cheek manner he recounts one Muslim lunatic, "a regular leader of the fire-eating daily newspaper *Zamindar,"* who when asked about what according to him Pakistan was, replies in a philosophic strain that it is a place where cut throat razors were manufactured (Manto 11).

Yet another notable fabrication of his pen is a conversation between two Sikh lunatics. When one asks the other as to why they were being sent to India when they do not know the language that is spoken there, the person questioned replies with a smile that he knows the language of the "Hindostoras." "These devils" he declares, "always strut about as if they were the lords of the earth" (Manto 12).

A Muslim lunatic, while bathing, raises the slogan of "*Pakistan Zindabad*" in such an enthusiastic manner that he loses his footing, and is later found lying unconscious on the floor. Manto creates an intriguingly profound and satirically charged atmosphere as he declares that even the inmates who are feigning madness are clueless about the situation.

> . . . They probably had a vague idea why India was being divided and what Pakistan was, but, as for the present situation, they were clueless. […]
>
> As to where Pakistan was located, the inmates knew nothing. That was why both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan. If they were in India, where on earth was Pakistan? And if they were in Pakistan, then how come that until only the other day it was India? (Manto 12)

Manto heightens the sense of the loss of identity and the forgetfulness of traumatic partition, as he creates a character "caught up in this India-Pakistan-Pakistan-India rigmarole," one day, installed himself on a branch of a tree and kept speaking on the "delicate" India-Pakistan issue for two hours straight, and when the guards attempted to persuade him to get to the ground, he instead went on to mount a higher branch (Manto 12). Furthermore, when the guards resorted to threatening him with punishment, he declared: "I wish to live neither in India nor in Pakistan. I wish to live in this tree" (Manto 13). A rather profound ecofeminist statement indeed, but through this very statement, Manto also manages to let this lunatic come out of his silence, just as the story itself becomes Manto's testimony and an act of recording his own history.

The cathartic import of tree climbing incident gets registered as the lunatic is finally persuaded to come down, and upon doing so he immediately begins to embrace his Sikh and Hindu friends, religious identities that Manto does not allow the readers to forget at any moment. Tears start running down his cheeks as he is overcome by sadness that his friends were about to leave him and go to India.

Manto alludes to an incident when a Muslim radio engineer, who holds an M.Sc. degree, loves to take long walks, and never socialises with anyone, one day takes off his clothes and upon handing the bundle to one of the attendants in the asylum, runs around naked in the garden. Manto's creative satirical jibes do not stop just here. He goes on to create yet another memorable inmate, a Muslim lunatic from Chaniot, who is described as one of the most devoted workers of the All India Muslim League, and is given to obsessive bathing, ranging up to fifteen or sixteen times a day. But post this decision, and as a reaction to the debate, had responded in his own way by completely turning his back on his daily mores. He had suddenly stopped bathing and announced himself to be—*Quaid-e-Azam* Mohamed Ali Jinnah. As a consequence to his declaration, a Sikh inmate declared himself to be Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs. Apprehending serious communal troubles, the authorities curb the dangerous behaviour of the inmates by locking them up in separate cells.

Amidst rising tensions Manto portrays a young Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had "gone off his head after an unhappy love affair" (Manto 13). Following the fast changing political developments hinting the possibility of Amritsar going to India, he was pushed further into depression. This was mainly because his beloved lived in Amritsar and associated memories had never escaped him even in his madness. The day he had learnt of the partition, he had mouthed obscenities against every Hindu and Muslim leader who was responsible for it because this had affected his relationship with his beloved who as a consequence now was an Indian and he a Pakistani. But the recent news of the exchange of inmates amongst the two countries brought a happy twist for him according to his inmate friends who began congratulating him as he would now be sent to India, the land of his beloved. However, as a further twist to his plight, Manto has this character declare that he had no intentions of leaving Lahore now as his practice, as a lawyer, would not flourish in Amritsar.

Manto's creative imagination at portraying the Lahore asylum, mirrors the key figure of the story, Bishan Singh, another inmate in the asylum, whose identity has been established as a Sikh confined there for the past fifteen years. And very peculiarly, according to the guards, the man had not slept or even winked in these past years of his stay. However occasionally he was spotted leaning against a wall. Due to his constant standing his legs had swollen but the man remained unfazed. Manto informs the readers that Bishan Singh had lately taken to listening to discussions about the "forthcoming exchange of Indian and Pakistani lunatics" but had still not emerged out of his repetitive utterances ""'Uper the gur gur the annex the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the laltain." However, after hearing about the upcoming exchange of the inmates, he solemnly states his opinion in his signature gibberish: "'Uper the gur gur the annex the bay dhayana the mung the dal of the Government of Pakistan" (Manto 14). This senseless verbal banter is equivalent to silence, as he emerges as the marginal voice, choked in the face of its traumatic experience.

Manto reveals Bishan Singh's concern about finding out if his village Toba Tek Singh, falls in India or Pakistan. Manto beautifully portrays his dilemma recounting the scenario through a wider picture that he creates:

> Of late, however, the Government of Pakistan had been replaced by the Government of Toba Tek Singh, a small town in the Punjab which was his home. He had also begun enquiring where Toba Tek Singh was to go. However, nobody was quite sure whether it was in India or Pakistan. Those who had tried to solve this mystery had utterly confused when told that Sialkot, which used to be in India, was now in Pakistan. It was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment. It was also possible that the entire

subcontinent of India might become Pakistan. And who could say if both India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day?" (Manto 14)

Manto's description of Bishan Singh's countenance is symbolic of the state of affairs in the divided parts of his native land: "The old man's hair was almost gone and what little was left had become a part of the beard,…a strange,…frightening, appearance" (Manto 14-15). This exterior is carefully contrasted with his "harmless" interior for the man had never gotten into a fight with anyone during his stay. A fairly prosperous landlord, he had suddenly gone mad, and had to be brought in fetters to the asylum by his family.

During the initial period of his stay he used to receive visitors as they became scarce following the stirring of communal unrest in Punjab. And almost reciprocal to this is his gradual loss of identity within his immediate surroundings. He had acquired the name, Toba Tek Singh. The idea is further intensified by Manto when he introduces his name almost midway through the narrative or when he is constantly referred to as the "Sikh lunatic" before that. He may have been in a state of limbo for years, being oblivious of time but he had developed a sixth sense which would help him sense the day he would be visited by his family and friends (Manto 15). During those anticipated and much awaited meetings he would express only in his usual gibberish. His confinement had resulted in leaving a fifteen year old daughter behind, "hers was just another face" (Manto 15). He was distressed and desperately wanted to know about the whereabouts of his village on the map but got used to not receiving any satisfactory responses. Nobody in the vicinity knew of its true status. The "…visits had…stopped. He was increasingly restless, but, more than that, curious. The sixth sense, which used to alert him to the day of the visit, had also atrophied" (Manto 15).

In an interesting conversation between Bishan Singh and an inmate, who had declared himself God, about the whereabouts of Toba Tek Singh, the megalomaniacal lunatic chuckled saying: "'Neither in India nor in Pakistan, because, so far, we have issued no orders in this respect'" (Manto 16). Bishan Singh could not help himself but beg this lunatic whom he seemed to believe to be 'God' to issue the necessary orders so as to be relieved of his problem but is only netted out with more disappointment as this 'God' in front of him appeared to be preoccupied with some more pressing matters. So angrily Bishan Singh tells this imposter: "'Uper the gur gur the annexe the mung the dal of Guruji da Khalsa and Guruji ki fateh…jo boley so nihal sat sri akal'" (Manto 16). In this moment Manto clarifies that: "What he wanted to say was: 'You don't answer my prayers because you are a Muslim God. Had you been a Sikh God, you would have been more of a sport'" (Manto 16).

In the developments that take place a few days before the exchange of lunatics Bishan Singh is visited by a Muslim friend from his village. Bishan Singh seems quite repulsed by the man initially but upon being told by one of the guards that the man was his old friend, Fazal Din who had come all the way to meet him, he looks over Fazal Din and begins to mumble. Realising his friend's condition Fazal Din warmly places his hand on Bishan Singh's shoulder telling him the news that his family is well and has managed to safely migrate to India. He has done whatever little he could to help.

Through all this, Bishan Singh keeps silent. So Fazal Din continues making efforts to converse with his friend. He tells Bishan Singh that he would also be moving to India in view of the new developments and requests Bishan Singh to tell the family that he thought of them often and that they should write to him if there was anything he could do for them. But still troubled by his dilemma, Bishan Singh asks Fazal Din the question he had asked almost everyone: "'Where is Toba Tek Singh?'" (Manto 17). And finally as a reader one feels that he will get his much awaited reply but just the contrary happens. Though Fazal Din tells him that

"…it is where it has always been," probably implying that the land could not have moved or probably just out of his familiarity with the place (Manto 17).

But still curious Bishan Singh again asks, "'In India or in Pakistan?'" (Manto 17). It is the response of Fazal Din through which Manto manages to strike hard at the sense of utter confusion and alienation that the general public was subjected to in the face of the divided border lines. As an initial response Fazal Din says, "[in] India," but then within moments he reveals his doubt as he says "no, in Pakistan" (Manto 17). Bishan Singh's angry distress can be gauged from his gibberish utterances.

And finally the day arrives, a winter evening that Manto categorically describes as cold, in the tradition of pathetic fallacy. As he narrates the saga of utter chaos and confusion, much like Salman Rushdie, he manages to instil a deep sense of "amputation" that partition entailed. He writes with a satirical tone of the behaviour of the inmates but the anguish and trauma of the people pierce through the reader's imagination. He writes:

> On a cold winter evening, buses full of Hindu and Sikh lunatics, accompanied by armed police and officials, began moving out of the Lahore asylum towards Wagah, the dividing line between India and Pakistan. Senior officials from the two sides in charge of exchange arrangements met, signed documents and the transfer got under way. It was quite a job getting the men out of the buses and handing them over to officials. Some just refused to leave. Those who were persuaded to do so began to run pell-mell in every direction. Some were stark naked. All efforts to get them to cover themselves had failed because they couldn't be kept from tearing off their garments. Some were shouting abuse or singing. Others were weeping bitterly. Many fights broke out. (Manto 17)

It seems that such a behaviour is symptomatic of the trauma of the lunatics who metaphorically stand for the entire generation that had to stand witness to the historical event of partition.

While one feels traumatized by the poignant narration of "complete confusion," Manto's comment that the: "Female lunatics were also being exchanged and they were even noisier," leaves a bad taste for feminist sensibility (Manto 17). It reflects the patriarchal mindset as "patriarchy itself traumatises women" (Horvitz 15). Manto's position in this context is quite explicit as he places primarily male characters as lunatics, thereby challenging the tradition of placing of female characters as mentally afflicted and hysterical in illness narratives.

Manto further dramatizes the scene by emphasising the bitter cold in which the lunatic inmates appeared to be dead set against the will and operation of the two governments. It was difficult for them to fathom as to why they were being forcibly removed, being thrown into buses and driven to a strange places. Amidst this chaos slogans of "*Pakistan Zindabad*" and "*Pakistan Murdabad*" were also heard. There were fights taking place between certain inmates. But when Bishan Singh was brought out and he was asked to give his name for the record register and all he could do was to repeat his question to the authorities: "'Where is Toba Tek Singh? In India or Pakistan?'" (Manto 18).

And finally, in that moment, amidst vulgar laughter, he learnt that it was in Pakistan. Hearing this, Bishan Singh tries to run but is overpowered by the Pakistani guards who are bent upon pushing him across the dividing line towards India. Manto interjects:

> . . . he wouldn't move. 'This is Toba Tek Singh,' he announced. 'Uper the gur gur the annexe the be dhyana mung the dal of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan.' (Manto 18)

While one clearly observes a piece of land being named after a human being here and the

human becoming an unmoving-unresting piece of land, one also witnesses the urge within Bishan Singh, prototype of a generation literally afflicted with insanity and loss in the face of partition, as he clings to a piece of no-man's-land and declares it as Toba Tek Singh.

Manto creates a rather somber picture of the society governed by power structures as he depicts the lost efforts of many, who in vain, try to explain to Bishan Singh that the land of Toba Tek Singh "had already been moved to India," or soon would be (Manto 18). The guards who tried to move him physically with force also have to eventually give up: "There he stood in no man's land on his swollen legs like a colossus" (Manto 18). His condition is the state of unassimilable experience—trauma. In other words, trauma experience is not experience, for experience and its assimilation requires a state of relaxation and a certain sense of claiming of that experience. Finally, realising how harmless the man was in his demands, he was allowed to stand in his proclaimed Toba Tek Singh while the exchange process continued and the night wore on.

In the final scene of the story, Bishan Singh screams loudly. The officials rush towards him and witness him collapse on the ground. The scene is reminiscent of the fainting of the witness in the Eichmann trial. Like the witness, Bishan Singh is not "deeply wounded" but is *re-traumatized*" (Shoshana Felman "A Ghost in the House of Justice: Death and the Language of Law" 257-258).

It may be looked upon as Bishan Singh's final "finding of voice" or "testimony" but only to collapse moments later, much like the Eichmann trial witness who was reliving the experience of the Nazi camp. Bishan Singh re-experienced the subdued pain of partition as the lunatics were being sent off to their respective lands. This can also be seen as a loss of the capacity to be a witness to oneself. The sense of loss of identity that triggered lunacy amongst the likes of Bishan Singh could be compared to that of Jews. The attempt to cling to no- man's-land can only be interpreted as a desperate attempt to hold on to one's identity without any state intervention—a clear defiance of state instilled insanity.

The narrative closes: "There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh" (Manto 18). A scene that instils a profound sense of loss within the mind of the reader as well.

Perhaps then this last scene could be seen as a sight of "an encoded of the anti-past," being in "another temporality," and attempting to "restore something erased from the official text of history" (Mad Witnesses 83-84). While we as a generation are from the "*metatraumatic*" or "second-order traumatic," Manto shows the generation of Bishan Singh as "first-order traumatic."

The discussion surrounding Manto and Partition trauma cannot be considered complete as long as the debate about the question of universalisation of trauma and collectivised experience of instigator remains. This is essentially an issue that arises from the understanding of trauma that "we are implicated in each other's trauma" (Caruth 24). Surely considering an entire generation as victim runs the risk of implicating everyone as a perpetrator. While it is difficult to be oblivious to the experiences of the first order traumatic or the second order traumatic, at the same time asking for reparations from the future generations of the perpetrators or holding every individual belonging to the then existent generation of the perpetrators as responsible, are surely complex issues. But I leave that point of contestation as clue for future exploration and research.

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Local History as Counter History: Reading Rahi Masoom Reza's *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli*

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore Rahi Masoom Reza's The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli *as a local narrative which calls into question the grand narratives of history and looks at history from people's point of view. It questions and interrogates the official, documented and supposedly objective accounts of history-writing, and legitimizes the oral, undocumented and primarily subjective ways of constructing what one may call 'people's history' or 'Local history.' The paper explores how Reza's novel* The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli *becomes a tool of asserting the local identities in local dialect/idiom, and also a method of subverting, interrogating, questioning and undermining the nationalist perspective.*
Keywords*: local history, partition, identity, home, interrogating history*

Local history deals with the history, geography, ecology and cultural sociology/memory of a particular place, locality, family, region or community. It has a very specific location bounded by a village or a community. Community-orientation of local history is certainly one of its defining features. But, this community is not an artificial construct, it is an organic entity, with a long, established history of shared sense of values/codes, and cultural practices. It is the presence of these cultural practices that makes for the 'emotional oneness' even co-existence of the community beneath the apparent, surface differences/dissimilarities. Religious differences are not the real markers of personal identity and therefore the 'cultural divide'; but it is the co-existence of plurality, difference and diversity that makes for a common local, cultural identity of the community.

Apparently, local history and micro-history might seem quite similar, but there are a lot of disparities between the two. 'Local history' offers a counter to the 'history of a nation' while 'micro-history is a way of interrogating history of the global cultures If local history is 'sub-national' within the 'national' framework, 'mico-history' is 'local' within the 'transnational' framework. However, both local history and micro-history could effectively be communicated with the help of 'narratives', oral as well as written.

Local history was never a popular subject of study among the historians. According to John Beckett, "It was only during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that something more systematic began with the first descriptive works, known by the generic name of chorographies. Overlapping with, and eventually succeeding, the chorographies were the county histories, and by the seventeenth century a tradition of writing local history had been established which still exists in an attenuated form today" (*Writing Local History* 9)

The advent of new social history in 1980's led to the burgeoning of community studies in the academy as well as amateur and academic local history. The works as Carol Kammen's *Doing Local History* and Myron A. Marty's *Nearby History* led to a deeper interest in the field. Historians like Terry Barnhart and Richard D Brown argued that "local history and

micro-history support a national synthesis" (qtd.in Pasternack 29).

David Russo in *Families and Communities* (1974) has urged "for a loosening of the national history framework in favor of a more grass-roots approach, a kind of history studied through smaller units because the nation is a relatively recent construct arbitrarily imposed as a framework on the country's past" (qtd. in Beckett, "Local History in its comparative International context" 93). Local history shares its ambit with various academic fields like regional history, case-studies of national history, public history, oral history, environmental history (Pasternack 22). According to Carol Kammen local history is:

> a study of past events, or of people or groups, in a given geographic area – a study based on a wide variety of documentary evidence and placed in a comparative context that should be both regional and national. . . Local history is, at its heart – as history itself – the study of the human condition in and through time . . . Local history is, despite its limited geographical focus, a broad field of inquiry: it is the political, social, and economic history of a community and its religious and intellectual history, too. It is a place to look for individual reactions to historical events and the arena in which to practice demographic investigation" (4-5).

In the Indian context, the linkages of local history can also be traced to *Anchalik Upanayas* (variously described as the local narrative/novel, area novel, regional novel etc as opposed to the epic novels' or 'national allegories' that we often come across in the Indian English Writing), initiated and popularized by Phaneshwar Nath Renu in 1950s. He was the one who began to explore the topology, the sociology and the cultural ecology of a particular place/region, and started the trend of constructing local histories in his novels. His novel *Maila Anchal* (1954) was a significant landmark in this respect. Phaneshwar Nath Renu was perturbed over the fact that the national agenda of development had completely bypassed the needs and demands of the *anchal* he was writing about. *Anchalik Upanayas,* is a tool of asserting the local identities and also a pretext for subverting, interrogating, questioning and undermining the nationalist perspective. It is this kind of dualism that becomes important for us when we begin to interpret Rahi Masoom Reza's novel *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli.* My main emphasis in this paper is on the issue Local History v/s National history.

The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli was originally written in Hindi as *Adha Gaon* by Rahi Masoom Reza in 1966, it was translated in English by Gillian Wright in 1994. Born in Uttar Pradesh, Reza did his Ph.D from Aligarh Muslim University. Rahi Masoom Reza's *oeuvre* engages with contemporary history in one form or the other. His novels are *A Village Divided* (*Adha Gaon), Dil Ek Saada Kagaz (Heart, A Tabula Rasa), Topi Shukla, Os Ki Ik Boond* (*A Dew-Drop*), *Katra Bi Arzoo* (*The Locality Called Woman's Desire*), *Scene No. 75* and *Neem Ka Ped* (*Neem Tree).* Beside the novels he was the scriptwriter for a much-hyped, famous television serial Mahabharat*a,* based on an Indian epic. To some extent, Reza seems to have acquired his sense of narrative/history from *Mahabharata*, where the focus is always on the local as opposed to the national. *Mahabharata* was essentially a story of a family of *Bharata*, not that of a nation *Bharat.* Reza's focus in *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli* is also on the families of village Gangauli and their intricate histories. It is at the same time the story of a village Gangauli, located in Ghazipur, a small town in the Gangetic plains inhabited predominantly by the Shia Muslims. In a way, it's the story of a village, but in a way it is also the story of Indian nation. In talking of his own home Ghazipur, Reza tells the reader that history has not reached Ghazipur. He says that in Gangauli "the murmurings or the cold sighs of history do not reach" (Reza 1). Ghazipur was a beautiful and harmonious blend of cultures. There were no differences amongst people; rather, during Muharram processions,

near the tomb of Nuruddin the Martyr, the entire town would shout in unison 'Bol Muhammadi!- Ya Husain!' (5). Gangauli becomes a microcosm of the macrocosm called Indian society/nation. In *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauly,* people's history becomes incidental to the history of a place or a location or a village. The novel becomes a pretext for delving into the 'local history' of Gangauli and its local population.

The Feuding Families of Village Gangauly may also be seen as a semi-autobiographical novel. The author broods over the significant past. In the beginning, Reza acknowledges that "These days the number of Gangauli-dwellers is decreasing in Gangauli, and the number of Sunni, Shia and Hindus is increasing (Reza 13). This means that all sects accepted a single identity as "Gangauli-dwellers"(13). The inhabitants of Gangauli, have a shared history, values, beliefs, and have a 'composite culture' through a long, well-established tradition of mutuality and peaceful co-existence. The identity of people of Gangauly was that of "Gangauli dwellers". Reza emphasizes, again and again, the insular character of Gangauli as if it is some kind of an aloof island of wisdom in the midst of madness let loose by the Partition.

The action of the novel centres round the village Gangauli, its communities and their daily routine. The village is divided into two parts the Dakhin Patti or the southern side, and Uttar Patti, or northern side. There is an ancestral rivalry between Saiyad Zamindars of both sides. In between the two sides are the homes of weavers and the traders. On the outskirts of the village, there is a settlement of thatched huts, where the Chamars, the Bhars and the Ahirs stay. The novel delves into their rituals, bonds and little strifes.

The communalists attempt to breed animosity between Hindus and Muslims are resisted by the people. Though they are angry at the barbaric bloodbath of Muslims residing in Calcutta, but they cannot fathom the idea of avenging it on their brothers , the Chamars, the Ahirs and the Bhars of Gangauli. For the farmers, "A couple of murders over land were nothing to worry about. But to murder someone or burn his house down simply for the crime of being a Muslim was beyond their comprehension" (Reza 276). Such personal sentiments of people are overlooked by the empirical elitist history.

Reza is certainly not portraying Gangauli as an utopian village. It is very much a real place, with all its intricacies. It is a typical feudal village. There was strife amongst people but these conflicts were mainly local in nature. Gangauli is a fine example of a heterogeneous society. The Muslim and Hindus were interdependent upon each other. They shared a cordial relationship, be it as landlords or as between servants and masters. It is a multicultural and plural society, thriving together in cultural syncretism. The novel vividly shows the social and natural harmony that existed among people in the pre-partition days. Alok Bhalla rightly states that the people "… are self-conscious about the fact they live within a network of people with different religious convictions whose right to a share in their living spaces has to be acknowledged. Beyond that, they are quite content to let the gods and their acolytes look after themselves and their sacred places" ("Memories of a Lost Home" 184). Bhalla further states that:

> The civilizational virtue of India was its endless capacity to engage in dialogue with all that was different and to listen to the difference with respectful attention. It assumed a moral world to which everyone belonged, independent of religious or ethnic identities. That alone explains why stories of the Partition of India register the shock of the Partition when it occurred and the greater sense of shame at the relentless violence which accompanied it" (192).

Reza through his narrative weaves together all that is legendary, anecdotal,

conflicting, locally contingent and honestly remembered. The novel is "…the story of time passing through Gangauli', '…the story of the ruins where houses stood, and of the houses built on those ruins" (Reza 11). The school is deserted not by the people but also by history. "This town lives in moments, dies in moments, and then is reborn in moments" (Reza 6). The town of Ghazipur has endured the test of time and has been a witness to history through the ages. It has been created, destroyed and built again but the village of Gangauli never lost its indispensable accommodating and heartwarming nature.

The novel covers the Pre-Independence days of freedom struggle to the Partition/Independence and then Post-Partition/Post-Independence India. Partition was the consequence of complex political realities that emerged during the British *Raj* in 1945-47. The idea of partition sprung up from Jinnah's idea of "Two Nation Theory" and his dictum 'Islam in danger'.The volatile political scenario of second world war(1939-45) as well as the rise of the Quit India Movement in 1942 turned the idea of Pakistan into a reality. The Partition took place in haste and resulted in a lot of chaos. According to Ajit Bhattacharjea "The haste and self delusion of Congress and Muslim League leaders that contributed to the bloodiest religious cleansing emerges with distributing clarity. . .They were so blinded by the desire to inherit power that they overlooked the transformatory aims of the freedom movement" (Kings & Pawns). After Independence, there was a public silence regarding partition. The mainstream historiography hailed the history produced by State centred nationalist elites. *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli* brilliantly portrays the ripple-down effect of partition at the village level and this has to be seen in the context of national, hegemonic and dominant history slowly rupturing the local traditions, customs and belief-systems of Gangauli.

"Moharram" is the central event in the novel. The *Moharram* celebrations in Gangauli give the Shias a sense of their own place in history. The village has its own *'Karbala'*, the Saiyids of Gangauli have built it to celebrate the highest sacrifice of Imam Husain and his family who are considered to be the legal descendants of the Prophet. By remembering their sacrifices through the *'majlis'*, the singing of the *'nauhas'* and the rhythmic performances of *'matam'* the Shias, as Alok Bhalla puts it, "re-anchor their lives into something which transcends profane time, and which doesn't suffer the whimsicalities and erosions of history" ("Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition" 10). For the people of Gangauli, Partition is akin to *Karbala*. Moharram and the turmoil of Partition offer striking parallels. Javed Miyan says "it looks like this Pakistan is doing Imam Husain's work, making people grieve" (285).

The novel questions the denial of the truths of the local populace, and the truth enunciated by the official versions of history. *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauly* is an alternative discourse to the much hyped inter-community relations. Contrary to the official history, the village did not have any history of communal violence. There were minor altercations between sects which is normal for any civic society. Reza ironically refutes the accusations made by right wing Hindu political parties that Muslims were outsiders in India. 'Islamic Brotherhood" or Jan Sangathan were simply abstractions outside the lived experiences of Gangaulians. Reza retorts befittingly to Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists The Jan Sangh says that Muslims are outsiders. How can I presume to say they're lying? But I must say that I belong to Ghazipur. My bonds with Gangauli are unbreakable. It is not just a village, it's my home. Home. This word exists in every language and dialect in this world…And I give no one the right to say to me, 'Rahi! you do not belong to Gangauli, and get out and go, say, to Rae bareli.' Why should I go Sahib? I will not go (Reza 291).

The novelist proclaims his right to belong to Gangauli. He does not let the creation of two separate nations Hindustan and Pakistan dislodge him from Gangauli. His identity cannot be politicized. It is beyond religion language and communal affinities. Reza claims Gangauli and not Bijouli to be his ancestral place. He says "I am not related spiritually to Bijouli" (Reza 290). What makes a place home is the memories and the bonds. To describe oneself the idea of locality was paramount. In the words of Raymond Williams, it is the "lived experience" and "structure of feelings" that make a community. Home is where heart is. Tannu, a character in the novel, puts it aptly "This is my home and Ka'aba is Allah Miyan's. If God loves His home then won't He be able to understand that we too can love our home as much as He loves His? (Reza 249).

Reza valorizes Bhojpuri Urdu spoken in Gangauli over chaste Urdu. He remembers the tales of Amir Haza told by Kallu Kakka. He says, "I preferred Kakka's version; perhaps because he didn't tell it in the chaste Urdu of Lucknow but in Bhojpuri Urdu. And besides, he didn't just tell the story - he acted it out as well. (Reza 40). The people of Gangauli refuse to let go of their local dialect, despite the bullying of the students of Aligarh Muslim University. For them, English is *'gitir-pitir'* (Reza 301). They deride chaste Urdu and Hindi as *'Nikaundi* (Reza 301). Their language carries their memories and the secret lore of their lives.

When Muslim League was gaining momentum and demanding a separate nation called Pakistan, the residents of Gangauli were preoccupied in their mundane chores, enmities and Moharram festivities. They were unperturbed by the political events taking place in the rest of the country. The ordinary uneducated people like weavers and traders were putting up resistance to the inflammatory rhetoric of the discourse of Pakistan. Tannu, a war returned soldier, told the person in Black shervani "I am not a voter…I am a Muslim. But I love this village because I am myself this village…(Reza 249). The common people did not see themselves as makers of a new nation. The whole movement of a separate nation was the handiwork of elite intelligentsia. As Phunnan Mian puts it succinctly 'Pakistan-Akistan is the game to fill up (own) bellies' (Reza 263). Gyanendra Pandey in his essay " In Defence of a Fragment" quotes the PUDR report which states that "The major material long term benefit the [rural]elite groups are likely to get from the present riots is land" (40). Mushirul Hasan rightly points out that masses were simply the "victims of the brinkmanship of the British, the Congress and Muslim League, the masses were neither committed to a Hindu state nor an Islamic nation" ("Imaginary Homelands")

India and Pakistan were merely territorial generalizations for the masses, who had not even the slightest inkling about "how Mountbatten's Plan or the Radcliffe Award would change the destinies of millions and tear them apart from their familiar social and cultural moorings" (Hasan "Memories of a Fragmented Nation" 16). *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauly* is a powerful portrayal of a wounded society. The loss of Hindu and Muslim relationship and their division in hate and violence is the most difficult experience for them to come to terms with. Reza laments the loss and says, "What a world of loneliness lies upon Husain this day!" (Reza 293). Everyone, who heard these lines in Gangauli, lamented. All Gangaulians sought spiritual strength in Husain and his 72 followers. They did so to mourn Husain's martyrdom in *Karbala*, but also because "(it) cut umbilical cord of Pakistan (that) was around their necks like a noose, and they were all suffocating" (Reza 293). Now they knew what "a world of loneliness" (293) was like. Life was not the same anymore with relatives across the border. People were worried. They were alone and depressed. The nights became intolerable. "There was a desire to dream, but what was there to dream about?" (293). The atmosphere was foul. It was such that "the blood of one's veins was wandering hopelessly

in Pakistan, and the relationships and mutual affections and friendships...were breaking, and in place of confidence, a fear and deep suspicion was growing in people's heart" (293). Their lost home became a place of yearning. In the words of Alok Bhalla (their) "Civic spaces lost coherence, their time has become fragmented, and they do not know how to retrieve their homes. They are left with a few belongings…which are as unimportant in the making of their new lives as they themselves are in the making of a new nation" ("Memories of a Lost Home" 171).

Reza shows how Partition crept into the interstices of the consciousness of people. Gangaulians are left straddling, trying to make sense of the abyss they are caught in. More than a physical space, Gangauli was a mental space. There were traditional jealousies and animosities earlier amongst people, but a shocking change took hold of Gangauli, giving it the form of a fractured village. Saddan, a character in the novel, relocates to Pakistan, but is still claimed to be the same Syed Saadatul Hasnain Zaidi of village Gangauli. How could Gangauli be another country! When in Pakistan, he would miss Shia congregations during Muharram. "These memories were of no particular importance, they were extremely foolish memories, but still Saddan embraced each one of them again and again and wept. He yearned for Gangauli..." (Reza 322). One cannot dissect human consciousness with the borders drawn with a pen. Reza laments,"With independence several kinds of loneliness had been born, from the loneliness of the bed, to the loneliness of the heart. Every individual in the Uttar and Dakkhin Pattis had found himself suddenly alone… Every emotion was alone…" (Reza 292-293).

In brief, *The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli* proclaims Rahi Masoom Reza's conviction in the restorative power of one's place, home, community, customs, village, local dialect, and above all, the life itself. The novel is a fine illustration of how the legitimate ground realities operating in a geographical locale offer a true socio-political picture vis a vis the national narratives about the period of turmoil prior to and after the partition of British India. Jason Francisco's observations that "Only the literature is . . . ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than political discourse" (25) are quite pertinent.

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Personality Traits: Contextualizing Helen Fisher's FTI Slant in Ruskin Bond's short story "The Long Day"

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Abstract

Personality expounds the person's distinctive character and its qualities all of which designates him/her as an individual unique identity in the world. The understanding of personality traits assists one to empathize and overcome problems by providing simple solutions. The keen perception towards personality make-up would even try to prevent the catastrophes and hard times from occurring. Worldwide, misconceptions are considered to be the sole root cause for all the complications and predicaments. Predominantly, the personality traits of humans are not similar and have different combinations of genes, hormones and, neurotransmitters. The paper attempts to contextualize Helen Fisher's Temperament Inventory and shows how the biological mechanism shapes the human personality in Ruskin Bond's story "The Long Day."
Keywords*: Personality, Biological Traits, Hormones, Neurotransmitters and Relationships.*

Introduction

Ancient Greek thinkers believed that one's personality, or temperament, depended on the strengths of various fluids, or "humors," in one's body. According to the Greek physicians Hippocrates and (later) Galen, there were four main humors, each of which was responsible for a particular pattern of personality. Subsequent addition to the theory of the four humors meant that an excess of one of the humors brought about a specific temperament in people. Later on, Galen stated that a lack of balance between the four humors affected people's way of acting, feeling, and thinking. But there is no evidence that any of these ideas is accurate, and the ancient Greeks themselves did not do any empirical research to find out whether the levels of these bodily humors were actually related to personality characteristics. Nevertheless, the idea of the four humors or temperaments remained popular during medieval times, and was influential even in the modern era.

Fisher's FTI defined

While some modern theorists argue that there is no hard distinction between the two constructs of personality and temperament, few others aver that temperament is a heritable pattern of cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior influenced by experience and that temperament arises from our genetic endowment. It influences and is influenced by the

experience of the individual. Against the backdrop of divergent opinions, Helen Fisher, an American anthropologist and human behavior researcher formulated 'The Four Temperaments of Personality Traits' in the year 2005 which was eventually found to be effective in the fast-growing modernized world to deal with human relationships. The FTI identifies four chemical subsystems of the brain (dopamine, seretonin, testosterone, estrogen) and measures four scales of behavior believed to be produced by those systems and an overall temperament type. She had conducted many experiments to vindicate the concepts scientifically by formulating a series of questions carefully curated to isolate the particular brain systems in question: dopamine, serotonin, testosterone, and estrogen. Fisher's concept is more related to brain science rather than psychology as she explains the functions of brain chemistry through her study that comprises the essential mechanisms in personality formation. "Temperament arises from our genetic endowment. It influences and is influenced by the experience of the individual, one of the outcomes is the adult personality" (qtd. in Fisher et al.,"Four Broad Temperament Dimensions"). Fisher's assertion was that the four chemicals were linked with specific personality traits, called "temperament suites." Eventually, the four personality temperament suites mapped out by Fisher are Explorer, Builder, Director and Negotiator.

The present paper essays to analyse Ruskin Bond's short story, "The Long Day," anthologized in *The Great Train Journey*, in the light of four personality temperament suites embodied in Helen Fisher's Temperament Inventory. "The Long Day" portrays various experiences and encounters of a school student named Suraj who had not performed well in his exams and avoided facing his mother by going out of the house early in the morning and planning to come back late in the evening. The paper analyses how a person's thought process and behaviour are modified by the influence of hormones and neurotransmitters pertaining to his state of affairs, thus raising questions about his behavior. The straightforward answers for these questions are nothing but the impact of the "biological components namely hormones, genes and neurotransmitters which are invariably present in all humans" (Bernstein) though the ratio of these elements varies from person to person. This outlook clearly endorses the fact that people tend to behave in accordance with the commanding levels of hormones and neurotransmitters in the brains. The controlling system in the brain induces them to act in a particular way. This discernment of brain science helps people to solve and resolve many an issue affecting their lives.

Fisher's Four Traits of Personality in Ruskin Bond's "The Long Day"

Explorer

The Neurotransmitter which is supremely responsible for the Explorer type is Dopamine. Fisher explains that "**Explorers** express more of the traits linked with the dopamine system. They tend to be curious, creative, spontaneous, energetic, daring, risk-taking, mentally flexible, enthusiastic and independent. They like novelty and adventure; they think outside the box and they inspire" (Fisher, "Personality"). Overall, people who have a dominant trait of dopamine would be pleasure–seekers, love excitement, learning, travelling and sociable. They establish themselves as curious, goal-oriented, energetic and love to be on their own. They just want to live in the present moment appeasing and not much bothered about future endeavours. Suraj is the protagonist of the storyline "The Long Day," who is a

school-going boy and he generally likes to play and enjoy, his exam results are out and he has failed so he planned a strategy to overcome this issue by escaping from his home. Firstly, he goes to the playground where a few boys are playing football and invited Suraj too. He joined them instantly and played for some time, even though he is not good at football. "A game of football was in progress, and one of the players called out to Suraj to join them" (Bond 27). Suraj felt utmost pleasure while playing and at the same time he is very much goal-oriented to pursue his other plans. Afterward, he goes to the railway station but not taking the regular route. He loves unanticipated exploration and adventure and right away takes an adventurous route that embraces crossing canals, agricultural fields, and hillocks and then finally reaches the station. "He went in the direction of the railway station, but not through the bazaar" (Bond 27). At the canal, he meets a different set of people that include washerwomen, a few men and a group of children who are taking baths in the canal. This aspect exhibits that Suraj is very much affable and sociable.

Suraj sees a train that is passing through the station and he uses his handkerchief to wave farewell to the passengers of the train who are actually strangers to him. "As the train passed, he pulled the handkerchief off his knee and began to wave it furiously" (Bond 28). The act of waving adieu to unknown people imparts him extreme happiness and excitement. Similarly, he is very much curious to know about the passengers, why they travel and what about their present lives and their past incidents and their destination all these things seem to be very mysterious and that provoke his curiosity. He wishes that one day he would unravel it.

Builder

The intense presence of Serotonin neurotransmitters is what makes people Builders. As mentioned by Fisher "**Builders** express more of the traits linked with the serotonin system. They tend to be traditional, conventional and cautious (but not scared); they observe social norms. They follow the rules, respect authority, enjoy making plans and schedules, and are conscientious and risk averse. They are concrete and logistical thinkers who focus on the details and the process; they are stabilizers" (Fisher, "Personality"). Typically, these persons would be as highly planned, cautious, valuing authority and routine-oriented. Suraj is not in fact routine-oriented but this particular drawback urges him to be routine-oriented. At this juncture, his serotonin segregation is higher and it is obviously a surprise to his mother. "His mother was surprised to see him up so early" (Bond 26). Suraj said that he would be visiting his friend Somi for the afternoon meal and he would come home only in the evening. This outlook explicates that he is good at planning and very much cautious to escape a hard time. He respects authorities like the teacher, mother and school report which are automatically instilled through conventional cultural practices during his growth phase. Bond delineates especially the preplanning quality of Suraj in an accurate manner. The progress report is going to arrive only the next day and Suraj is again planning for tomorrow's activities such as embracing a game of any sort, a bath in the canal, watching the passing train and spending some time at the bazaar. The intense planning also states his cautious actions. "Builders love structure and routine. They are traditional and conventional, conforming to social norms, including following the rules and respecting authority" (Regan). As stated by Fisher, Suraj is having a combination of all the four personality traits and depending upon the level of hormones and neurotransmitters, the action of Suraj is determined.

Director

The sex hormone Testosterone is found to be having a higher influence in this type known as Director. Fisher remarks that "**Directors** express more of the traits linked with the testosterone system. These men and women tend to be analytical, logical, direct, decisive, skeptical, tough-minded, emotionally contained, rank oriented and competitive, as well as experimental and excellent at understanding "rule-based systems"—including engineering, math, computers, mechanics, and/or music. They are strategic thinkers and Commanding Leaders" (Fisher). Suraj's friend Ranji falls under the category of the director who seems to be very much analytical, independent and logical when compared with Suraj. Suraj asked him why Ranji has come to this lichi tree, the answer given by him is very much logical which is '"Came for lichis"' (Bond 30). It is Ranji who suggests and takes a firm decision of visiting the bazaar to have delicious fried pakoras. The decision-making skill of Ranji is expressed through this specified action. Suraj has obviously no money to spend on pakoras, here being resourceful Ranji spends his money to buy *pakoras* and they both enjoy eating the *pakoras* together. The hormone testosterone level is found to be high in Ranji and this is conveyed through his course of actions in the narrative.

Negotiator

Negotiators are having the dominant trait of Estrogen hormone level in their body. Fisher articulates that "**Negotiators** express more of the traits in the estrogen system. They are synthetic, holistic, contextual, long-term and imaginative thinkers. They are good at reading postures, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. And they excel at people skills--being intuitive, insightful, trusting, empathetic and nurturing. They make excellent educators, medical workers and salespeople" (Fisher). They do know the knack for understanding complex and ambiguous problems. They connect to people very well and are highly empathetic towards organizing things. And most importantly Negotiators are more emotionally expressive. Suraj's mother is having a more dominant estrogen personality trait that initially not much bothered about the progress report of Suraj until one of his friends informed her about the arrival of the report. Suraj thought that his mother is going to know the truth about his report only after its arrival, but his mother must have guessed and her intuition must have given her some hint and that is not explicated. In the storyline, the narrative is in the perspective of Suraj and hence his mother's thoughts are not revealed.

Mostly, mothers tend to care and nurture children more than men folks. The caring trait is induced by the estrogen hormone which is naturally more in women than men. In the story under scrutiny Suraj's mother is not an exception obviously, she cares the most for Suraj, '"Well, have your bath first and put something in your stomach"' (Bond 27). She always seeks to that his essential needs like hunger should be sufficed at any cost. She has not bothered much for herself and is ready to sacrifice anything for her child. Bond very naturally presents the motherly love through Suraj's mother character that is always insightful and caring, "'Come and have your food"' (Bond 31). When expressing her care towards her son is very much emotionally connected and it is expressed through her dialogues. "Negotiators are conceptual thinkers and Fisher notes they do well with ambiguity and long-term thinking … empathetic, trusting people" (Regan). They are intuitive, insightful, charming and caring in nature. Naturally, women tend to adapt and adjust to any environment. Suraj's mother fits into the mould of very much sociable and adaptive person.

Conclusion

The different ratios of sex hormones and neurotransmitters are present in the human body and the level of proportions in the body is said to be the Neural/Personality Signature. The personality signature differs from person to person and so it is essential for the understanding of one's personality trait. The biological function and its impact on the person's personality well articulated by Fisher, are finely reflected in Ruskin Bond's story, The Long Day." The story is a fine study of four personality traits drawn up by Fisher. Ruskin Bond has captured naturally the lifestyle of a school-going boy by focusing on his activities on a prolonged day. The characters in "The Long Day" - Suraj, Suraj's mother and Suraj's friend Ranji - distinctly represent the four personality traits as outlined in Helen Fisher, are applicable to all people, irrespective of their race, class, gender and nationality because a person cannot claim to be purely dopamine or testosterone. In fact, he/she is indeed a mixture of all the two sex hormones and two neurotransmitters. The level of their combination actually defines one's personality which is nothing but how the body shapes the personality.

As the narrative unfolds, Suraj's father is said to be away on a tour, this implies that to a certain extent Suraj has the combination of his father's personality as well. At the time of absence of Suraj father, a few activities of Suraj like getting up early in the morning, leaving for work and coming back late at night, cautiously planning for the next day and routine-orientation, resemble the personality of a father in a patriarchal society. It is generally observed in the experiment that people would be having two of the four temperaments at the possible higher level. In that sense, the protagonist Suraj is both an Explorer and Builder. Personality traits help to understand people's personality and their thought processes and the reason for their behaviour. In one's life, it is necessary to comprehend and acknowledge who one is and who one is not. This process of understanding dismantles most of the day-to-day problems in humans' lives because people spend and waste more and more precious time on silly and unworthy things. Ruskin Bond skillfully presents various specimen of personalities through the fictional characters for a better conception of the society in which people live. In a deeper sense, Fisher's Temperament Inventory examines humans' behavioural traits from childhood to adulthood, thereby solving human problems.

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Secession vs. Cultural, Political Assertion of Naga Tribes: A Study of Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood*

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Abstract

Albert Camus (1913-1960) in his essay "Historical Rebellion" writes that the true end of any struggle lies in freedom. But can rebellion itself not become the reason of the suspension of freedom, a more concerted foray into violence, murder, and abuse of human rights? Does the concept of justice stand defeated/compromised then? Can there not be other ways to achieve freedom sans the use of violence and secession politics? Why should terror become the watchword of any struggle? The Northeast happens to be such a region where the demands for separate homelands have taken the nation by storm. As a celebration of pluralities has got momentum with the arrival of democracies in various parts of the globe, a plethora of mini but powerful cultural identities find space in tribal literatures. However, what remains significant and unquestionable is that the idea of separation from a state as a whole and the creation of mini homelands must not be carried forward. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse Nagaland born writer Easterine Kire's novel Bitter Wormwood *(2011) in the light of secession politics and how it poses a threat to the nation. Battling with questions of pre-Japanese invasion from 1937 to the Indian Partition to AFSPA to the year 2007, the protagonist Moselie brings to the fore various facets of Naga life and their struggle for autonomy. However, what remains also a note of central concern is his disillusionment with divisions within Naga society itself where relentless violence dampens his spirit and how the unending bloodshed across generations has filled the lives of common man with unfathomable pain.*

Keywords: *Secession, Violence, Tribes, Wormwood, Culture, State*

Naga cultural and political identity is fraught with countless issues. The Nagas never considered themselves as an integral part of the Indian republic. They always wanted a separate nation and took up arms to fight the Indian Army post-Independence. As happens in most of the cases, the movement was brutally suppressed by the Indian Army. However, the Underground, the group of Naga rebels, freedom fighters, kept up the flame of protest ablaze with many ambushes and skirmishes. Though the Naga aborigines maintain their right to land, claiming to be the earliest inhabitants of the place, the demand for full autonomy would peril India's security as it is bordered with China which has already threatened India's peace by external aggression.

The British rule added to the woes of the tribals in the first place. To serve their own interests, they intruded into the tribal lands thereby making it easier for the non-tribals to encroach into the tribal areas. It is what "undermined the traditional economy and society of the tribals [and] the newly imposed British land system was radically different from that prevailing among many tribals" (Sharma 4792). Verrier Elwin writes that the tribals "believe

that the forest belongs to them and that they have a right to do what they will with it. They have been there, they say, for centuries; it is their life and they consider themselves justified in resisting any attempt to deprive them of it" (257). Ramachandra Guha calls the tribals as "the most disadvantaged and least visible of India's poor" (2375). As the British left after granting freedom to India, the Nagas began to vociferously raise their demand for a separate nation. Even Mahatma Gandhi agreed to provide them a separate state, however, after his death, Nehru never wanted this part of the Northeast to be seceded from India.

Christopher Heath Welman in his book *A Theory of Secession: The Case for Political Self-Determination* (2005) argues that "any group has a moral right to secede as long as its political divorce will leave it and the remainder state in a position to perform the requisite political functions" (1). However, India would have lost much more as a nation had Nagaland been captured by Burma or China. Harry Beran suggests that "liberal political philosophy requires that secession be permitted if it is effectively desired by a territorially concentrated group within a state and is morally and practically possible" (qtd. in Dowding 71). Hence, it was not 'morally and practically' possible to secede Nagaland from India as that would have meant the creation of many such nations in the Northeast. Percy B. Lehning in his book *Theories of Secession* (2005) also writes, "Do individuals have the right to have the state of their choice, irrespective of the wishes of other individuals in the territory in which they live? (3). It clearly shows that not all the Nagas wanted a separate nation. "Secession is not an instant fact. It always implies a complex series of claims and decisions, negotiations and/or struggle, which may – or may not – lead to the creation of a new State" (Cohen 14). "Cultural diversity was India's distinguishing trait, and a source of strength rather than a weakness" (Bajpai 3) at the time of Independence and Nagaland found sufficient/enough political representation in the Indian Union. (Bajpai 3) Rather than viewing India as "an assortment of quarrelling nationalities" (Bajpai 4), as was done by the British, the solution lies in retaining cultural identities and not in secession and simultaneously contributing to the nation-building.

Bitter Wormwood begins in the year 2007 when Mose finds a young man shot to death in the broad daylight. The narration then shifts to the year 1937 when Mose was born, the only son of his mother Vilau. The strength of Naga women comes to light as Vilau gives birth to her son in a shed amidst the fields as the home was quite far away. The young mother carries her baby back home which was not "an uncommon phenomenon in those days" (15). The mid-wife who takes care of the baby brings another important aspect of their culture as she elaborates, "Our people always name their children as soon as they can, because naming them makes them members of the clan and protects them from being taken by spirits" (17). The naming of the child as Moselie is again symbolic as it means "one-who-will-meet-life-without-guile" (17).

Mose's joining the Mission School coincides with the Japanese aggression during the World War II. Since Mose is the only hope of his mother and grandmother, he works really hard and eventually gets the stipend to support his education. Soon he learns English which gradually supersedes Tenyidie, the local language spoken by Mose's tribe. Even Vilau and Khrienuo take pride in speaking broken English. However, the news of the departure of the white man makes Vilau wonder as to "who will be the government if the white man goes away?" (31). Later, when on their departure, the British leave Nagaland to India, the family feels disconcerted. Further the bloodshed between the Muslims and the Hindus unsettles them as they fail to believe the neighbours ruthlessly killing each other. It is with the Independence only that the Naga demand for self-determination and secession begins to gain momentum.

The Naga leaders believe in Gandhi and consider him to be a kind man who would not object to the Naga Independence. However, Gandhi's assassination shocks Mose and his mother and grandmother. The further news that he is not killed by a white man but "his own countryman" (48) saddens them.

The novelist also shows the gradual conversion of the Nagas into Christianity by the British: "Khrienuo and Vilau were both non-Christians, but Mose had begun to recite the Christian prayers he learned at school. When he was quite convinced that he wanted to worship the Christian God, a gentle conversion of the whole family took place" (51). Eventually, the pastor announces that "we need to pray for our land. The Indian Government has taken Zapuphizo prisoner for saying that the Naga people want independence" (52). Phizo had been put behind the bars "for writing letters to the British Parliament" (52). Khrienuo also says that "we have never been a part of India before. Why should we join them now?" (53). Lt Gen JR Mukherjee who spent twenty-five years in Nagaland writes about the plebiscite thus:

> In 1951 Phizo organized a controversial plebiscite in Naga Hills District to determine whether the Nagas wanted independence or merger with India. He then claimed that 99% were in favour of independence. In fact, the so-called plebiscite was held only in Kohima and Mokokchung with limited attendance, and women and other areas of Nagaland had been excluded. These realities are little known to all including the Naga public at large. (Mukherjee 32)

Wayan Norman talks about the morality of secession, saying that it is justified only if a group "is systematically oppressed or exploited" (182). The Nagas were never oppressed by India during the British rule.

The strong presence of the Indian Army disrupts the daily life of the Nagas. Women stop working in the fields late evenings. Even Mose and his friends at school are advised not to move into the town after six. Even the many letters addressed to the UNO and the Prime Minister of India by the Naga National Council fail to illicit a favourable response. Nehru was not happy about the Naga Plebiscite: "Whether heaven falls or India goes to pieces and blood runs red in the country, I don't care. Nagas will not be allowed to become independent" (62). Eventually the villagers are forced to put their signatures to see Nagaland as part of India.

The secret formation of the Underground further adds to the woes of those who did not want to be a part of it. Since the Underground depend on the villagers for supplying them food items on the sly, the latter feel sandwiched between the army and the Underground. Women losing their sons to both the Underground and the atrocities of the enemy become the worst victims. The army begins "to identify and harass the relatives of those in the Underground in an effort to make the members surrender" (83). Further their bodies become the easy targets of violence as many are brutally raped. The novelist highlights that the Indian Army does not only burn the whole villages in the Ao and Sema areas but also rapes women. Further a missing woman who "had been raped and murdered and decapitated" (82) fumes the villagers as such cases had never happened before.

Situation turns grimmer when a bullet kills Khrieuno, leaving Vilau and Mose broken. Moreover, no soldier could have been accused of the killing as the year 1953 brings in another act known as "the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act" which empowers "a soldier to "shoot and kill, in case it is felt necessary to do so for maintaining of public order"(73). These unbridled powers to the soldiers further cause endless panic among the common people. It is what causes Mose and his friend Neituo leave their school and join the Underground. Running out of food supplies and their resort to killing wild animals or eating

gourd from the fields causes some dismay as villages had been burned which were a lifeline for the partisans. However, they feel that they will eventually win as an officer claims, "The Indian soldier does not feel for the land as we do. Sooner or later we will defeat them" (95).

The spies from within the Nagas further dampen the spirits of the Naga rebels. The making of Nagaland a state sends shockwaves among the partisans. Further, the government's offer of rehabilitation and land to the rebels who surrender syncs well with Mose and Neituo returning to the normal life as the mothers of both were bed-ridden. Eventually, Mose marries Neilhounuo, known as the rifle girl in the Underground and she had also left the Underground as her father was sick.

Easterine Kire shows the passage of time to cover a history of nearly seventy years. Neilhounuo gives birth to a baby girl who is named Sabunuo. Just after two months of Sabunuo's birth, Vilau passes away, creating further void in the lives of the couple again. The writer talks about the survival of the Mose family as the birth and death coincide with the same year. The birth is emblematic of the life which goes on despite onslaught of varied sorts. However, back in civil life, Neilhounuo feels disillusioned now with the war as a lot of blood had already been shed. The novelist captures the pain of Neilhounuo in particular and women in general:

> It was a man's war. If it had been left to the women, maybe they would have talked it over and sorted it out long back. After all, it was they who bore the brunt of the deaths of husbands, lovers, brothers, and sons. On both sides. But women did not settle wars. It was unheard of. The women's lot was to mourn their dead. And the very next day try to find food for their families. (113)

The growing factionalism among the Nagas causes alarm as break-away group nearly kills the three school boys who drop out of the school to join the Underground. Moreover, the passing of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, and the Disturbed Areas Act makes any peaceful resolution to the problem seem a really distant dream. The bombing of the Ruby Cinema Hall on 4 February 1973 leaves many dead and it is the Underground that shamelessly execute this heinous act where many innocent children die. This resort to violence further weakens the demand for a separate nation and attracts widespread condemnation from all quarters. Eventually even after Mose opens up his own shop, the ghost of the past keeps haunting him. The way two Underground members fling things across in his shop and beat him mercilessly shocks him. The angry outburst that "Traitors! You and your kind have sold out the cause . . . We have not pity for people like you" (119) shows the precarious situation of Mose. Their walking out of the Underground and leading a happy life vexes the Underground who now instil fear in the minds of the people. The other breakout group calls itself the Nagaland Socialist Council of Nagaland, those who followed the Chinese Communist principles. Mose and Neituo also realize, "When you begin to kill each other, you no longer have a cause left . . . then, the Indian government has just been handed a very good reason for being here" (148).

The shift from the old generation to the young one brings no peace. While the army senselessly shoots two boys, Neituo and Mose feel very much disillusioned. Neituo's son Vilalhou joins as a government teacher at twenty-one. Both Neituo and Mose marry off their son and daughter respectively with each other in December 1986. Sabunuo sets up her own weaving business to become self-dependent and also hires two girls from the Dimasa Kachari tribe of Assam. She does not only weave body-cloth but also school bags and table mats. Sabunuo gives birth to a boy who is baptised as Neibuo.

The young opportunists instil fear in the minds of the people as they extort money.

Mose condemns them: "Political causes being abused by petty criminals for lining their pockets" (163). Kire writes about Neilhounuo and common people's suffering:

> Neilhounuo was disgusted with the way factionalism had created more crime in town. In addition there were many jobless young men joining the factions and extorting money. They added to the atmosphere of fear that had become a constant in people's lives. (163)

Their own men terrorising the common people and killing them proves too much for them to bear. More, the factional groups would take away nearly twenty-five percent share of small shopkeepers and office-goers. "What hurts him [Mose] most is the gradual degradation of Naga society, where factional killings have become the order of the day" (Boruah n.pag.). Factionalism destroys the credibility of the Naga movement and the eventual torture, extortion of money and killings of common people by the factionalists shows an element of disunity amongst themselves.

Kire takes the situation to the year 2005 where Sabuno's son Neibuo joins the Shri Ram College of Commerce in Delhi. The first racist slur he counters is from a senior student who calls him a *paharia*, a hill dweller. Even girls from the Northeast are termed *badchalan* means easy women. The novelist exposes how girls were becoming the targets of "carefully planned rapes and sexual attacks" (182).

Eventually Neibuo's friendship with Rakesh, another student from Haryana turns out to be interesting. His grandfather Himmat Singh had served in the army in Nagaland in the 1960s. Rakesh makes a very apt comment upon the compulsion of both their grandparents during those turbulent years, "Consider what lives they led, these two, one fighting for freedom and the other thinking that he was fighting to preserve the integrity of his nation" (188). Himmat emphasizes how Indian army was acting as a professional unit:

> We were not there as an occupying force. But we were there to prevent secession by the Nagas from the Indian Union. I don't regret my years in Nagaland. I only wish I could have gone there in peacetime so that I could have befriended people and done more for them. In war, there is always distrust. (200)

Himmat further expresses his opinion about war time as a crude reality and speaks about meeting Mose thus: "It would be a great honour to meet a former warrior. Even though he was once my enemy, I bear him no ill-will. We were pawns in a bigger game, that's all. All those killed. Fathers and sons and husbands" (202).

Himmat Singh speaks out the truth concerning the duty of soldiers during these troubled times. He says, "As a police officer, there were many things I could not speak out against. If I had done that, I would have been seen as a traitor to my government. But now I can speak as an individual. When you are in fear for your life, you shoot first and ask questions later" (205). He gives voice to the soldiers' pain as well as they had to negotiate an alien culture of the hills apart from linguistic barriers. Rakesh's visit to Nagaland and meeting with Neibuo's grandparents is again fruitful and he admires these innocent farmers and feels pity for their terrible plight. The meeting of the two people of young generation is to look out for a remedy for this political problem as the novelist corroborates in an interview:

> I wanted to write a nonstereotypical book about Naga political history and the story of the two grandsons of the two soldiers meeting up and striking up a deep friendship is not untrue. It is also a book that questions political ideologies and their solutions and offers a human solution instead. As a Naga writer, it has been cathartic to write about the Naga political conflict. (Daftuar 3)

As the story moves back to the present in 2007 again, Mose does not only feel pity for

the young man who is shot in the market but also laments that the divisive groups have destroyed the Naga cause. Further, when the old Mose tries to rescue a Bihari shopkeeper from the Underground members, he is also killed by the Underground, making the appeal for peace all the more resonant. His grandson Neibuo realizes the importance of the loss of human lives and appeals "the factional leaders to teach their members about the worth of each human life and how irreplaceable it was when taken away" (276). The same note is further struck as the novelist looks out for peace. "In some situations history kills solutions. So one has to simply push it out. Adapt it. Focus on the present moment, and on the people who are alive today, not those who are dead and gone" (236).

Neibuo further gives vent to some regressive tendencies of the Nagas, "The problem with us Nagas is that we have allowed the conflict to define us for too long. It has overtaken our lives so much that we have been colonized by it and its demands on us . . . We are still allowing ourselves to be bound by cultural dictates and the culture of the conflict itself" (236). The Naga movement thus fails as it "descends into violent factionalism" (Haleda n.pag.). "Tribal society is witnessing an internal upheaval. Stratification has emerged. Differentiation is growing. The long dormant gender issues have surfaced. Tribal women are also questioning such aspects of tribal customary laws that permit polygyny and deny them all rights in property except the right to maintenance during their life time" (Singh 86). In another interview, Easterine Kire emphasizes the need for making solutions as everything about the tribals cannot be adorable:

> Living in Norway has given me the distance I needed to become an objective writer and thinker. I no longer take sides and I feel that has given me a greatly objective perspective of the situation at home. I think differently now: I am solution oriented instead of problem oriented. I am at the same time moving beyond the narrow confines of being defined by other people and being defined by the conflict because there is much more to me and my people than just another political conflict. (ICORN n.pag.)

While alive, Mose had plucked a bitter wormwood leaf and stuck it behind his ear as it would keep not only the bad spirits away but also heal cuts and insect bites. Now his grandson Neibuo picks up the same leaf of bitter wormwood, saying that the Nagas have forgotten to use this leaf. The need to revive the use of the leaf is to keep the bad spirit of violence away to restore peace and happiness.

To conclude, cultural identity and political rights of the Nagas are inextricable. However, political activism accompanied with militant secessionist voices shakes the foundations of an otherwise peaceful nation. While cultural assertion and political resistance to achieve a few demands within one nation state are a must for a dignified life, the voice for the creation of separate homelands for different ethnic, tribal groups would surely undermine the national integrity. While the novelist does valorise quite conspicuously the Naga struggle for independence, she also presents the dark side of violence which does not even spare the life of Mose. Through the disillusioned state of Mose, Neilhounuo, Neituo and Himmat, the writer appeals for peace and does not seem to advocate a secessionist politics. Herbert Read writes in his Foreword to Albert Camus's *The Rebel* about the sustaining power of solution and hope, "After an age of anxiety, despair, and nihilism, it seems possible once more to hope—to have confidence again in man and in the future" (3). Kire seems to advocate for the same peace after a lot of bloodshed. Plagued by a series of tribal movements, the common people look for peace.

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A Stylistic Analysis of "The Strange Affair of Robin S. Ngangom"

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Abstract

The paper attempts to explore the style of Robin S. Ngangom, a North-East Indian English poet, through a systematic and comprehensive stylistic analysis of his longest poem "The Strange Affair of Robin S. Ngangom." The textual data are elucidated by emphasising on a precise level of their linguistic structure. The linguistic based critical analysis has been of immense significance in revealing some characteristic features of Ngangom's poetic style. His linguistic choices in this poem are observed to be influenced mainly by his desire to raise voice for his people of Manipur in their raw form amalgamated with utmost honesty and transparency. Within the areas of plain, contemporary vocabulary and normal syntax, Ngangom achieves significant effects through some lexical and syntactic devices like a neat structure of lexical sets and sub-sets, the use of unpredictable collocations and multiple connotations of words, free direct speech, and rhetorical questions. This poem, in spite of its plain vocabulary and regular syntax, is rendered 'poetic' through certain phonological and semantic devices. Music is interwoven with its structure through a profuse use of schemes like alliteration, consonance, assonance and internal rhyme. Besides revealing important aspects of Ngangom's style, the stylistic analysis has also offered insights into the deeper significance of this poem.

Keywords: *stylistics, poetry, Indian English Poetry, Language, analysis, identity, North-East Indian English Poetry*

Introduction

The critical study of literature encompasses application of various critical theories to analyse nature, function and effect of literary texts. The critical theory of Stylistics believes in the inseparability of literature and its language. It investigates literature through the feature of its language. Phonology implies how sound is arranged to create meaning. According to Lodge(2009), "phonology is the study of linguistic systems. Specifically the way in which sound represents, differences of meaning in a language." Kennedy (1983) viewed, "A figure of speech may be said to occur whenever a poet or writer, for the sake of freshness or emphasis, departs from the usual denotation of words." Freeman (1971) views that stylistics as a sub discipline started in the second half of the 20th century. Stylistics is the scientific study of literary style and the methods used in written language. Fowler (1986) observed some of the best literary criticism of twentieth century has focused on the language of literary works. The canon of Indian English Poetry comprises of many poets who own distinct voices that raise issues like identity crisis, ethnicity, violence, insurgency, marginalisation and conflict concerning their contemporary surroundings. Robin S. Ngangom is one of them. He asserts the identity of North-Eastern people of India through this poem under study. His choice of words, syntax, figures of speech, grammatical items contribute to the message he wishes to

convey about the aftermath of the conflict between Indian armed forces and the insurgents. Imphal(Manipur) born, Ngangom is a bilingual poet who writes in English and Meiteilon and teaches at the North Eastern Hill University Shillong. His corpus of poetry includes Words and the Silence (1988), Time's Crossroads(1994) and The Desire of Roots(2006). His essay "Poetry in a Time of Terror" appeared in The Other Side of Terror: An Anthology of Writings On Terrorism in South Asia(2009). He was conferred with the Katha Award for Translation in 1999. Ngangom often defamiliarises the familial world and effectively communicates his complex experiences through semantically deviant expressions or metaphors. He has an uncanny gift for inventing accurate analogues, bold images and fresh grounds of comparison. His poem is full of concretive, animistic and dehumanising metaphors which effortlessly convey his characteristic perception of the world around him.

King Budhachandra of Manipur signed the Instrument of Accession joining India on 11 August 1947 and signed the Merger Agreement on 21 September 1949 making Manipur a 'Part C State' of the Indian Union. Manipur was made a Union Territory in 1956, and a full-fledged state in 1972. Their claim for self-government from India still continues which has resulted in the formations of several rebel groups and insurgents. Many issues such as Armed Force Special Power Act, insurgency, ethnic tension have marked their pervasive impressions on the collective consciousness of Manipur people. Such conflicting atmosphere has led to the displacement and killing of thousands of people. Poets like Ngangom emerging from the region write about their individual experiences in their works. In the editors' note to the Dancing Earth: Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast(2009), Robin S. Ngangom and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih have argued:

> The expressive concerns of the writer from the Northeast cannot be the same as that of a writer from elsewhere in India. The writer from the Northeast differs from his counterpart in the mainland in a significant way. While it may not make him a better writer, living with the menace of the gun he cannot merely indulge in verbal wizardry and woolly aesthetics but perforce master the art of witness (xii).

Ngangom expresses the situation of his homeland, Manipur, in his essay, "Poetry in the Time of Terror"(2006):

> Manipur, my native place in Northeast India, is in a state of anarchy, and my poetry springs from the cruel contradictions of that land. Manipur boasts of its talents in theatre, cinema, dances, and sports. But how could you trust your own people who would entrust corruption, aids, terrorism and drugs to their children? Naturally the Manipur that I ritually go back to every year is not the sacred world of my childhood. (168)

"The Strange Affair of Robin S. Ngangom" is a prose poem. Poetic prose also seeks to establish discourse. There is a descriptive address to people of Manipur and the whole world. The persona uses the first person pronoun "I" to bring the element of collective experiences of his people (lines 16-21). The use of passive sentences emphasises the deeper impact of the violence on the receiver and hence the receiver is focused upon that becomes the subject of the sentence. There is a working of oppositional stance in the poem. The persona of the poem talks on the behalf of the suppressed and mutilated selves of the Manipur people. The voice is raised as a perspective of an Insider (line 35). It works to establish identity of the poet as well as his own people.

Excessive use of active voice in the poem conveys the concern of the poet towards the need of acknowledging the hitherto ignored subject, that is, the people of Manipur. The use of words like "mammon", "cadavers", "dissection" indicates the nature of greed and corruption

that polluted the morality and humanity of his land. The poem has four parts: The first part of the poem (lines 1-63) describes conversion of the 'pristine' native land of the persona's boyhood into 'murderous' in the present with encompassing food shortage, doubt, suspicion and devastation. The second part of the poem (lines 63-107) gives an account of how the Indian armed forces through their 'appliances of death and destruction' created destruction in his native land making the whole concept of liberation and independence into a travesty. The third part of the poem (lines 108- 52) conveys the poet's message to all the youths to cherish the new faith abandoning 'ideological horror' and remain morally indebted to their identity. In the fourth part of the poem (lines 153-96) Ngangom portrays sullenly the darkness that the 'coarse theatre of time' has inflicted on him and the people of his native land creating a feeling of despair and captivity which normally exist in a war-ravaged region.

John Lennard (2006,156-157) observed, "In most good verse there is a swirling relationship between clauses, grammatical units, and lines, poetic units; variations produced by clauses shorter or longer than a line are instrumental in preventing dullness." Ngangom's poem is punched through enjambed line-breaks and pausing appropriately at punctuation-marks along with the patterns of clause against line. Metrical disturbance of the poem is analogous to the mental agony and mutilated heart of the persona. There is a distinct broken rhythm in the poem that corresponds to the fragmentary inner self of the people and to the wrecked image of the land. In the poem, sometimes commas end-stop the lines and sometimes huge welter of short clauses bleeds off momentum, as an eddy detracts from a current; there is a steady backward movement of caesurae, many lines split: the weight of the caesura lessening from full-stop to comma. Ngangom produces huge clauses enjambed through line breaks and long clauses lessen ambiguities and eliminate difficulties of reading the poem aloud. Enjambed lines are used as the flow of the sentence continues across the line breaks. This long poem draws the attention to the anxiety and fear of the Manipuri people who have been enduring violence and conflict for a long time. The poet points out the frailties of his own people too to envision a peaceful future for his people. Multiple commas (11,16,24,25,27,32,39,44,45,54,56,57,64,73,79-81,96,98,101,105, 108, 109, 111, 115, 117, 133,137-39,141,143,149-50, 162, 172, 179, 181,183) in the poem embody a trapped mind pacing within its skull. The poet seems caught up in the conflicting political and social issues of Manipur and envisages a solution.

Repetition is a primitive device of intensification, expression of deep emotions in gravity to the situation/ idea expressed. There are many issues (like voicing the unheard and the unspoken, concern and love for his homeland, bleak and dismal silence over the solution of the conflicts) that the poet attempts to emphasise with the use of repetition of sentences (lines 12-15). The expression "maybe" (lines 178-184) is repeated four times to indicate the bewilderment and confused thinking of some of the people of his land which destroys the peace and clarity of the persona's mind. Patriotism is defined by choosing sarcasm amalgamated with the element of pity. The persona is anguished and grief-stricken to see the predicament of his people and the variant changes that his homeland has undergone. The lexical choice in the poem indicates the disillusionment about the whole situation; patriotism is defined by "preaching secession", "mourning our merger with a nation," "honouring martyrs/ who died in confusion", "inflicting" native customs and traditions on "hapless peoples", "admiring/ the youth who fondles grenades", "secretly depriving my brother", "music of guns."(131-143) Thus, the persona conveys the ignoble nature of the co-existence of violence and apathy: "Stones speak, the hills speak/when we finally fall silent.(146-147) There is an indication of the disparagement towards the fact of not writing "right" history. The

persona indicates that silence can further deepen the wound of the wrong history written about his people. Lines 159 and 160 assert the poignant pain of the persona.

Rhetorical questions (lines 149-152) are put to bring home the message to the people that sheer greed and corruption will give no answer to the ethnic conflicts. Towards the end of the poem, the poet asks:

But where can one run from the homeland,
where can I flee from your love?

Persistently varying length of sentences embodies diminution and isolation. This poem is engaged in social and political commentary. The poem is in full engagement with oppression and aftermath of violence. The poet reminds the readers about the dark reminder of human existence: violence that has never proven to be of any worth. There is a disturbing 'labyrinth' that catches at a mental pathology that found increasingly poignant expression in syntax and imagery as Ngangom's capacity to prick the conscience ripened towards the end of the poem. Short lines indicate an expressive burden of oppressive multiplicity/plurality of the law makers and enforcers on the minds of the inhabitants of the hill lands.

Ngangom uses the phrase "my love" to refer to Manipur which is indicative of personifying the homeland as a dear companion. The form of address for the homeland is "healing breasts", "scars appeared on the body" and there is a feeling of "stigmatised" "guilt" in the "heavy heart" of the poet for not being able to do anything to save the land from "the beaten-up past" (65-72). The use of prose poem as well as the descriptive narration of events uncovers traces of history that affected the lives and psyche of the inhabitants. "We honour the unvarying certainty,/ and pay routine homage to silence." (101-102) The subconscious ease that the persona calls in through the form of address for his homeland is suggestive of his yearning to see the peace ushering in his homeland. As the reader penetrates to a deeper layer of understanding the linguistic choice in the poem, the choice of words and phrases showing negative and pessimistic attitude can be identified. Towards the ending of the poem, the persona uses personification [homeland as "my love", question word to emphasise his helplessness for not being able to find a way, repetitive inverted subject verb order ["where can" one/I], post modifier of noun [prepositional phrase of the noun 'life' 189], preposition "between' is repeated to accentuate the vacuum of spaces: inner and outer, relative clause indicating bleak and depressing situation of his people: "My love, how can I explain/That I abominate (hate) laws/ When I am gone/ I would leave you these:/A life without mirrors, and/The blue ode between pines/Between pines and the winter sky./But where can one run from the homeland,/Where can I flee from your love?/They have become pursuing prisons/Which hold the man/With criminal words." (185-196)

Phonological Patterns

There are two ways of showing the connection between sound and sense of a poem: Chiming and onomatopoeia. Chiming(William Empson [1947,12]) is the mechanism of connecting two words by similarity of sound so as to sensitize the reader to a possible semantic relationship between them. The phonetic link indicative of the semantic relationship between the words may be alliterative or one of pararhyme. Expressions like "go to gloating", "begging bowls" are the examples of alliteratively connected words. Alliteration in "bronze bell", "somewhere, sometime", "begging bowls", "death and devastation", "stones speak", "history, hunch-backed", "without a woman" to draw the attention of the readers towards the issue of Manipur and emphasise the predicament of the

inhabitants living in the conflict-inflicted land. The words are meaningfully connected by a similarity of sound. The recurrence of the sound makes the reader capture the 'intellectual point' inbuilt in the words.

Foregrounding: The syntax of the poem is foregrounded with the plain regular common patterns of English language with a stylistic vein that stirs some deep responses in the readers. The pattern of syntax is foregrounded too in the poem when the poet uses the recurrent personal pronouns: "I remember", "I left", "I can say", "I envied", "I am enchanted", "I was made", "I invited", "I found", "We sowed", "we met", "I touched", "I ask", "I inhale", "I stand", "I've accomplished", "I abominate". This pattern of parallelism establishes a relationship of equivalence among the different actions embodied in the different verbal phrases. These actions contemplated by the persona are parts of the total experience of the same person who can understand the circumstances of Manipur people in all its aspects and on the basis of their understanding of the situation can envisage a series of events arising out of it. Considering the conflicting nature of the persona's homeland, the poet is tormented with the realisation of "death and destruction" of his people and believe "laws" "have become pursuing prisons/which hold the man/with criminal words" (194-96)

The nominal group is a structure which includes nouns, adjectives, numerals and determiners termed as modifier, head and qualifier. The nominal group can act as the subject of a sentence. The presence of nominal group in the poem is a distinct compositional device. This structural device balances the persona's inner chaos of fear and disappointment towards the political, social and cultural changes in his homeland with the hope to see the better prospect for his people and land. Let us see how the pattern of nominal groups pervading the whole structure of the poem produces certain literary effects.

Modifier	Head	Qualifier
Bronze	bell	
Painted	girls	
Blind	boys	
Marigold	garland	
Gloating	neighbours	
begging	bowls	
unleashing	ideological horror	
solitary	word	of love
unpardonable	obscenity	
preaching	secession	
honouring	martyrs	who died in confusion
hapless	peoples	
blindfolded	love,fear, anger, and old	despair
blue	ode	between pines and the winter sky
pursuing	prison	

Simile: Ngangom uses similes to put across his message emphatically: "Soldiers with black scarves (mufflers)/ like mime artists/Turn them in seconds into shrouds." (75-77) The greed has tarnished the existence of hilly beauty life where "cargoes of sand and mortar/ Mammon...cut down the remaining trees...like cadavers (corpses) for dissection." (88-92) "Morning papers like watered-down milk"(93) put on the market the news of "rape, extortion, ambushes, confessions, embezzlement, vendetta, sales" undermine the poignant

situation of the people of Manipur. The image of sky with stars and shreds, with stars holding it "like nuts and bolts so that/ the firmament will not fall." (163-166) clearly indicates the pessimism that has pervaded the place now. All these similes are etched so clearly in the readers' perspective.

Metaphor: The tenor and the vehicle invoked in the poem are illustrated throughout the poem. Line 3 has "wheel of fire"(3) representing "death and destruction" for the Manipur people. The "humanisation" of homeland is portrayed through the expressions like "my love". The perception of the persona towards his homeland is that of his life's love. In this context of personification of the homeland of Manipur, Ngangom animates the metaphorical significance of words by using them in collocation with "hands" "healing breasts", "scars", "your body", "my love", "toy doll" (64-69). Negotiation of spaces, fissures, and gaps is done through the metaphors of "fire" (45), "labyrinth" (48), and transferred epithets "reaped heads" (52), "fabled homeland" (81),

Imagery and Symbol: Ngangom communicates the whole pathos involved in the violence and conflict in his homeland. The imagery in the poem evokes many images of sacrifice, pity, suffering, fury and helplessness of the people of Manipur; "untended hearths", "malicious intent", "shrouds", "graves of youth", "acrid smoke", "rape,extortion, ambushes, confessions, embezzlement, vendetta, sales", "sullen day", "buy guns for unleashing ideological horror", paragons of thievery", "mourning our merger with a nation", "fondles grenades", "hapless peoples", "music of guns", "coarse theatre of time", "a tiny land bound by fire", "ability to suffer", "utmost hurt", "land...being suckled on blood", "abominate laws", "a life without mirrors", "pursuing prisons". These images have the air of utter sadness about the predicament of the people of Manipur and the helplessness of the persona along with his desire to raise voice against the injustice and suffering of his people and his homeland.

Ngangom makes use of certain images which indicate the symbolic value in his subconscious mind. The images of "sheep", "goat" that "townspeople/enjoy driving...with a marigold garland" (16-20) clearly indicate the common ill practice of misusing common people. These images point towards the sacrificial connotation of animals like 'sheep' and 'goat' that further suggests that often common people of the community have been sacrificed. The image of "fire" (45) point to obliterate the "murderous history" that the poet strongly believes that there is need to "re-write"(53) history. He cautions: "When we re-write make-believe history/with malicious intent,/memory burns on a short fuse." (53-55) The images appear in their simple visual feature but suggest the persona's anxiety for the bloodshed and his hope to see the peaceful state of affairs. The images of festivals of "Christmas" (56) and "lights"(175) are juxtaposed with the antonyms like "hate and fear" (57) and the "dreams" "dressed in red"(62-63) signify the dejection of people who get nothing but revulsion and apathy. The image of homeland as a "body", "toy doll", "moonskin" personify Manipur and suggest the deep concern of the poet towards the exploitation of the land with "acrid smoke/ of gelignite (explosive)". The images of "commodities" like "oil/lentils/potatoes/food for babies/transport/the outside world./Even fire water and air" are not certain for the people who are made to suffer the most when strikes or bandhs affect their life.(123-129) The images of the youth with "grenades", "playing the music of guns/ to the child in the womb" (141-145), "a tiny land bound by fire", people getting "love, fear, anger and old despair" (156, 160), "stars", "sky", "nuts and bolts" all deepen the pathos and mechanics of conflicts and clashes that the people of Manipur are made to suffer.

The above stylistic analysis has shown that the themes of political oppression, the geographical and emotional transmutations of Manipur and its people, their economic and physical suffering are highlighted through the linguistic choices of the poet. The aesthetics of the poem support the sharpness of the message, and contribute to the literature of resistance. The poem establishes Robin S. Ngangom as a protest poet among many other renowned poets voicing their opposition like Langston Hughes, Pablo Neruda, Maya Angelou, Denis Levertov, Muriel Rukeyser and Gwendolyn Brooks. The poetry of protest is a very influential and dominant contrivance to counteract the lethal process of violence.

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Diasporic Fiction as Community History: Understanding M.G. Vassanji as a Community Historian

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Abstract

Diasporic fiction has covered a huge variety of issues and themes ranging from challenges of coming to terms with dislocation to adapting to ways of re-location. This entire spectrum of experiences, however, has at its bottom the pain incurred therein and the healing up sought individually as well as collectively. It is this communitarian aspect where individual writers turn to their communities for social and emotional anchoring that has been investigated intensely. What has largely remained neglected is the way diasporic fiction and community histories intersperse and overlap. This is more so with certain writers such as M.G. Vassanji and Rohinton Mistry than others; so the paper involves placing M.G. Vassanji within the matrix of Canadian national literature, which the first part seeks to do. Further, analysis of Vassanji's novel The Gunny Sack *is designed to bring out the extent to which and the probable reasons for which his early fiction engages itself with the cultural past and origins of the Ismaili community in Gujarat and its vicissitudes in both East Africa and Canada. . So the paper is an attempt to understand these interstices of fiction and history better.*
Keywords: *Diasporic fiction, community history, national literature, negotiating identities, memory, self-representation*

Diasporic fiction arguably records more essence of the diasporic experience than the history texts *per se* do. This is so because the fiction written by people in diaspora and about diasporic life is, at bottom, a complaint, a lament, a way of registering what dis-location, re-location, and coming to terms with hyphenated, mid-space existence involves—individually as well as collectively. M G Vassanji, along with Rohinton Mistry, is a key figure in contemporary diaspora literature insofar as community-consciousness is concerned. His fictional world depicts Shamsi Khojas (a fictive name for the Ismailis of Gujarat) in both East Africa and Canada. His concern for the community, particularly its history, is so much so that the fictionality of his fiction seems to merge unrecognizably into the factuality of his community history. The question sought to be explored here is: how do fiction and history intertwine in such literary discourses? Also, how and why these writers, Vassanji in particular, take on the role of community historian? Is it an attempt at self-representation for self-preservation?

The paper is in two distinct parts 1) Vassanji's position as an immigrant writer vis-à-vis Canadian national literature; 2) analysis of Vassanji's first novel *The Gunny Sack* as community history.

The role of fiction writers as 'scribes' of community history is arguably a phenomenon specific to the writers with a history of multiple dis-locations. In fact, it is this experience of multiple dis-locations conjoined with a heightened concern for the community's origins that sets M.G. Vassanji's fiction in a typical position vis-à-vis Canadian

literature. Of course, pinning down Canadian literature itself to a specific identity has been an elusive exercise, the immigrant writers like Vassanji, nevertheless, add an important dimension to it.

Despite the myth of nation having stood debunked for long now, it seems hardly debatable that the concept of 'nation' and its derivative 'national literature' continue to be a fact of today's global politics. And by the same token, the relation between the nation and the literature written by its citizens too, no matter how problematic it be, stays important in terms of belonging and identity. The question in any nation, therefore, is: how to negotiate the relationship between the texts and the nation imaginary that they produce. This is paradoxical in the sense that post-colonial situation is at once nation-bound and nation-free. The double-bind is eloquently noted by Amin Malak as he writes:

> Neither static nor uniform, post-coloniality, whether a condition of reality or a state of mind, is often compounded by the exigencies of exile, migration, and double migration; in such an environment the writer's sensibility is naturally challenged by a multiplicity of affiliations that avail or impose themselves. (277)

In a way, this boils down to the question of the writer's position vis-à-vis his/her milieu. And, it is upon how one resolves this dilemma hinges the nature of one's writings. Prof. Shyam Asnani pointedly articulates this need as he observes:

> Though the writer's individual talent should be rooted in the tradition of a particular society and culture, the real strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual's predicament in terms of alienation, immigration, expatriation, exile, and his quest for identity. Culturally and even linguistically estranged as the individual feels about himself, the whole question of his social, emotional, ethnic or cultural identity assumes mythic proportions and thus becomes and unattainable ideal. (73)

Prof. Asnani further points out the two approaches to 'difference'. There is the one that identifies 'difference', and there is the other that tends to use 'difference' as the basis for categorization, which in turn determines the power equations. While recognition of difference is egalitarian, the use of difference as a category is politically *status quoits* and tends to hierarchize the cultures. This is where difference yields conflicts. On this issue, an insightful and apt observation has been made by Janice Kulyk Keefer, a writer of Ukrainian origin but living in Canada, who isolates the "act of bridge-building" as a crucial feature of the idea of Canadian national literature and situates the writer on a swaying bridge balancing between cultures: "It's the writer's being situated on the bridge between cultures, and thus free to turn her/his gaze in any direction, to critique, to defend, to redress wrongs- not just in the adopted but in the home culture as well- that makes him or her Canadian." ('The Sacredness of Bridges', 105)

Canada, being predominantly a white settler colony, though with the official policy of multiculturalism, is inscribed with plurality. It holds three major forces that the dominant majority feels compelled to contend with- the Quebecois, the Aboriginal groups, and the ethnic immigrants from various Asian and European nations. Given such a state of heterogeneity, it has now long been a challenge to forge one complete Canadian identity: which group's culture is more Canadian than those of others'. This issue is concisely put by Frank Davey in Foreword to M.F. Salat's *The Canadian Novel: A Search for Identity* as he observes, ". . . it seems that many Canadians identify more with being female, Albertan, Quebecois, black aboriginal, homosexual, or of Greek, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Italian, or South Asian ethnicity, than they do with being 'Canadian'"(vii). A similar note is made by

Northrop Frye when he says, "there is no Canadian way of life, no one hundred per cent Canadian, no ancestral figures corresponding to Washington or Franklin or Jefferson, no eighteenth-century self-evident certainties about human rights, no symmetrically laid out country" (48). So, unless there be any clarity and surety about what it means to be 'Canadian,' it, as a corollary, hardly seems possible to say who is a Canadian and who is not! It is precisely with this point that the so-called ethnic writers from elsewhere and, mostly writing about elsewhere, often find themselves clarifying their positions. M.G. Vassanji's stance on this comes clear in his address at the Annual Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences Federation of Canada, University of Manitoba, Summer 2004.Vassanji does, sort of soul-searching, on the subject of what constitutes the essential Canadian-ness. And his finding is that:

> . . . the country is changing around us even as we speak, stirring up a host of conflicting ideas and interests, and to look for an essence, a core, a central notion within that whirlwind is surely an illusion. To define this country or its literature seems like putting a finger on Zeno's arrow: no sooner do you think you have done it than it has moved on. (7)

Asking himself,--what is multiculturalism?—he offers a reply, "Isn't it simply a waiting post, a holding area for immigrants, a quarantine to hold the virus and keep the peace while succeeding generations have time to emerge, fully integrated, assimilated?" (9) What a joy to behold a young Canadian of Asian or African background, speaking an accepted Canadian dialect; and what a pain in the backside, the contentious parents who claim their version of English is as good, if not better, and curry is simply great? Who is multicultural except the immigrants from Asia, Africa, the Middle East; those whose language is not English, whose culture is not western and Christian? (9)

For Vassanji, it is considerations like – how does a book set in India or Africa relate to Canada? Or, what will future generations think about it [the fiction set elsewhere], as Canadian? – that "go into the making of literature syllabuses for high schools and courses at universities"(9).Then, his argument leads to the conclusion that, judged by these criteria, writers like Vassanji, Mistry and Sony Ladoo, can never be thought of as being Canadian in the same way as Margaret Atwood and Marie Macdonald are! But, with a positivity and zeal, he suggests a way out:

> All is not lost, however. There is a way out for writers of my ilk, of course, it is the only way out, and it is honesty itself…. That way out lies in the admission that it does not matter, it should not matter to me as a writer that the world takes me as, will take me as. I cannot write, honestly call myself a writer of fiction, a truthful fiction if I decided to write in such a way that I would be seen as more of a Canadian; as more of less of anything. A novelist is, and that is it. Others can put labels on you for their purposes- theses, papers, editorials have to be written after all- but you cannot work under the shadow of a label. (10)

For Vassanji himself "the story should end here, and it does for me [Vassanji]" (11). But then again, just for the sake of playing the 'polemic game', he pursues it further and contemplates, "Isn't there any way, then, in which I can be truly Canadian? And the answer comes in the form of a new phenomenon called 'Canadian Postcolonial' designating:

> . . . those who emerged from the colonies in the 1960s and 1970s; we [writers categorized so] tell the stories of those societies- stories which have not been told, or do not have a ready reception in the centers of the world; we are the historians and mythmakers; the witnesses. We are essentially exiles, yet our home is Canada…. (11)

If this phenomenon is big enough and viable by itself, why cannot such a community be the audience for these writers? Linda Hutcheon takes a supporting view as she confirms, "the specificity of Canadian post-colonial culture today is being conditioned by this arrival of immigrants from other post-colonial nations" (59). But, Frank Davey, the poet and critic, has inexplicably and self-contradictorily refused to consider the novels by "Canadian ethnic communities . . . such as Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints*, Moyez Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack*, and Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, novels which contain few if any significations of Canada or of Canadian polity" (7) as part of Canadian literature. While he himself has in the same work (*Post-National Arguments*) criticized nation and nationalism as too narrow and homogenizing ideological formations (1993). This self-contradiction is astutely pointed out by Arun Prabha Mukherjee who thinks such "exclusion is highly ironic given the title of Davey's book which declares that Canadian literature needs to be studied beyond the confines of nationalism" (169). Instead, she recommends that a truly post-national approach should rise above the concepts of not only nation but also place. The lack of Canadian experience in such works is abundantly made up for by memory. Therefore, these writings must also be studied as Canadian experience. This is what Vassanji too claims:

> . . . We are telling the stories not only of there, but also for people here. They came with their clothes, and sometimes with their pots and pans, and left it on us to bring their stories here. Their stories are not only for their consumption; they are not for nostalgia; they are their history, describing their being. And they are for their future generations as well. (11)

So, he concludes his view on the immigrants' claim to being Canadian with:

> The idea I am putting forward is that new Canadians bring their stories withthem, and these stories then become Canadian stories. Canada's past lies notonly in the native stories of the land itself, but also in Europe, and now in Africa and Asia; Canadians have fought not only in the World Wars, but also in the wars of liberation of Africa, Asia, and South America. (12)

In a similar vein, Ajay Heble too disapproves of Frank Davey-like purist approach, and instead tends to view the rise of such writings as an indicator of "the necessity of moving beyond a nationalist critical methodology—where "the desire to come to terms with oneself in place and time and in relation to others" is, as David Tarras [in *A Passion for Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*] suggests, "a national instinct" (10)—to a cross cultural exploration of the discourse of hybridity as it is played out both within and beyond our national borders." (60)

Vassanji as a Community Historian

The role of ethnicity amongst migrants becomes immediately manifest as the migrants encounter a culture different from their own. Initially, ethnic culture not only offers emotional support but also a means of organization for collective action aimed at community rights. Over generations there may come up other means of such protection. But, even at a later stage, on experiencing discrimination and failure to get equal treatment, the ethnic culture is much likely to be re-asserted. In Vassanji's *No New Land*, Esmail, the painter, is a case in point. The language and religion of an ethnic migrant community act as the unifying, cohesive forces.

M.G.Vassanji's fiction is, despite its apparent oppositionality between the nationalist and diasporic discourses, not only tends to negotiate space for popular and subversive cultural

formations within the national space, but also serves as 'community histories' that re-tell the community experience as part of what Fanon calls 'genuine populist national consciousness', rather than mere official histories that are hegemonic and exclusionary. The Asians in East Africa have popularly been seen as supporters of the colonizers. This is how the members of this community become doubly diasporic: because of having occupied the dubious mid-space between the colonizers and the colonized.

On the subject of writing about one's own community, Vassanji commented in a symposium, "one should operate from strength rather than ask for sorrow or pity. Black, Native, Asian, and other peoples should tell their stories and tell them in abundance" ('Whose Voice Is It, Anyway?'). Indeed, his writing is aimed at restoring his people's history and thereby produce an 'alternative perspective' of the people intimidated by Amin's expulsions from Uganda, which turned them all into "lost children of Britannia" (*Gunny Sack* 237). His mission is to show how they survive more by adjusting than by conviction even after their migration to Toronto, "cold Eldorado of the north" (*No New L*and 249).

While Vassanji's community moved from Gujarat in India to East Africa (Madagascar, Kenya, Uganda etc.) and then over to Canada, it did have a history of multiple up-rooting as well as the experience of being in minority, being vulnerable to the assimilative forces of the mainstream cultures and religions.

The Gunny Sack (1988)

The novel is a tale of "escape, wanderlust and rootlessness that afflict so many people of the Shamsi, a fictional device for "Ismaili community in East Africa" (Ahmad Harb 182). It recounts the causes, processes and consequences of the historical dispossession and wanderings of the four generations of an Asian family in East Africa and thus turns into a chronicle "that in the most penetrating manner captures the Asian people's search for identity in the sub-region" (Ilieva and Odiemo-Munara 197). This is Vassanji's practice of the precept he often shares in defense of the community-centered fiction. Giving a socio-cultural leverage to the writer, Vassanji tends to view him/her:

> . . . as a preserver of the collective tradition, a folk historian and myth maker. He gives himself a history; he recreates the past, which exists only in memory and is otherwise obliterated, so fast has his world transformed. He emerges from the oral, preliterate, and unrecorded, to the literate. In many instances this reclamation of the past is the first serious act of writing. Having reclaimed it, having given himself a history, he liberated himself to write about the present. ('Postcolonial' 63)

The novel, in fact, begins at the end, and in a flashback, the narrative goes back to the narrator Salim Juma's great-ancestor Dhanji Govindji, who first fled the Shamsis community of Junapur, India, to Matamu, Zanzibar, for a better life. "In astronomical terms it was Samvat 1942 when Dhanji Govindji first set foot in Matamu 1885 A.D" (*GS* 10). On arrival in Matamu, he, with the help of Mukhi Ragavji Devraji, the Shamsi community leader, sets up his trade as a local agent working for the Amarsi Makan. One cold night, on the mukhi's advice, he sleeps with Bibi Taratibu, his slave black woman, just to warm his bed. But, this casual intercourse results into the birth of Huseni, a half-caste. Since Dhanji's bond with Indian social norms is as yet intact, he is made to marry a girl of Shamsi family. Naturally, Huseni becomes the cause of disgrace for the family, and is often ill-treated. Suffering the humiliation and social degradation, he disappears, never to return, leaving his wife, Moti, and child Juma behind. Moti marries twice after the disappearance of Huseni. She takes the four-

year-old Juma with her to Kenya to live with her third husband. Later, she dies in childbirth and her husband packs off the children- three daughters and Juma- to her sister Awal in Nairobi. Much like his father Huseni, Juma is also reduced to the status of a slave in the household of Hassam Pierbhai, the aunt's (Awal's) husband. One day, he too disappears, only to be recovered after three years from the steamers to India. Hassam Pirbhai agrees to take him back.

Soon after, his marriage with Kulsum, a Mombasi girl of humble origin, is solemnized. And, they beget a daughter (Begum) and two sons (Salim and Jamal). Years roll by. Juma's family moves to Dar before Juma dies suddenly. As if the whole family is cursed with wanderlust, Begum runs away with an Englishman to England, and Jamal flees to Boston. It is Salim, the narrator, who is left. But soon after, he too runs away leaving his wife, Zuleika, and the only daughter, Amina in the lurch. And it is after his flight to Toronto that Salim realizes the inescapability of life's cruelty (Ahmad Harb 183-4). He, in a moment of soul-searching, decides that "running must stop now. The cycle of escape and rebirth, uprooting and regeneration, must cease in me" (*Gunny Sack* 268).

It is at this chronological point that the tale begins. Salim is hiding in a basement in Toronto and has a gunny sack by his side, bequeathed to him by Ji Bai, an elderly relative. And the story unfolds in a manner suggesting as if it is the gunny sack that is recounting the collective memory of this family. Anthropomorphizing the sack, the narrator Salim introduces the sack:

> Memory, Ji-Bai would say, is this old sack here, this poor dear that nobody has any use for any more. Stroking the sagging brown shape with affection she would drag it closer, to sit at her feet like a favorite child. In would plunge her hand through the gaping hole of a mouth, and she would rummage inside. Now you feel this thing here, you fondle that one, you bring out this naughty little nut and everything else in it rearranges itself. Out would come from the dusty depths some knick-knack of yesteryear: a bead necklace shorn of its polish; a rolled-up torn photograph; a cowrie shell; a brass incense holder; a Swahili cap so softened by age that it folded neatly into a small square; a broken rosary tied up crudely to save the remaining beads; a bloodstained muslin shirt; a little book. (*Gunny Sack* 3)

The comparison of the sack to Shehrzaade seems to foreshadow the fact that despite all prolongation, the sack, or by analogy the memories of the past, must meet with an eventual death. So, the sack is a metaphor for the collective memory of the community in general, and of Dhanji Govinji's family in particular. Amin Malak has especially pointed out this narrative technique whereby the tale keeps moving centripetally and centrifugally between the individual and the community. He notes, "This strategy represents one of the common features of Third World/Postcolonial narratives, whereby characterization signifies not an exercise of isolation but a deliberate endeavor at contextualizing an individual's destiny within that of a family's, an ethnic community's, or a nation's" (277). The narrative technique has also been compared with those employed in Indian Hindu literary tradition. M.L. Pandit observes in this regard:

> Even before the reader starts on his journey of discovery of this sea of a novel, he notices several interesting things about it, which provoke his thought. […] The choice of the word 'sea' to describe the novel is deliberate. For, even as it maintains the tradition of the European realistic novel in its selective combination of fact and fiction, The Gunny Sack also relates to the Indian epic traditions of the Mahabharata and the Kathasaritsagar, the latter literally meaning a sea of fiction formed by the

> mingling of several streams of narrative. (111)

On this specific use of memory as a device for recording the dislocation and ruptures that the Asians in East Africa had to suffer during and after the African nationalism, G.D. Killam observes:

> *The Gunny Sack* is a repository of family history, a Pandora's Box of memories and mementoes and operates as the organizing metaphor of the novel. The memorabilia that Salim takes from the gunny sack refresh his memories of the oral history of the family and cause him to dig further into the cause and effects of events associated with the gunny sack's contents. (22)

Prof. Harish Narang has also singled out the use of history as Vassanji's special interest in origins. He notes, "History fascinates Vassanji. If there is one common thread running through all his fiction . . . it is his concern of history - history of individuals, communities and nations"(7). This concern with history seems to be Vassanji's way of offering orientation to the disoriented immigrants who find themselves caught in the in-between space. It is this space that provides the terrain for elaborating the strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society. It is in the emergence of the interstices that the inter-subjective and collective experiences of nation-ness, community interest or cultural values are negotiated (Bhabha 98). And in such acts of negotiation, memory proves to be the weapon not just to reconstruct the past, but to interpret it.

Thus, to relate the saga of how the Asians of Shamsi community felt being wedged between the White rulers and the Black ruled, Vassanji becomes the preserver of his own community's collective tradition and makes an effort at writing the alternative history in his bid to "contest master narratives of history and progress, to set models of difference, marginality and 'ex-centricity' over against the center" (Hutcheon 57). To Kanaganayakam, Vassanji once said, he "did not see, nor wanted to give the impression of a simple, linear historical truth emerging" (22). Arguably, here lies the rationale for choosing the gunny sack as the mouthpiece of history, not one narrative trajectory but infinitesimally varied, provisional and open-ended through memory, which is fragmentary and fallible:

> Wisps of memory. Cotton balls gliding from the gunny sack, each a window to the world… Asynchronous images projected on multiple cinema screens… Time here is not the continuous coordinate… but a collection of blots like Uncle Jim drew in the Sunday Herald for the children, except that Uncle Jim numbered the blots for you so you traced the picture of a dog or a horse when you followed them with a pencil… here you number your own blots and there is no end to them and each lies in wait for you like a black hole from which you could never return. (*GS* 112)

But, why is it that Vassanji should lay so much stress on past? As his fictional discourse concerns itself mainly with the unfulfilled quest for selfhood and identity at both individual and communal levels, there is always a looking backward. Ashok K. Mohapatra has identified this phenomenon and has given a plausible explanation too:

> The idea of origin always overshadows the conceptualization of subjectivity in all possible forms. It is of great ontological significance to subjectivity, which gets culturally inscribed and represented as "identity" in terms of the differential categories of language, class, race, gender and sexuality in specific discursive sites. However, this idea becomes more intricate and uncertain in the case of M.G. Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* and his other novels because the diasporic subjectivities that he and his characters illustrate are transfigured many times over in multiple sites

through self-chosen migrancy or enforced wanderings as well as exile. (2)

Peter G Mandaville (2000) has also aptly spelled out this process in saying that identity and place of diasporic communities travel together and that these communities practice "the complex politics of simultaneous 'here' and 'there'" (31). Thus, these cultures, identities and histories become de-territorialized, to put it in post-structural parlance. Yet, their links with past do not simply go away. In Vassanji's own case, one can observe this ambivalence of affiliations. Gene Carey (1999) in his review of *Amriika* has quoted Vassanji saying, "Once I came to the United States I had a fear of losing my link with Tanzania. Then I feared going back because if I went back I feared losing the new world one had discovered." (13)

In a way, this may be construed as an attempt to re-claim and hang onto an authentic cultural past, an originary identity. Therefore, every diasporic experience seems to warrant an understanding of its specific historicity and situated-ness within the cultural matrix of the host nation. This is an attempt at self-preservation through keeping one's past alive and intact in one's own history i.e. community history.

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Returns to Homeland: Nepal and the Nomadic Transmigrants in Manjushree Thapa's *All of Us in Our Own Lives*

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Abstract

As an expatriate writer settled in Canada, Manjushree Thapa has been articulating the experiences of Nepali citizens living in and outside their nation. In her recent novel, All of Us in Our Own Lives *(2016), Thapa represents the aspirations and the anxieties of the Nepalis returning to their homeland with a desire to contribute to the development of the nation. These returnees interact with the indigenous Nepalis and discover the trauma of living in a poverty-ridden country without any proper administrative set-up. In the novel, Gyanu and Avah return to Nepal to encounter a total mess. Gyanu wants to provide a secure life to his sister, Sapana but fails to do so. Avah seeks to expedite the process of international funding projects in Nepal but finds that major portion of the grant is consumed by the corrupt bureaucrats. The dismal situation in Nepal prohibits Gyanu and Avah to forge an affective link to their homeland, and in doing so, they adopt a nomadic transnational identity. In fact, they influence indigenous Nepalis, Sapana and Indira to configure a similar identity. With no specific attachment to any particular homeland, these Nepalis become nomadic transmigrants, acquiring a rootless identity.This article seeks to examine the aspect of nomadism in Nepali transmigrant characters as represented in Thapa's novel. To critically assess this issue, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "rhizomatic", Pnina Werbner's idea of "complex diasporas" and Aihwa Ong's notion of "flexible citizenship" have been used.*
Keywords*: Nomadism, Transmigrant and Homeland*

Pnina Werbner in her essay, "Complex Diasporas," refers to the "South Asian diaspora" as an instance of "complex" diversity of culture, language, religion, politics and race (77). This diaspora, Werbner believes, deviates from the "Jewish model of diaspora" (76) to encourage a sort of migration that incorporates fluidity and "constant flux" (77). Nepali diaspora, being a part of South Asian diaspora, has generated a "complex" pattern of migration evoking a problematic bonding with homeland in Nepali transmigrants. These migrant subjects are keen on contributing to the development of Nepal, but the political and social conditions repel them and they remain at the margins of the country. Being a representative of the transmigrant Nepali voices, Manjushree Thapa's writings are significant from the perspective of understanding the relationship between the Nepali transmigrants and their homeland. Thapa's latest novel, *All of Us in Our Own Lives* (2016) maps the various attitudes to homeland from the point of views of Nepali transmigrants and also from the perspectives of those Nepali citizens who are not keen on associating with Nepal. There are mainly four characters in the novel, Gyanu, Avah, Sapana and Indira, and their lives intersect in an interesting manner to foreground the necessity of leading a life beyond the political and the social commotion in Nepal. These characters, in their own way, seek to adopt a transnational

identity, and in doing so, they also intend to escape from the problems experienced by them in Nepal. This article intends to critically study the desire to achieve transnational identity in these characters, interpreting in the process the nomadism inherent in their attitudes.

While discussing Thapa's novel, *Seasons of Flight*, Himadri Lahiri observes that Thapa wishes to present characters who deal with "a sense of tension" occurring due to a conflict between "two ethical choices," either to stay in Nepal or to leave Nepal for a better opportunity (80). This ethical conflict is at the core of the lived experiences of the Nepali characters depicted in Thapa's latest novel. Gyanu is a Nepali cook working in a Dubai based five –star hotel and he is living in with a Filipino girlfriend, Maleah. Though he has been sending money to his parents from Dubai, he never wishes to meet them or his sister, Sapana. However, when his mother dies, he visits Nepal to perform the funeral rites, but he does not stay for a long time. Gyanu visits Nepal again after his father's death and performs all the necessary funeral rituals. But, this visit to Nepal puts Gyanu in a state of dilemma. After his father's death, there is nobody in his house to look after Sapana. He realises the need to support Sapana and works hard to provide a stable life to her. While making sincere efforts to build a sustainable environment for her sister, Gyanu fails to return to Dubai and eventually loses his job. Gyanu's sense of duty for his sister restricts his movement from Nepal for sometime. During one of their conversations, Sapana vents her desire to be a part of a "whole" family living happily with Gyanu as they had lived during their childhood days (Kindle Location 2054 of 3658). She also knows that Gyanu has always been an "outsider", never intending to understand the importance of living in Nepal (Kindle Location 2046 of 3658). Before leaving Nepal, Gyanu makes arrangements for Sapana's settlement in her uncle's house, but after his departure, she becomes frustrated and decides to involve in community based programmes funded by foreign agencies. This involvement is expected to fulfil her dream of living in the West because she has come to know that these agencies provide scholarships to young women for studying in abroad institutions. Gyanu leaves Nepal and moves to Canada with Maleah without considering any possibility of return to homeland. His affective bonding with Nepal is snapped and he assumes a cosmopolitan attitude migrating from one nation to another in search of job and proper settlement. Indeed, Canada may not be his final place of settlement. As a transmigrant, Gyanu is an example of Aihwa Ong's notion of "flexible citizenship" (6). Ong defines "flexible citizenship" as an outcome of the "cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement" which propel diasporic "subjects" to "respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (6). Gyanu's migration is the result of his desire to earn money and he responds to the neo-colonial capitalist world order by adopting a flexible subject position.

Gyanu, as the narrative shows, is a nomad whose connection to Nepal is lost in the course of his journey across different continents. He is a decentred subject whose flexibility erases all possible notions of stability and fixed roots. In this context, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "rhizome" provides a useful lens to interpret his subject position. "A rhizome," as they explain, "has no beginning or end" and the idea of "rhizome" incorporates the "conjunction, 'and … and … and…'" (26). The function of this "and" is to demolish the rooted notion of "to be" in a place, which implies that questions related to movement are "totally useless" (Deleuze and Guattari 26). Thus, a rhizomatic existence, according to Deleuze and Guattari, signifies a perpetual movement with no points to connect the beginning with the end and this further implies "a false conception of voyage and movement" (26). Avah's life, though different from Gyanu, is representative of a nomadic spirit engaged in searching for an illusory homeland. She was adopted by a Canadian couple from an orphanage in Nepal.

Unaware of her family lineage, Avah grew up believing that she is a Nepali. While working in a corporate law firm in Canada, she nourishes the wish to work in some developmental projects in Nepal. Avah gets the opportunity to supervise the projects funded by IDAF in Nepal and this brings her to the "imaginary homeland" (Kindle Location 2639 of 3658). While working in Nepal, she comes in contact with the local inhabitants, especially Sapana, Indira and other women who have been toiling hard in their respective communities to develop the condition of women. These women have been provided financial aids from the NGOs functioning in Nepal and the main motive of these financial supports is to encourage women to work independently for securing a better future for them and their families. Such aids are really beneficial, but Avah soon discovers that these aids are actually benefitting the local politicians and bureaucrats who have been charging huge cut money for sanctioning funds for the poor and marginalized people. Very soon, Avah realizes that her decision to come to Nepal was wrong as she can never clean up this mess of corruption. This creates a sort of rift between her and the "imaginary homeland." Apart from this issue, Avah also fails to connect with Nepal when her attempt to visit the orphanage, from where she was adopted by her parents, leads to a sorrowful feeling of (un)belongingness to Nepal. Is she really a Nepali or a person of mixed race? She is never able to know the name of her actual parents which propels her to doubt her Nepali connection. During her field visits, when Avah learns about the suppression of female voices in rural communities, she decides to encourage the illiterate and oppressed Nepali women to form cooperatives and work independently to earn money. Though Avah inspires these women to come out of the oppressive shell of patriarchy, she ultimately leaves Nepal to settle in Canada. Indeed, Canada offers Avah an "alternative life" (Kindle Location 3301 of 3658) beyond the pains and worries of Nepali life. She chooses to detach from Nepal forgetting its culture and society. Nepal, in Avah's case, is a forgotten past and this evidently closes her search for origin. In a sense, she too becomes a nomad or a rhizomatic entity with no beginning (past) and end. Like Gyanu, she is also a "flexible" citizen and this is well elaborated in the act of choosing Canada as her place of work which may later shift to America or Europe. Avah influences Indira, a local inhabitant of Nepal who aspires to earn salary in dollars, to work honestly and very soon Indira earns the coveted position of the Director of WDS-Nepal. This promotion helps Indira to move beyond the claustrophobic atmosphere of her house and country as she visits foreign institutions to attend seminars and conferences. Thus, Indira too, like Gyanu and Avah, seeks to leave her country of origin to be a part of the Western world. Though Indira may not be able to completely sever ties with Nepal, there is a strong desire to liberate herself from the familial and national affiliations. There is an inherent rhizomatic drive in Indira as she struggles to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming the Director of WDS-Nepal. Werbner observes that diasporas "are both ethnic-parochial *and* cosmopolitan" (75), and in the case of Indira the "cosmopolitan" drive is stronger than the "ethnic" one. Her willingness to form a bonding with abroad locations amplifies this aspect. Sapana is the only exceptional character whose desire to migrate from Nepal is not fulfilled. Lack of necessary resources and contacts forbid her movement beyond the country's border, however, on one occasion, Thapa shows that she manages to reach the Nepal-India border to meet Chandra. At this juncture in the narrative, Thapa reveals the helplessness of Sapana. She crosses the border avoiding the eyes of the border security forces to feel the presence of Chandra. India assumes a spatial significance in Sapana's mind as the "Indian soil" allows her to "feel Chandra" (Kindle Location 3486 of 3658). This short connection with India relieves her frustrated mind, evoking a sense of transnational bonding with her absent friend.

Gyanu, Avah and Indira are truly nomadic subjects, migrating from their homeland to

find new ways of settling in developed nations of the world. These settlements are often temporary as they move from one nation to another in search for a congenial environment to work and stay. The nomadism, inherent in their migratory pattern, is indicative of their desire to escape from the depressive economic and political conditions of Nepal. Countries like Dubai and Canada are dream destinations for these nomadic subjects who are interested in earning money and settling in a politically peaceful environment. However, such migrations to dream destinations often involve risk and insecurity as the host nation may not always provide an ideal space to live and work. Nepalis have often been subjected to racial hatred and oppression in America and other countries in the West, and this aspect has been addressed by Thapa in the novel, *Seasons of Flight* (2010). Prema, the protagonist in this novel, is a Nepali who migrates to America to find a new life, but her attempts to connect with America fail as she is disillusioned by the American way of life. Thus, the idea of "flight" embedded in the title of this novel, is a signifier of Nepali nomadism, reflecting the endless process of flying from one nation to another without any socio-cultural mooring. In this context, one may also refer to Kiran Desai's novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), in which, one encounters the Nepali character, Biju, who immigrates to America to fulfil his dream of achieving an economically good life. However, he too, like Prema, fails to forge a strong connection with America and returns to India as a disillusioned subject. Theoretically, this sort of migration incorporates nomadism as well as transnationalism. Steven Vertovec, while defining "transnationalism" discusses the "consciousness" of a transnational subject and in this context, he observes that, "de-centred attachments," "multi-locality" and "a refusal to fixity often serving as a valuable resource for resisting repressive local or global conditions" (6-7) are important traits of a transnational subject. Nepalis, as evident in Thapa's narrative, have imbibed these traits to resist locating their selves in specific geo-cultural regions, thereby embodying a transnational consciousness.

Thapa's novel therefore poignantly critiques the socio-political situation in Nepal by foregrounding characters who are disinterested in forming an affective bonding with the nation. Gyanu, Avah, Indira and Sapana are representatives of the formidable Nepali diaspora seeking to assume transnational identity for building new routes to connect with the West. Nepal's disturbed political history and lack of transparency in spending foreign aids have spoiled the developmental prospects of the country. This aspect has been represented in the novel very clearly, particularly in the context of Avah's narrative in which she is found to be enquiring about the constitution the country that is yet to be drafted. Avah learns about the rampant corruption in Nepal when she meets Gyanu, who informs her about the cut money charged by the politicians and the administrators. In such a dismal scenario, the youths are compelled to search for better opportunities in other nations. Adopting a rhizomatic entity is one sort of response to this situation. Nepalis are indeed everywhere in the world moving and adapting to different cultural traditions. Thapa's novel therefore is an appropriate representation of the Nepali youths' desire to acquire a nomadic self.

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Othering in Contemporary Afro-Caribbean and South Asian Diasporic Fiction

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Abstract

Contemporary literary studies have extensively deliberated upon the construction of the 'self' and the 'other' that not only stimulates but also legitimizes the politics of othering. The problem of othering has always been and continues to be, the main impetus for the ontology of literary and cultural studies. Rooted in a history of repudiation and segregation of the others, the notion of othering posits a binary opposition in which the 'self' produces its putative 'other' as an object through a difference, even when the difference is entirely arbitrary and meaningless. Deliberating upon the construction and deconstruction of the constructed images, the present article intends to examine the experiences of being othered among ethnic minorities in contemporary Afro-Caribbean and South Asian diasporic fiction. This study make an attempt to provide a rigorous exploration of what othering entails, why it matters in the context of migration, and of the factors contributing to the process of othering and interventions that might mitigate or nullify this discursive practice. In doing so, this paper adopts the case study approach so as to scrutinize the experiences of Black and Asian liminal Britons who are othered and ostracized in the British mainstream society with special reference to Ravinder Randhawa's debut novel A Wicked Old Woman *(1987), Joan Riley's* Waiting in the Twilight *(1987), and Hanif Kureishi's* The Buddha of Suburbia *(1990).*
Keywords*: Othering, xenophobia, alterity, ostracism, stigmatization, ethnocentrism*

Introduction

Over the years, the concept of 'other' or 'othering' – the politics of discrimination and exclusion of disenfranchised groups or racial/ethnic minorities- has become one of the most important contributions to philosophy, ethnology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Primarily concerned with the representations of the 'other,' and the construction of the national cultural identities, the discourse of othering thrives on the concept of Manicheanism, a process of polarizing the society, culture and the people into the binary oppositional category of good and evil, superior self and inferior other. From colonial representations to postcolonial realities, this self/other binary plays a crucial role not just in intensifying the schism between Blacks and Whites, but the history reveals how the 'other' is deliberately kept alive to maintain a group's dominance over others. This binary relation which has arisen from the need to distance the 'self' from the 'other' is the simultaneous construction of the in-group(superior self) and out-group(inferior other) through the identification of some apparent characteristics that the in-group has and the out-group lacks and vice versa. To put in succinctly, it is a discursive practice 'representing an individual or a social group to render them distant, alien or deviant' (Coupland, 1999, 5;) that also serves as a rationalization for their stigmatization,

ostracism, and discrimination. However, it is important to note that the process of 'othering' is way more than exclusion, discrimination, or what Coupland refers to as 'minoritization' (p.17); it can be identified as a strategy of denigration, pejoration, negation, oppression, white privilege, asymmetrical power relationship, homogenization, dehumanization, and silencing.

Originally coined in 1985 as a theoretical concept by the postcolonial intellectual Gayatri C. Spivak, the notion of 'othering' draws on Hegel's generalization of 'Master-Slave Dialectic' as proposed in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (1807). However, in post-colonial theory, the definition of the term is deeply rooted in French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's conceptualization of otherness that represents a difference between Other with a capital 'O' and the other with a small 'o'. Whilst the 'small other' is the 'other' with whom an infant resembles while looking into the mirror, the 'big Other' denotes the 'other' in whose gaze the self constructs its subjectivity (Ashcroft et al., 155), and which is important in defining the identity of the subject. One such example of this grand-autre (big other) is the imperial centre/the colonizing self in whose gaze the colonized gains subjectivity and becomes conscious of his/her identity as the putative 'other'. In his ground-breaking text, *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said brings to the fore the construction of images, while revealing how the East has served the west as 'one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other' (1978, 1). By denying them the subject position, the Occidentals construct the Oriental as a putative other, barbarian, or uncivilized, and relegate the latter to such an extent that they can rule or annihilate them to the margins of humanity. It is no exaggeration to say that the self/other dichotomy is the *sine qua non* condition for the genesis of the politics of 'othering' which is played out in a wide array of socio-cultural settings.

In the face of the modern globalization, this sinister process of othering can be perceived as a tendency of the dominant group to legitimize and maintain the existing power hierarchies. Not to mention, the remarkable increase in migration is one of the factors exacerbating the process of othering that sets up the national cultural identities into an unequal relationship. Over the years, the concerns relating to the stereotyping and stigmatization of the communities of colour have received much attention by the diasporic authors as can be seen in the literary representations of Ravinder Randhawa, Joan Riley, and Hanif Kureishi who interrogate the role of the Black and the Asian liminal Britons as quintessential others. Randhawa through *A Wicked Old Woman*(1987), Riley through *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), and Hanif Kureishi through *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) reveal the complex nature of othering that is endemic in the contemporary British socio-cultural environment. Despite the conspicuous cultural, historical, social, and geographical differences that exist between these authors, the common thread which links them together is their similar stance against the continuing legacy of the colonial rule. All these diasporic novels chosen for the present study clearly participate in unraveling the discourse of difference that continues to oppress and marginalize immigrants, however, the strategies and techniques used therein may vary due to the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the authors. Hence, this paper intends to locate and explore the relationship between these Afro-Caribbean and South Asian diasporic authors who have migrated to Britain and who have contributed a lot for giving voice to the unfair treatment meted out to the people of colour. The major concern of the article is to scrutinize the xenophobic relationship arising from the cross cultural interaction due to globallization and how this hostility has negatively affected the lives of the immigrants as illustrated in these texts.

Othering in Afro-Caribbean and South Asian Diasporic Fiction

Within the era of globalization, the collision of various cultures within a society leads to the dichotomies of the self/other, Black/White and us/them. Over the years, many diasporic authors including Ravinder Randhawa, Joan Riley, and Hanif Kureishi have interrogated the discourse of othering and the false presumption on which it is based. Randhawa through *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987), Riley through *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), and Kureishi through *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) illustrates how the practice of othering suppress and disenfranchise the immigrants and how these immigrants, in turn, shift their liminal position to adjust along the racial continuum.

To begin with, Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987), which is set in 1970s England, encapsulates the experience of being an Asian immigrant in Britain. Through this novel, Randhawa explores the lives of different generations of immigrants and the different effects of othering on these generations. *A Wicked Old Woman* is the narrative of a woman named Kulwant, who faces the difficulties of growing up as an Asian in an alien land. Despite her prolonged stay in London, she is considered an outsider- a quintessential other within the mainstream society. Being caught within the position of liminal space, she experiences a feeling of alienation that persuade her to take on the identity of an old immigrant, with an 'oversized coat swaying around her, buffering the loneliness knocking at its threadbare fabric' (Randhawa 1987, 113). Her adoption of the disguise of an old woman illustrates how the process of othering can lead to the identity formation of immigrants that assists them in their acculturation process. Randhawa represents Kulwant as a mysterious Oriental woman who is an interesting curiosity and for the first few months the centre of attention among her schoolfellows. Her migration to an alien land has been compared with the experience of a fetus as articulated by Randhawa 'You came over the sea. Cradled in water, day and night, just like a baby in a womb. And starting a new life. And hating it as much as a baby hates leaving the womb' (50). This xenophobic relationship of Kulwant with the outer world further leads to her dilemma of negotiating everyday hostility in an ethnocentric society.

In the very beginning of the narrative, the reader perceives that she is having an affair with the most coveted English boy of her school, Michael who exoticizes her as 'Indian Princess', 'the mysterious oriental woman', 'the Mata Hari of his heart' (6). However, she refuses his marriage proposal in fear of losing her Asian identity and chooses an arranged marriage. Apart from that, Kulwant is subjected to the racist attitude by her illicit lover and a politician Mark, who exploits her exotic connection in order to execute his political objectives as expressed in the words of Kulwant, 'Was I your contribution to anti-racism? Not only can you say 'some of my best friends are black', but also 'some of my best lovers' (167). Apart from Kulwant's personal experience, there are a plethora of examples that illustrate how racial minorities are cast into the role of objects and are made to feel othered from the mainstream. Throughout the narrative, Randhawa represents several characters who are subject to oppression, and are not accepted or entertained in a white supremacist society as can be seen in the case of Rani/Rosalind who is charged with murder after killing her rapist, Rosco, her English boyfriend since 'this country don't take too kindly to darkies hurtin' one of their whities. Even if it was in self defence'(236). Through Kulwant's eldest son Anup who prefers anonymity, Randhawa brings to the fore the sense of invisibility which is condemned by Maya, a filmmaker, 'We're making ourselves invisible, which is precisely what they want us to be…If we have a right to be here, don't we have a right to be human, warts and all' (123). Thus,

with a view to voice the problematic of othering universally, Randhawa represents several experiences of the xenophobic confrontation that cannot be overlooked in a globalizing world.

Like Randhawa, Joan Riley's narratives are also preoccupied with the politics of othering, an intrinsically negative framework that perpetually relegates Black liminal Britons to a position of marginality. Through her narrative, *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), Riley call attention to what it means to be 'other' or 'not one of us' in a hostile land. She encapsulates the experiences of Adella and her husband Stanton, who voluntarily migrate to Britain where their identities are influenced by an interplay of socio- political, economic, environmental**,** and geopolitical factors and where they come into what Pratt refers to as the 'contact zone', a space of colonial encounters where:

> peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict….[It] attempts to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. (Pratt 1992, 6-7).

Through the portrayal of Black subjects as the quintessential 'others', the author draws attention to the ways in which migration to a hostile land affects the lives of Black immigrants like Adella, Stanton, and Mr. Weston who migrated to Britain in the hope of better living and job prospects. However, these expectations of immigrants are hurt when they are confronted a discourse of difference that keeps them trapped in a vicious cycle of poor socio-economic conditions. The narrative gives an impression of the harsh reality of Britain where Blacks are stuck in poorly paid and low-status working conditions as it is evident in the case of Stanton who "had been a carpenter in Jamaica and it was only because there were no jobs like that for black men in England that he had to work on the buses" (Riley, 1987, 23). Through such examples, Riley reveals the fact that despite having education and school certificates, the black immigrants are exposed to institutionalized racism and face persistent discrimination, pertaining to the job positions**.**

Through her protagonist, Adella, Riley demonstrates how the experience of being othered in a racist society is further incited by her physical stroke which prevents her from achieving a sense of self and belonging in a foreign milieu. Repenting the way how Stanton ignores and misbehaves with her and children, she blames racism he has to confront at work, and the ways "the white people treated him and sometimes she wished there was something she could do" (12-13). Deserted by her husband on account of her disability, Adella has to do the physically challenging job of a cleaner so as to keep her five children clothed and fed. Despite being destined to do hard physical labour, Adella is exposed to xenophobia as it is explicit in the "contempt on the receptionist's face, and the way the porter let the door swing back at her" (87). Even the repellent smell of mold incessantly growing out of Adella's house gives an impression of hostility, causing disdain among white people and prompting Adella to confess that "they don't like foreigners over here" (38). One thing she has discovered after being dismissed from her previous job due to having a stroke that black individuals are expendable and easily replaceable. In fact, this is the expendability of the black lives that forces them to work at low wages and poor working conditions. In this way, through the structural entrapment of the black immigrants like Adella and Stanton, Riley represents London as a place where the growth of the blacks is thwarted by the discourse of othering, and which has demoralizing and detrimental effects on their physical and material well-being.

Set in 1970s Britain when it goes through an extremely rapid demographic transition to a multiracial society, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) offers incisive

insights into the diasporic experience. The key concern of the novel is the denial of the marginal identities by the dominant culture. It encapsulates the issues of class struggle, cultural clash, generation gap, and the discourse of othering emanating in the diaspora space. Throughout *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi brings attention to the ways in which immigrants are dehumanized and are made to feel different from the mainstream. The novel begins by emphasizing the racialized difference of its protagonist as expressed in the words of Karim Amir:

> My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. Or perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it (3).

This assertion of Karim's dilemma of in-between positionality in the opening passage of the narrative focuses on the way immigrants are considered as the outsider despite being born and bred in Britain. Even though Karim is only half-Indian by birth, both he and his father, Haroon who had been in Britain for more than twenty years are fixed in the role of the putative 'other' and they both have to strive in order to seek their identity and place in the mainstream of the society. Across the narrative, Kureishi illustrates several incidents where these characters confront xenophobia and are considered as cultural, economic and social outcast as expressed in the words of Karim, 'Mum and Dad always felt out of place and patronized on these grand occasions, where lives were measured by money'(42). On his way to work, Haroon encounters many racist attacks and takes a different route to avoid the 'fear of having stones and icepops full of piss lobbed at him' (28). The situation is no better even at his workplace. Like Stanton, in Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight*, Haroon seems to be trapped in the structural racism as he has also been passed over for promotion on racial bias: “The whites will never promote us…. Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth”. Thus the way Haroon is turned down for promotion for an undeserving but white colleague is indicative of the perpetuation of the power hierarchies embedded within the white spaces that persistently seek to annihilate the identities of liminal Britons. Later on when his marriage with Margaret fails, he perceives failure in all aspects of life (social, economical, family relationship and social status), and finally ends up in frustration. Such structural inequalities, the immigrants are exposed to, are seen to have adverse effect on their subjectivities and development that further augments their sense of alienation and displacement.

Through the portrayal of Haroon Amir, and his son, Karim, Kureishi explores the way the immigrants are constructed as exotic other as evidenced by many racist incidents both Karim and his father encounter in their life. This discursive process of stigmatization and dehumanization against minorities is reflected in the schools where non-conformity to a set of norms is attacked as in the case of Karim who is subjected to persistent racist abuse, and has become “sick… of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings” (62-3). These seeds of segregation planted by his school fellows make Karim aware of being different from the norm and of the fact that he is not accepted here at all. Such hostile attitudes encountered by the second-generation diasporas give them a feeling that that they do not belong to this country. Even in his adulthood, Karim experiences such process of othering by Henry, his girlfriend Helen's father, who sets the dog on him while Karim wants to date Helen, “We don't

want you blackies coming to the house….However many niggers there are, we don't like it" (40). Another striking example of racist hostility in the novel is the physical abuse and violence experienced by a Pakistani diaspora, Jamila and her parents who live in the poorer area of London, "which was full of neo-fascist groups…[who] roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter boxes" (61). Such incidents point to the narrow and exclusive definition of cosmopolitanism in Britain, where racial and ethnic minorities have been denied the acceptance in the society. Through the experiences of Karim and Jamila, Kureishi encapsulates the insider/outsider positioning of second generation immigrants who straddle two cultures and shift their liminal position to negotiate everyday life in Britain: 'Yeah, sometimes we were French, Jammie and I, and other times we went black American. The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and pakis and the rest of it' (53). Kureishi makes these examples central to understand how the visible minorities are vulnerable to ostracism and how such exclusionary practices can sabotage their subjectivity to two-dimensional facades, which constantly reinforces the feeling of isolation among them.

Conclusion

In light of the discussion so far, it can be argued that though these characters are fetishized under unequal power relationships, their attempts to negotiate the difference facilitate them in fulfilling their aspirations. However, the devastating ending of Riley's Waiting in the Twilight demonstrates the protagonist's futile endeavours to negotiate the difference. Adella's inability to integrate and to come to terms with her otherness exposes that the notion of hybridity privileges the elite class, the higher stratum than those non-elites who have been struggling to make ends meet and who encounter various degrees of hostility and discrimination. Thus, the conclusion we may draw from Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight* is that the practice of othering can be deconstructed by celebrating the difference in a culturally diverse world.

Such an approach is adopted by Kureishi in *The Buddha of Suburbia* where Haroon and Karim subvert the notion of the other, by taking up the position of "postcolonial exotic", or what Huggan explains as "the global commodification of cultural difference" (Huggan, 2001: xvii). In this way, rather than being ashamed of their difference, both of them take advantage of it and as a consequence, Haroon who "spent years to be more of an Englishman, now was putting it back spadeloads" by overemphasizing his native accent and by teaching yoga and Eastern philosophy to the English. Similarly, Karim's entrance into the acting world as an Indian is an indication of his acceptance of the self and celebration of the difference. Through this celebration of difference, Kureishi emphasizes that accepting the difference and valuing cultural diversity would definitely mitigate the politics of othering and would further assist in fostering peace-building and social cohesion. Thus, it can be argued that both Riley's and Kureishi's novels stress the need for creating a "mosaic society" where differences are valued and embraced, and individuality is celebrated; where individuals maintain their own cultural norms to make a culturally diverse society, just as the innumerable multi-colored stones combine together to form a mosaic. As a consequence, such individuals can be proud of their cultures and traditions rather than being ashamed of their alterity or uniqueness.

In a similar vein, Randhawa also lays stress on accepting the difference, rather than embracing any fake persona. Towards the end of the narrative, Kulwant attains self-empowerment and successfully navigates through her liminality by stepping out of the

disguise of an old woman and taking part in a documentary film without any fake appearance. However, she takes a novel approach in negotiating the difference and underscores the role of agency and activism in challenging the structural racism and white privilege. With a view to highlight the agency of immigrants, she represents several characters such as Kulwant, Big Sis, Shazia, and many others who take a stand against the racist structure by participating in a campaign to support and defend the women victims like Rani and many others. Through the representation of 'Greenham Women' a group which promotes self-awareness and solidarity of black and Asian women, Randhawa asserts belief in the power of agency that not only challenges but also destabilizes oppressive regimes. Thus, the novel ends with a universal appeal for agency and solidarity that produce new forms of subjectivity and identity within a hostile and ethnocentric society.

To sum up, it can be stated that the concept of othering that operates in a variety of nuances in the narratives of Randhawa, Riley, and Kureishi, can be destabilized by celebrating the difference and by accepting your uniqueness. Drawing attention to the importance of adopting such an egalitarian approach, these authors redefine or reconstruct the notion of Britishness, while stressing the need to move beyond conflicting social categories and truly developing a cosmopolitan society free from rigid dichotomies of self/other, white/black, and East/West.

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Theorizing Space and Hybridity in the Character of Aadam Aziz in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children

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Abstract

This article analyses how hybridity occurs in the character of Aadam Aziz (Midnight's Children) *to affect his existential experience as a hybrid individual in an otherwise enclosed and backward community. It focuses on the antagonistic relationships between Aadam Aziz and the native inhabitants, which was caused by the former's hybrid state. Aadam Aziz had strived to surpass his own dilemma by taking either a positive attitude of compromise or a strong position of resistance against any negation, rejection or even exclusion imposed by the indigenous people in the village against his hybrid identity. In his theory of hybridity and the Third Space, Homi Bhabha argues that Aadam Aziz's hybridity indicates his dilemma of getting himself stuck in an ambiguous area which was normally in between two areas involving in them different elements specifically as ideas, ideologies, cultures, etc. This ambiguous area is exactly what is called the Third Space in Bhabha's theoretical postulations. As such, this ambiguous area called the Third Space provides Aadam Aziz with a site to reflect on his interstitial state, to reconsider and reconfigure his disruptive becoming and thus to reconstruct his ruptured self by having meaningful negotiations between himself and other characters in the novel. And it is in the third space created in the process of his hybridization that effective exchanges between the two sides can be made possible. However, Bhabha claims that the cultural difference entailed in Aadam Aziz's hybridity can create problems to the long-desired effective cultural exchange. According to Bhabha, only through the enunciation of the cultural difference in this hybrid third space can Aadam Aziz expect to transcend his existential predicament. When his pursuit of identification was disavowed constantly by a force of conservative people, unacceptance and exclusion had become his destiny.*
Keywords*: Hybrid Becoming; Cultural Difference; Third Space; The Act of Enunciation; Resistance and Exclusion*

Introduction

Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) starts with the story of the character Aadam Aziz, the grandfather of Saleem Sinai who is the protagonist and narrator of the novel. Aadam Aziz was born in a small village of Kashmir, and thus possessed many prominent features peculiar to the people of the place. He had a pair of Kashmiri-blue eyes and was as tall and robust as the other Kashmiri men. Brought up in a traditional Kashmiri family, Aadam Aziz was originally seen to stick with perseverance to the conventional practices adopted by the native people as the tradition of the village, which was in particular exemplified in his religious faith for which he was acting always as a pious and unswerving believer in his early

life. And all this had contributed to forging the parts of his ascribed identity. However, owing to the success of his family's gemstone business, Aadam Aziz was sent to receive professional medical training in Germany. During his five years abroad, Aadam Aziz was obliged to expose himself to various influences that had affected his original pure state of his identity. Those new alien factors had penetrated in him, making his identity more complex, unstable and fluid. With the combination of the indigenous aspects and the alien factors, Aadam Aziz thus acquired a hybrid identity. In his state of hybridity, Aadam Aziz appeared to have different modes of thought and behaviour compared to his life before leaving home for an alien country. His experiences in a foreign country had equipped himself with more progressive ideas which later manifested in many aspects of his life, and the progress he had made was more significantly indicated by his political position illustrated specifically in his support to Mahatma Gandhi's hartal. Nevertheless, Aadam Aziz's fruitful return defined by his hybridity had caused an obstruction to impede the normal communication between him and the villagers –an exchange he used to conduct smoothly in the early stage of his life. Adam's slip into dilemma, under such circumstances, had inevitably positively opened up a new area which is characterized by its interstitial, in-between nature. Aadam Aziz's dilemma was illustrated as being stuck in this interstice, this in-betweenness. In this light, the new terrain provided a space for Aadam Aziz to reconcile the growing tension resulting from an implacable relationship between the two sides – Aadam Aziz's hybrid being and the conservative state of the villagers. This new terrain served as a site for Aadam Aziz to resist the negation and exclusion imposed by the native inhabitants against his hybrid identity. This paper draws on Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the Third Space, combined with the theoretical postulations by some influential figures on the field. to study the issues posed by Aadam Aziz's hybridity. In theorizing the concepts of hybridity and space in the case of Aadam Aziz, the paper is aimed at interpreting the story of Aadam Aziz and reading the colonial and postcolonial concerns in Rushdie's writing. In this way, it hopes to add constructive insights and alternative interpretations to the repository of research on the work of Salman Rushdie.

Purity and Uncontaminatedness: Two Misunderstood Concepts

Aadam Aziz's story was closely related to his home place, the valley of Kashmir. The valley was depicted as an area far removed from the outside world. The valley was elaborately presented as Aadam Aziz's story unfolded. As surveyed through Aadam Aziz's clear Kashmiri-blue eyes, it was a beautiful place that allowed for infinite imagination and fantasy. When viewed through the lens of an early spring season, it was rendered as a pure space free of any alien influence. The world in the valley was still covered by ice and snow in the early spring time. It was a quiet and mysterious world at this time of the year, characterized by low temperature, frozen earth, frost-hardened tussocks, etc. Although a frozen world it was in the early spring, there were numerous indications showing that things hidden underground bided their time to emerge to the surface of the earth in the upcoming warm spring time – the law of nature and the signs of hope. For example, the new grass that lay under the solidified tussocks had strived to explore its way out in the open; the long frozen mountains and lakes were in the early spring thaw. The lively presentations of the natural phenomena render an original state of this primitive place which indicates that it had remained uncontaminated by any foreign influence. Salman Rushdie's brilliant portrayal of the natural scenes here provides the basis for the observations, which can be seen in the narration as "In those days the radio mast had not

been built … In those days there was no army camp at the lakeside … In those days travellers were not shot as spies if they took photographs of bridges …" (Rushdie, *MC* 12). What Rushdie stresses here is the pure, static, unchanging, uncontaminated state that the native place demonstrated. The account of the space under Rushdie's pen signifies that the valley was a distant place still rarely treaded on by the outsiders and thus remained in its original and early pure appearance in those days, "…the valley had hardly changed since the Mughal Empire, for all its springtime renewals …" (Ibid.).

However, Homi Bhabha holds different views on the idea of cultural purity and cultural uncontaminatedness. In his seminal work of postcolonial theory *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha talks about cultural hybridity, which constitutes a stark contrast to the idea of pure culture. According to Bhabha, culture is not a static entity that can be fixed in time and space, but rather is something that is regularly in fluidity and perpetually in motion. Bhabha's definition offers an interesting alternative critical discourse vis-a-vis the idea of static, unchanging, uncontaminated, pure culture. Instead of seeing culture as something fixed at a certain point in time and space, Bhabha argues that culture is always set in dynamic processes, in ever-folding, ever-changing and ever-transforming processes. And more importantly, it is characterized by the sense of mixedness or interconnectedness, which Bhabha uses the term "hybridity" to describe. This is the theoretical position that Bhabha takes in his exploration of the concept of hybridity.

Theorizing Aadam Aziz's Hybridity and Spatial Manifestations

Drawing on Bhabha's theory of hybridity and James Clifford's insights on inter-cultural influence, to make a dialectical analysis on the notion of cultural purity and cultural hybridity, a conclusion can be drawn that the indigenous culture in the valley where Aadam Aziz was born and brought up had been hybridized as the result of the entry of alien cultural elements through varied channels. Physical contacts and cultural interactions had taken place through the interplay between the natives and the foreigners. Subsequently, a hybrid culture had become an inevitable scenario with the influence of foreign cultural elements upon the native culture. Furthermore, the emergence of hybrid cultural forms in the valley, a hybrid space it had become accordingly, had more or less exerted impact on the identity of the native people, making their cultural identity more complex, since the idea of pure Kashmiriness as believed to be inherent in the identity of those people had broken down in the context. This provides hints to look at the hybrid state of the native people's cultural identity.

Doctor Aadam Aziz had acquired a further hybrid identity after spending five years abroad. Aadam Aziz left home for professional medical training in Germany at a young age. During his five years in the city of Heidelberg, Aadam Aziz had exposed himself to varied alien things. In Heidelberg, Aadam Aziz had learned how to practice medicine in the Western fashion, for example, using devices like stethoscope for medical examination and knives for cutting the wounds or performing operations, and introducing Western medicines to cure such epidemic diseases as cholera, malaria, smallpox, etc. Moreover, his friends Oskar and Ilse Lubin who were deemed as firm believers in anarchism, had had a profound influence on Aadam Aziz with their anti-ideologies. The influence was so powerful that Aadam Aziz found it extremely difficult to adapt himself to the native land and culture after coming back from Germany and becoming a well-trained doctor. It is obvious that Aadam Aziz's identity had taken in varied aspects of other alien cultures, along with medicine and politics. In consequence, Doctor Aziz's hybrid identity was caused as the result of living in two or more

distinct cultures. The hybrid state of Aadam Aziz had resulted in many transformations that would inevitably transpire in his later life, including his faith in god, his perceptions on his surroundings which he was familiar with, his relationship with people whom he had closely come in contact, etc.

Aadam Aziz's educated and stethoscoped return had got him into trouble in many aspects of his life. Hybridity, in Aadam Aziz's case, is a negative state which indicates his struggle in the situation of dilemma. Aadam Aziz's dilemma is ascribed to the cultural difference that he introduced into his native land after absorbing alien cultural elements and acquiring a hybrid identity. Were these foreign cultural elements accepted by the native inhabitants in the old place? Or rather, were they resisted or excluded by the same people? All this presented a predicament in Doctor Aziz's returned life. The notion of cultural difference is developed with much elaboration by Homi Bhabha in the book *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha's elaborate discussion on the concept, setting in the colonial and postcolonial context, reveals his theoretical assertion that cultural difference provides a site for the interaction of two or more cultures and it is in this space that problems are induced in the process of the enunciation of differentiation. In this respect, Bhabha claims that "The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation" (34). Bbabha's theory provides an alternative perspective to interpret Aadam Aziz's case in a new light. In the first place, Aadam Aziz was faced with a dilemma vis-à-vis his faith in god. With a hybrid state of thought, Aadam Aziz, in performing his ritual of worship, started to doubt about the existence of god in his belief. His tradition-based perception had cracked open a gap, an interstitial gap between his pre-given religious belief and his newly-acquired knowledge about religious faith, which had divided his awareness into whether to believe or disbelieve the existence of a God, as can be traced in Salman Rushdie's writing, "… it smoke him upon the point of the nose. Three drops fell. There were rubies and diamonds. And my grandfather … was knocked forever into that middle place, unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve. Permanent alteration: a hole" (Rushdie*, MC* 14). Admittedly, his education abroad had filled his head with more empirical knowledge which could be proved and verified by reason-based approaches. The then-prevalent trends such as anarchism, atheism, anti-ideologies in German society had also exerted influence upon Aadam Aziz's perceptions, making it difficult for him to deal with the realities in the old place. Distressed by the accident that occurred during his worship which gravely injured his nose, Aadam Aziz decided not to perform any worship for any god or man. This decision presents a rupture in his religious faith, indicating that he was very much willing to turn himself into an ungodly person. Nevertheless, tradition was too deeply rooted in his consciousness, so Aadam Aziz had to struggle in between this ruptured state of consciousness.

Creating Enabling Spaces to Reconcile the Antagonistic Relationships

Rushdie in his writing describes this rupture as a hole emerging inside Aadam Aziz. The hole inside Aadam Aziz is repeatedly depicted in the story, which reveals the fact that Aadam Aziz was tortured by this ruptured state throughout his life, even though he had made many attempts to fill up the hole with something meaningful. The hole here has a very strong symbolic meaning. The hole is metaphorically taken as an indication to show Aadam Aziz's dilemma in his hybrid state of mind and identity. The hole can be interpreted as a special place, a special space of in-betweenness, which provides Aadam Aziz with a particular zone to

reconsider, reframe and reconfigure his ruptured being in terms of mind and identity. In Bhabha's theory of hybridity, this ruptured state that constitutes an interstitial gap is termed as the Third Space. According to Bhabha, the Third Space provides an atmosphere or a setting for the hybrid individuals, who are hybrids of their unique set of affinities, to reconfigure or reconstitute themselves and their relationships with the others in the challenging situations. In this light, the hole inside Aadam Aziz is such a third space which provides a zone for him to reconfigure different cultural elements inscribed in his identity, and more importantly to enunciate the cultural differences demonstrated in his hybridity so as to transcend, change, and go beyond his present living conditions. In presenting his dilemma in this hybrid third space, Aadam Aziz expected to see cultural exchange between the two sides taking place and cultural translation transpiring in the process of interactions. Furthermore, such a liminal or in-between space also provides possibility for Aadam Aziz to re-think and re-evaluate his hybrid self which had lost its historical continuity in the process of hybridization, which indicates a disconnection of his present being from his past self. For this, Rushdie writes "…so here he was, despite their presence in his head, attempting to re-unite himself with an earlier self which ignored their influence…" (Rushdie*, MC* 13). In this way, the symbolism of the hole inside Aadam Aziz has been made clear, which constitutes a third space of enunciation where Aadam Aziz could voice his dilemma as a hybrid being, and at the same time express the cultural differences inscribed in his hybrid state of mind and identity, and expect cultural translation in his interactions with the others so as to redeem his disruptive state of being. Besides, such a form of liminal or in-between space can be presented as a site of resistance in which Aadam Aziz fought against any forms of social and cultural exclusion imposed on him by the others.Aadam Aziz was fully aware that his identity had been added with something new and different, and he himself thus had been turned into a hybrid person accordingly. In this way, his return to his homeland, after a five-year experience abroad, had taken back with him new things to the native culture. Meanwhile, he had also realized that the cultural difference that he had introduced into the native land had caused problems to his life. If these new cultural things were not to be accepted by the natives, then they were meant to be resisted and excluded by those people. Subsequently, this would forge an oppositional relationship between Aadam Aziz who reflected cultural difference and the other people who resented his hybrid identity. In order to avoid the possibility of social and cultural exclusion, Aadam Aziz had dedicated to creating chances for cultural exchange and seeking for the opportunity of cultural translation. In so doing, it was likely that a setting could be fostered for Aadam to reconfigure his relationship with the other people. In his theory of hybridity, Bhabha discusses about the question of how cultural difference can be discovered and recognized. He points out that it is through the act of enunciation that cultural difference can be detected and understood, for the reason that culture is never pre-given, it must be uttered, must be spoken out. Then, the enunciative process must take place in certain situations and locations. Based on this argument, Bhabha also tries to specify where this enunciation of cultural difference would take place. Bhabha responds to this concern by introducing the concept of Third Space, and arguing further that the act of enunciation that informs any cultural performance is bound to transpire in a present time and a specific space which Bhabha defines as "a Third Space" (36). Bhabha says, "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated,ification, thus freeing Aadam Aziz from the

categories defined by stereotype.

Conclusion

Having analyzed all of the above, it can be concluded that Aadam Aziz found it difficult to get involved again in the land of his origin after obtaining a hybrid identity. His hybrid becoming had also constituted barriers to normal communication between him and the native people – the exchange he used to conduct smoothly in his early life – since the indigenous inhabitants tended to see his hybrid state as a threat to the purity of the village which was remote, insulated and distant from the outside world, and thus deemed as pure and uncontaminated in nature. Aadam Aziz adopted in the very beginning a positive attitude towards the resistance, negation and exclusion demonstrated by the villagers. He, according to Bhabha's theory of hybridity, took the site emerging in his hybrid state as a battlefield to fight against the discrimination, disdain, prejudice and exclusion vented on him from the dwellers of the native land. In this sense, the site had been taken as a space of resistance in which Aadam Aziz struggled to win understanding, acceptance and recognition and also seek for a meaningful existence with a hybrid identity. In this hybrid third space, Aadam Aziz initiated negotiations with the concerned individuals in hope of alleviating the hostile conjuncture and reaching a harmonious relationship with the latter.

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Linguistic Exile and Cleft Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *In Other Words* and David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*

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Abstract

Exposure to language is the key to early literacy and language learning. In the words of Maria Montessori "Language is an instrument of collective thought." The paper seeks to explain the close connection between Language Learning and Language Acquisition and how this connection bears an impact on 'smriti' and 'shruti' In addition, the paper is an attempt to answer such questions: How does Language help us in forgetting, re-creating and re-cycling our much endowed lives of limitless possibilities? How does the inadequacy of language also act as a catalyst in the constant struggle to adjust and assimilate ourselves to new environments? How do we re-surface then and make a forward progress?The protagonists in both the texts face a cleft identity, eventually exploring a larger and unified self that they were heretofore unaware of. Their consciousness enlarges with the ability to improve not just their own lives but also other lives along the way.
***Keywords**: Linguistic acquisition, identity, language learning, exile*

Jhumpa Lahiri's *In Other Words* (2015) and David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* (1978) discuss the thematic principle of adapting to a language which is different from the source language, with a fundamental difference. While Jhumpa Lahiri learns Italian as a conscious act, Malouf's protagonist does it under compulsion, after being exiled from Rome and also from the refined Roman language.

Jhumpa Lahiri's first language was Bengali, handed over by her parents. At four she goes to school in America and learns English which was traumatizing as she recalls in the book. She had to express herself in a language she "didn't speak", "barely knew" and that "seemed foreign" (Lahiri 137). Being four years old her natural impulse was to go home to the language she knew and loved. However, when she turns six or seven, as she reminisces, her "mother tongue was no longer capable, by itself, of rearing [her]. In a certain sense it died. English arrived, a stepmother." (Lahiri 138) Lahiri's parents wanted her to speak only Bengali with them at home and "the part of her that spoke English, that went to school, that read and wrote, was another person." (Lahiri 138) So there was a schism, a cleft in her identity as if the same person had two different identities knowing two different languages, embodying two different aspects, cultures, viewpoints and lives.

The author had to joust between Bengali and English unwillingly till the age of twenty five when she discovered Italian. There was no need for Lahiri to learn that language—no family, cultural or social pressure but in her own words: "Studying Italian is a flight from the long clash in my life between English and Bengali. A rejection of both the mother and the stepmother. An independent path" (Lahiri 141).

Jhumpa Lahiri migrated to Rome—a willful and conscious act, to deprive herself of English or Bengali. She considers it "an official renunciation" (Lahiri 38) and becomes a

"linguistic pilgrim to Rome" (Lahiri 38). She chooses to leave behind something familiar and essential. She maintains a diary, listens and understands to use Italian, the way an Italian does, acquiring the language by using all five senses and thereby revealing a deeper, a more humane and complete understanding of it, which is not possible at only a superficial level. It's later that the notes of the first diary take the form of her book *In Other Words*. During the period of her writing, she quips: "she feels like a divided person. My writing is nothing but a reaction, a response to reading… a kind of dialogue. The two things are closely bound, interdependent." (Lahiri 39)

Jhumpa Lahiri writes: "Every language belongs to a specific place. It can migrate, it can spread. But usually it's tied to a geographical territory, a country." (Lahiri 121) Her relationship with Italian takes place in exile—in a state of separation, when she was living in America and it was a painstaking activity. She talks about her parents who miss their language, even after almost fifty years of their moving to America. They couldn't wait for a letter to arrive from Calcutta, written in Bengali. Those letters brought back the memory of a life that had disappeared for them because "words bring back everything: the place, the people, the life, the streets, the light, the sky, the flowers, the sounds." (Lahiri 121) English for Lahiri's parents and Bengali for the Americans represented the same thing- "a remote culture, unknown, suspect" (Lahiri 139) Lahiri jostled between these two languages but she admits, that she could identify herself more with English and tried to be like her friends and also hated hearing her mother on the telephone when she was at a friend's place, from where she wanted to run away, hide and deny that part of her identity. This accounted for her inherent fear of being disowned by the English community. She poignantly explains:

> She was ashamed of speaking Bengali and at the same time was ashamed of feeling ashamed. It was impossible to speak English without feeling detached from my parents, without an unsettling sense of separation. Speaking English, I found myself in a space where I felt isolated, where I was no longer under their protection. (Lahiri 140)

There is also a sense of protest when she speaks against the cultural colonization of one's mind. She observes that the salespeople in the shops addressed her, simply because she did not have a foreign accent and rejected her parents because of their Bangla accent. Though her parents did understand the language, it had no bearing on these people. This brings home the point about the importance of culture which surround us and also influences us directly so much so that we try to acquiesce with what we see, hear, like or dislike. Slowly we develop our existential living between the two- one which we identify as our own and the 'other' which also seems integral to our being.

All the telling metaphors and images that the author uses explain this dichotomy between feeling of estrangement and feeling of attachment. That's what migration does to you. It's a complex skein of forgetting and remembrance, a linguistic exile, which in a way acts as a gateway to have an increased understanding and appreciation of language. As is quoted in the David Malouf's text "Dante had to wait nine years before speaking to Beatrice and Ovid was exiled from Rome to a remote place—a linguistic outpost, surrounded by alien sounds." (Malouf 21) Also when you live in a country where your own language is considered foreign, you can have a continuous sense of estrangement. It is easier to control things which are certain, stable and concrete, with fixed coordinates than things which are fluid and shifting. Such a reductionist discourse is useful mainly for the training of teams, such as armies, sales departments or missionaries. Control is opposed to flexibility and to sensitivity to circumstances. That's the reason Lahiri and Ovid respond with similar pain and face a chasm

between belonging and separation. Environment and culture plays a very big role in shaping our identities and giving meaning to our existence. This could be understood with enlarging our limited perceptions and looking afresh. This requires grit and determination to be able to accept the world we see before ourselves. Indian ethos has always stressed on "*Vasudev Kutumbakam*" (the world is one family) Ramanujan explains this Western ethos:

> Whatever his context – birth, class, gender, age, place, rank etc.—a man is a man for all that. Technology, with its modules and interchangeable parts, and the post-renaissance sciences, with their quest for universal laws (and 'facts') across contexts, intensify the bias towards the context free. (quoted in Dallmayr 142).

We are supposed to leave a place in order to arrive at another destination and also with it our learnings from one place to another. Aren't we then caught in between learning, unlearning and learning afresh? There is a baggage we carry and also we need to lighten ourselves in order to pick up new learnings. This becomes then the cleft or the chasm which we must not fight to reconcile but embrace it as it is.

Illustrative of this context-sensitive quality, Baudhayana (800 BCE)—the Indian mathematician and philosopher—noted that learned men of the traditions follow the customs of their regions. He listed practices in one region which were contrary to those in another, and yet both followed '*shruti*' and '*smriti*' in their own contexts. (Qtd. by Malhotra, 180) We have to pass through, in the words of S. Radharishnan "self-transformation, self-scrutiny, self-understanding." (Radhakrishnan 51) that echoes Mathew Arnold's cry in 'Shakespeare': "self-school'd, self-scanned, self-honoured, self-secure" (Arnold, Web)

We may have to pass through a spiritual journey of devotion, meditation, yoga or whatever we may call it, to transform our nature and make of ourselves different human beings altogether. It could be consciously done as in Lahiri's case who thought of exploring herself by means of a foreign culture in a foreign land by absorbing it from everywhere possible or like Ovid on whom the change of environment was thrust upon by force in the form of banishment. When we have that insight into the truth of things, we will recognize that our logical descriptions are inadequate accounts of the nature of the Reality, halting imperfect: *Yato vaco nivartante aprapya manasa saha manas* (Both mind and speech are inadequate to express the nature of reality) Our words are unable to express the name of that Reality. We are reminded of Buddha: *Anaksarasya dharmasya*. The truth cannot be expressed by *aksara* (words). Others may show us the path, but we have to travel alone or experience it ourselves.

David Malouf's (1934-) *An Imaginary Life* is a historical novella written in 1978. The setting of the fiction is in the outskirts of Rome in the first century A.D. about the Roman poet Ovid and his exile to a land of barbarians, which helped him evolve his view on nature, civilized life and the inextricable relationship between place and perspective. Thematically, the book explores issues of acceptance, banishment, belonging, cultural tolerance, environmental dependence, death, rebirth and most importantly, metamorphosis. The book has often been cited as an example of postcolonial writing, with the metaphor of ancient Rome standing for his modern-day Australia. However, we will see it with regard to the linguistic exile that Ovid was subjected to and how that changed his world view and mellowed his arrogance and pride over being the finest poet of his times. His inability to communicate and understand the language of the people of Getae, exposed him as a vulnerable man in the hands of greater forces—the people, culture and circumstances that he was surrounded with. His learning of how to adjust and adapt to his new environment, started now.

The novella begins with Ovid's lamenting his exile to the desolate land of Tomis, located outside the Roman Empire on the edge of the Black Sea. Banished from his native

language, Ovid "born on the cusp between two houses of the zodiac" (Malouf 11) must learn and find ways of communicating and coexisting with the savage locals. He also faced a cleft identity crisis situation with his inability to mingle with this alien race of people on the one hand and the nostalgia of his own familiar surroundings on the other. The text takes a full circle, ending where it began, yet a lot changed in the process. The way it begins already gives the novella its pretext—the meeting with the child who knows no other language other than his own—the prototype Mowgli who brings about Ovid's metamorphosis gets complete—linguistically, culturally, socially and also in terms of attitudinal change and evolution of character.

> Towards the beginning, Ovid faces a sense of foreboding estrangement with the barbarous people of Getae that reminds us of Tennyson's *Ulysses* where the people of Ithaca are described as "a savage race,/ That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me." [Ulysses in the poem and Ovid in "An Imaginary Life"] (*Ulysses,* Web)

Malouf's Ovid laments having been relegated to the "limits of the known world, and expelled from the confines of Latin tongue… But I am describing a state of mind, no place." (Malouf 8) The Japanese call this state "mushin" or no mind, when you are open to accept anything you want and happening around you. You become aware of your environment and submit to the flow of nature instead of resisting it. Ovid admits of not having seen any tree, flower or fruit but what he misses the most is his language. Being a writer and an artist of the first order, he's nostalgic about the lost homeland, the comfort of being around people speaking/understanding/knowing the refined language.

Ovid keeps talking to himself, to keep the words alive in his memory wishing the same time that some secret admirer of his, back in Rome, has so preserved his poetic lines or committed it to memory or even passing it "somewhere from mouth to mouth"(Malouf 12) that has become a part of common speech (the vernaculars). In Getae, Ovid feels more aligned towards nature and its animal creatures and insects. His amazement on discovering a scarlet colour poppy, is magical that brings back a whole host of colours and flowers to his memory. The very sound and meaning of the word 'scarlet' brings him a flutter of joy, as if that single word had the power of evoking other words—thereby other colours and smells and tastes and a lot more. Also dawning with it on Ovid was the realization of being transformed into a more humane person than he was before. Lahiri too, just like Ovid practiced one Italian word after another until a whole new world emerged before her which she felt in love with. She kept absorbing its sounds—the phonological, syntactical and lexical meanings with a childish curiosity though with the maturity of a creative artist. However, with love comes pain and both Ovid and Lahiri have felt it as innately and sensitively as does any artist.

Both the protagonists felt separated from this newly acquired and learned language, which has the ability of showing them the beauty of the entire world, yet there was a schism existing between the language and themselves. There was both a freedom in the liberty of expressing themselves in a different way in another tongue and yet there was a sense of separation from the people knowing the language because in the eyes of these native inhabitants as Lahiri notes they will remain 'foreign' (Lahiri 131) This is what is referred to as a cleft identity in my paper- a kind of rift between two parts of the same self. Both the texts use the first person narrative, evoking a kinship with the readers experiencing an inner journey, a mental and attitudinal transformation.

Ovid, in *An Imaginary Life* grows close with an old man named Ryzak, the village leader and slowly began going for the annual deer hunting excursion. It was then he came across a mysterious wild Child, raised among nature in the snowy woods. Throughout the

course of the text, Ovid tries to come to terms with the linguistic barrier between him and the Child, wondering if the Child will ever be able to understand and discover "the sounds out of himself by means of his breath? Has he discovered the rudiments of speech? Does he speak to himself, having no other creature with whom to share his mind, his tongue? Being in that like myself." (Malouf 45) This thought of what the Child faced is what Ovid could empathize with and he tried to give his companionship but in the end it is Ovid who takes the lesson and understands a deeper language—one of love and understanding with a deeper meaning vesting in his communion with nature. The Child, much like Wordsworth's *Lucy poems* where Lucy is the pristine child of nature, represented the raw and wild nature from which we have become disconnected and are at a loss to appreciate anything beyond our community/culture and language. Malouf draws our attention to this fundamental concept of accepting cultural differences as a means of enriching and expanding our outlook on life. Ovid's *anubhav* (experience) is drawn from the *samsparsa* (contact) with the Child representing the pervasive and mysterious wild nature. This is the state of awakening according to the Buddhists, of *metanoia* or change of consciousness.

We have to assimilate in the cultural essence of that we come in contact with, irrespective of the language we know. Ovid opines in the text: "A man's speech might be chipped off in the same manner as our drinking water and melted later in the warmth of the house" (Malouf 47) By extension it could be *samaj* (society), culture or neighbourhood. He is talking about the fluidity of language and our attunement to it, as if it's something malleable and could be given any shape.

Ovid in Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* keeps thinking about the Child, even got obsessed with him because of his curiosity and will to not just assimilate but to enjoy his company and know about the secrets of nature beyond the understanding of an average man. Also Ovid was completely able to empathize with the Child, an attribute that make us human. Lahiri on the other hand makes use of the maternal metaphor to explain the same obsession with Italian:

> I think of the first times I had to leave my children at home, just after they were born. At the time, I felt a tremendous anxiety. I felt guilty… I am acutely conscious of a physical detachment. As if a part of me were missing… I am aware of the distance. Of an oppressive, intolerable silence. (Lahiri 119-120)

There are many reasons and factors working behind having this divided or cleft identity. All those ideals/values/belief systems that were once dear to us, without which we couldn't imagine to live, suddenly become meaningless. This shows the irreconcilable clash of two cultures and languages and yet we embody both. Ironically Ovid quips in the novella quite pertinently:

As a Roman citizen of the knightly order, the descendent of a whole line of warriors, with the law and the flower of Roman civilization to protect against the barbarians, I scoffed at such old-fashioned notions as duty, patriotism, the military virtues. And here I was, aged fifty, standing on guard at the very edge of the known world. To protect what? A hundred or so mud and wattle huts, three hundred savage strangers who do not even speak my tongue. And of course, my own skin. (Malouf 49) .

Lahiri also admits:

> Learning a foreign language is the fundamental way to fit in with new people in a new country. It makes a relationship possible. Without language you can't feel that you have a legitimate, respected presence. You are without a voice, without power. No chink, no point of entrance can be found in the wall. (Lahiri 131)

The cleft identity could be noted in the Child also when he and Ovid briefly meet the second time but the child does not run away immediately, like he did the first time but stands puzzled, as if uncertain:

> …which of the two worlds he should fly to—back into the woods, or into whatever new world he has smelled and touched and taken into himself that comes from us. He has eaten from an earthenware bowl made by men, on a wheel. He has eaten grain that has been sown and gathered and crushed and boiled, and sweetened with a spoonful of honey… We [Ovid and the Child] have spoken. I know it. In a language beyond tongues. (Malouf 57)

A contact is established between them that cannot be broken. This contact is cherished by both in the *bandhutva* and *maitreyi*. It be seen and felt in Ovid when he started doing activities with hands like gathering seeds, marsh flowers, sowing seeds and making a garden. However, making a garden must be seen as an attachment (nostalgia) with his old life and fascination of gardens that he couldn't abandon. He also started understanding these people and their language. From barbarians he started addressing them as 'people' and admitted that he understood their "speech almost as well as [his] own… This language is equally expressive, but what it presents is the raw life and unity of things. I believe I could make poems in it. Seeing the world through this other tongue I see it differently" (Malouf 59) Being exposed to the queer language of the people of Getae, their habits, lifestyle and alien environment, Ovid begins to empathize with these people. He reconciles with the fact that his inabilities are an indication to change something within and not outside and when one is able to make that temperamental shift from within, nothing stands between him and the universe. Therefore, through this linguistic exile Ovid becomes aware of a greater exile which he acknowledges in the text:

> When I think of my exile now it is from the universe. When I think of the tongue that has been taken away from me, it is some earlier and more universal language than our Latin, subtle as it undoubtedly is. Latin is a language for distinctions, every ending defines and divides. The language I am speaking of now… is a language whose every syllable is a gesture of reconciliation. We knew that language once. I spoke it in my childhood. We must discover it again. (Malouf 94)

Ovid gets a taste and whiff of the simple life and goes through self transformation to actualize his true self. Ovid realizes "that spring is no longer to be recognized in blossoms or in new leaves on the trees, I must look for it in myself. I feel the ice of myself cracking I feel myself loosen and flow again, reflecting the world. That is what spring means" (Malouf 60). Lahiri in the same vein expresses her creative endeavor in Italian language *In Other Words* that has an identity of its own because "it belongs to everyone, or to no one, nowhere." (Lahiri 203)

In both the texts the journey ends with the protagonist returning to where he/she started from. Jhumpa Lahiri will go back to America, Ovid to Rome and the Child to nature but they are now having a much better understanding of their position and unique identities.

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Expatriate Women's Quest for Identity in Azadeh Moraveni's *Lipstick Jihad* and Manal M. Omar's *Barefoot in Baghdad*

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Abstract

"Exit West" has become a resounding slogan in the present context with a potential to become a global movement. However, the attention, affiliation, affinities, dreams and hopes of the expatriates from the Middle East had already turned homeward in the polarized world post 9/11. The "discourse of return" produced by such expatriates signifies not only the geographical return but a metaphorical return to their culture, religion, language and people. It emerges at a critical moment of renewed tension between the United States of America and the Middle East. The trend of going back to homeland has been captured in the memoirs of women expatriates from the Middle East. Working on a multicultural platform and well-versed with the global politics, these women can identify the local and global antagonists. The memoirs also interpret the political events, revolutions and invasions that spell danger for women in their homelands. The paper looks into the discourse of return as the authors identify with the common cause of the people, express faith in the progressive vision of the native people, dream a shared dream and get activated to fulfill that dream. The proposed paper delves into two memoirs by expatriate women – Azadeh Moaveni, an Iranian-American and Manal M. Omar, an Arab-American. Moaveni's Lipstick Jihad *and Omar's* Barefoot in Baghdad *trace their journey as they return from the United States to their homelands. The journey symbolizes their quest*
for identity – individual and national.
Keywords: *native, memoir, diaspora, women, identity, Arab, nationalism*

Introduction

Following the turn of events in the 21st century, a re-orientation of diasporic discourse is taking place. The Middle East diasporic communities have felt the need to assert themselves, present their side of the story, offer unbiased representations and challenge the superiority of Western civilization at the cost of the East. Imbued with a renewed nationalism post 9/11, women's autobiographical writing affirms faith in their own cultural heritage and tradition and its ability to resolve problems without the U.S. military intervention.

Women memoirists considered here have experienced living or are still living, working and writing in the West. Shuttling between their host and home countries, they remain connected to their heritage through family ties. Writing mainly in a post-colonial context, they inhabit a "third space" which allows them to approach the challenges facing their countries from a transcultural perspective. The memoir form has become the perfect tool in the hands of the refugee and the displaced. The paper looks at two memoirs – *Lipstick Jihad* (2005) by Azadeh Moaveni – an Iranian-American journalist and *Barefoot in Baghdad* (2010) by Manal M. Omar – an Arab-American working with an international NGO. The paper

undertakes a parallel analysis of the two memoirs to tease out issues of identity, nationalism, feminism and Islamic fundamentalism. Moaveni is a second-generation exile born in Palo Alto, California, into the lap of an Iranian diaspora community awash in nostalgia and longing for an Iran many thousands of miles away. The memoir recalls the 1979 Iranian revolution and its fallout for Iranian people. In the words of Moaveni, Islamic Revolution was a populist uprising stolen by fundamentalist clerics. Iran was ruled by Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi till 1979 whose government was propped up by an American-British coup in 1953. The resentment against the Shah's regime and his pro-west policies precipitated into a revolution in 1979. Martha Nussbaum remarks that the Iranian memoir was born in a turbulent period of Iranian history and culture with the "war on terror" looming large over its horizon. Moaveni's return to Tehran twenty years after the revolution began as a quest for personal identity and concludes with her attempts to identify with Persian culture. Omar is a non-Iraqi Arab. She was born in Saudi Arabia to Palestinian parents who moved to Lubbock, Texas, when she was six months old. According to her, her memoir is a search for identity against the backdrop of a country in turmoil. *Barefoot in Baghdad* also traces the journey of Iraq as it rises from the ashes of war and sanctions. It is also the story of women of Iraq who are trying to rebuild their lives. As an aid worker on an international women's organization, Omar's return is more of a gesture of rising to the occasion in Iraq's dire need for reconstruction. As the expatriates frequently cross geographical borders, the affiliation with the culture and tradition of their home countries and identification with the cause of local people are the subjects that deserve to be explored.

The Return

The subjects in both texts feel the need to return to their native countries ostensibly for different reasons. Torn as she is between her Iranian and American identities, Moaveni wants to recover her roots and reconstruct her identity as an Iranian. She is ill at ease with her hyphenated identity. Earlier, Moaveni's mother had futilely attempted to fuse the East and the West in the United States leaving her yearning for one stable identity. "Living between two cultures just made me long for refuge in one" (Moaveni 19).

In contrast, Omar perceives her hybridity as a source of strength. Omar returns to Iraq because she felt it was "her duty as a Muslim to work with women in conflict in their personal struggle from victim to survivor to active citizen" (130). However, as she treads along, her life becomes intertwined with the lives of the Iraqis around her. "I lost sight of where my horizons ended and theirs began. Their expectations become my expectations; their disappointments, dreams, pains and losses became my own" (Omar XXI). While the emigres felt the need to assimilate and de-emphasize their Arab roots in their host countries, the memoirs show a reverse trend following the U.S. "war on terror". The second-generation exiles seem to be more drawn to their roots than their parents. Disenchanted with American politics in the Middle East, Moaveni and Omar identify closely with their country, culture and dreams of their community.

Reacting to the neo-imperialism of the United States of America, *Lipstick Jihad* and *Barefoot in Baghdad* record emergence of neo-nationalism among the diaspora. Omar refuses to be the darling of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) or the U.S. military. She doubts the intentions of the United States in Iraq. Moaveni returns to Tehran as a journalist with a determination that if she wants to deal with Iran as a patriot, "it would have to be the Iran that existed now, wounded and ugly with its pimples and scars" (Moaveni 39). She

was sure since she was Iranian, she would feel at home in the one place she was meant to belong. In the same breath, she refuses to be quiet about Islamic Republic just to prove her anti-Americanism.

Reconstructing Identities

Linking their personal stories to the lives of other women and to the political histories of their respective countries, Moaveni and Omar are determined to challenge the stereotypes of Muslim women perpetuated by fundamentalists and Western media. The memoirs write back to the western hegemonic discourse as well as to the obscurantist discourses gaining currency in the name of Islam in their home countries. Another important function of the texts is to acquaint the younger generation of the exiled community with the richness of their cultural heritage. The memoirs aim to preserve the history and culture of subjects' native countries for the new generation of hybrid citizens who got to hear the tales of a mythic homeland from their parents. In the case of Iran, the generation that experienced the revolution firsthand longs to enlighten the successive generations about the Iran that was not Islamic Republic and about the Persian women who were free from the religious prescriptions of the state. Memoirs in this sense are repositories of the collective memory and emblematic of renewed nationalism. Hilde Lindemann Nelson points towards such transformative power of narratives in her book *Damaged Identities: Narrative Repair*. She argues that individuals or groups of people facing oppression resist the construction foisted on them by others. They do so through "narrative repair". This repair involves the construction of a "Counter story ... the cluster of histories, anecdotes and other narrative fragments … that resist an oppressive identity and attempts to replace it with one that commands respect" (Nelson 6).

Moaveni in her political memoir *Lipstick Jihad* is keen on clearing the name of her country. Labeled as a spoke in the "axis of evil" by George W. Bush – the President of the United States from 2001 to 2009 – Moaveni is at pains to clarify that Islamic Republic is not Iran. "I hated how the Islamic Republic not only dissolved the ties between exiles and Iran but those between Iranians and their own culture" (59). Her discomfiture is evident when misleading and simplistic labels such as conservative, progressive, liberal, moderate are freely used in the western media to describe the political situation in Iran. She aspires to free Iran of this political impasse, leadership vacuum and ideological impoverishment.

Barefoot in Baghdad does the important task of lobbying for Iraq which has been much maligned as a belligerent nation in the international circles. Omar, due to her eastern and western cultural experiences, possesses a "double consciousness." She can see through the global politics of isolating Iraq as well as attempts at the westernization of its native culture. Omar dispels the notion of Iraq as an Islamic country spreading terrorism. She marvels at its diversity and openness in society. Referring proudly to Iraq as a multicultural and multiethnic country, she says, "The mosaic of identities inside Iraq was not hypocritical or schizophrenic: it was what made the country powerful. The scene has changed following the U.S. invasion. The only images from within Iraq are of death and destruction" (XIX). Moaveni and Omar in their narratives regret the decline of their nations and present images of their countries as more sinned against than sinned. They are thus trying to cleanse the image of their countries through their discourse. Their effort goes beyond words to extend to the field of action. Moaveni reports from Iran for the *Time* magazine and Omar works towards the uplift of Iraqi women victimized by war. They are not escapees of their culture, war and political chaos. Instead, their memoirs reflect their determination to stay and strive. Eventually they settle down near their countries driven by their desire to contribute towards nation building.

The Islamic Revolution had turned the clock many years back for women. Veiling was made mandatory by the Islamic Republic. But Iranian women defied the state by using fashion as resistance. Moaveni sees the daily defiance of the dress code as part of the struggle. "She likens to war paint the heavy makeup that some women apply and attributes the obsessions with appearance to attempts by women to maintain their individuality despite the religious restrictions" (Mozaffari 523).

Omar is proud of Iraqi women as they had paved the way for women in the other Arab countries by being among the first to vote, the first to participate in judicial system and the first to demonstrate their economic power. Even as Omar worked with the most vulnerable women including widows, divorcees and teenagers, "she was amazed at their outspoken nature, their candid list of needs and their resolution to create change for themselves" (117). Despite their privileged position, Moaveni and Omar are not tempted to detach themselves from the Iranian and Iraqi women by making objects of them. The authors offer resistant narratives that "recognize the multifarious ways in which it is possible to be Arab, Muslim, female and post-colonial writer in a transnational, historical context" (Vinson 94).

Return to Tradition

As the memoirs conclude, the authors feel the affinity of their culture more poignantly. Both texts celebrate the culture, tradition, folklore, literature and religious practices of their native countries. To that purpose, they invent new metaphors as well as recycle traditional symbols. In the discourse emerging from the third space, Shahnaz Khan insists, the original signs are appropriated, cultural symbols reinterpreted, translated and re-historicized allowing for possibilities of supplementary sites of resistance and negotiation. Omar's favorite landmark in Baghdad is the statue of Kahramana, built in the 1960s and inspired by the story of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" from *A Thousand and One Nights*. She loves the fact that the protagonist of the story was a woman. No other Arab country showcases a contemporary work of art that depicts a female character in the middle of their streets. Shahrazad, asserts Nawar al-Hasan Golley, is the prototype of the modern intellectual Muslim woman who narrates her way to empowerment. The writers oscillate between two approaches on the issue of tradition. They project the negative aspects of tradition from a Western perspective. Here, they focus on the misogyny and social backwardness. Moaveni criticizes the patriarchal attitudes embedded in Iranian society. Omar regrets the backlash against women as the U.S. invasion was followed by the resurgence of conservative forces.

Moaveni's journey of self-actualization in Tehran runs parallel to the story of Simurgh, the mythical bird referred to in a 12th Century Persian epic poem *The Conference of Birds* by Farid Ud-Din Attar. Moaveni admits that her quest for a mythic homeland was a journey for self-actualization. Moaveni and Omar meant to stay in Iran and Iraq respectively for a short period and the option of going back was open to them. However, a wedding in *Barefoot in Baghdad* and a funeral in *Lipstick Jihad* towards the close sealed their future. They chose to stay close to their countries and strive even as the tension escalated in Iran and Iraq. Omar gets a marriage proposal from Yusuf, her colleague from Women's International. In the words of Omar, *Barefoot in Baghdad* is the story of finding love in the "most unlikely place." Moaveni resolves to continue her search for identity.

The memoirs of Omar and Moaveni show them as coming home to their culture and people. They do not endorse pure Islamic or Westernized identities. Moaveni is aware that she will feel transplanted everywhere only in varying degrees. Miriam Cooke, an Arab feminist

critic, observes, "The West stands as both nemesis and model. It must be rejected but also, paradoxically, emulated" (*Women,Religion* 174). Omar, too, refuses to be an Arab poster child. Crossing the political borders assumes significance when they realize that their individual lives are indelibly marked by the fate of their national community and that they are more accurately defined by their native culture, community life and family relationships.

Conclusion

Women on the East-West interface are trying to reconnect to their roots and reconstruct their identities as the world enters a new phase of strained relations between the United States of America and the Middle East post 9/11. The return to their native countries marks the geographical as well as metaphorical return. Writing memoirs is a way of reaching out to their people, introducing the transnational audience to their country's glorious heritage and depolarizing the world. The experience of the subjects adds to a greater awareness among an international audience of events shaping up contemporary Middle East and encourage a deeper understanding of the indigenous culture and faith. At the same time, they resist the dominant discourses driven by state agendas, religious fundamentalism and U.S. neo-imperialism. While telling their personal stories, they reconstruct their nations exposing their faults and extolling their virtues. The memoirs define "a culture that has an integrity and value of its own and is fully capable of reform and progress" (Turhan-Swenson 128). In returning, the diasporic women with multicultural perspective are indeed making an informed choice.

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Logotherapy and Primo Levi: A Rereading of *If This is a Man*

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Abstract

Logotherapy evokes within the fragility of human thoughts a will to find meaning in one's existence, whether subjective or objective, to survive and persevere as a functioning unit of society. It is a contradictory view of Freud and Adler in that it addresses the existential loss of hope induced by the harshness and indifference of reality and the chase to reclaim the loss of meaning. Frankl propounded this psychotherapy and this act as a coping mechanism to survive Auschwitz. The purpose of this paper is to examine the notion of 'meaning' described by Primo Levi's works in the light of Logotherapy in the context of literature. This paper will critically examine the reasoning and the drive behind the resistance and perseverance in an inferno such as Auschwitz, where morality would be impaled. The inhumane attitude is shown towards the captives. The perception of the Nazi violence towards the captives as disreputable and ignominious to such a dangerous extent where the termination of Jewish lives became the standard within a functioning society is problematic. Levi, Frankl, and various other holocaust writers and witnesses deeply condemned and questioned the mentioned phenomenon. This paper is an attempt to critically discuss the journey of Primo Levi through his witness writings. This paper aims to highlight and conceptualize the 'will to meaning' and how it helped Levi and other inmates pull through the unprecedented traumatic event in Auschwitz.

***Keywords**: Logotherapy, Primo Levi, Viktor Frankl, Auschwitz, Holocaust, Nazi*

Introduction

This paper is a radical observation based on understanding the meaning behind 'meaning' in an irrational and nonchalant world where expectations rarely match the unfolding of the conscious unit or the individual. The Holocaust–the apex of regression we took as a species, as a society, with our concerns away from 'meaning' and 'morality; concepts that philosophers and ancestors had till then honed and perfected with the greatest of care–creates the same problem of the 'will'; the volition instilled within humankind. Zygmunt Bauman, in his book *In Modernity and the Holocaust*, writes that "The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason, it is a problem of that society, civilization, and culture" (iv). Berel Lang in his book *Is the Holocaust Unique* has given a similar observation and described it as "a unique or as a novum, a breach or turning point in moral history generally and in Jewish history specifically. Such characterizations start out from the systematic cruelty inflicted in the

Holocaust with that enormity also expressed in a related set of terms that call the Holocaust "indescribable," "beyond words," "ineffable" (35).

The survivors of the Holocaust were fanatically careful in addressing and expressing their own experiences of desecration and damage. However, it was clear that there was a disturbing sensibility among the oppressed, of a certain restless upheaval and need to bring the atrocities of Auschwitz into discourse because of unsettled mourning and grief for innumerable family members and even whole communities that were lost in the Nazi purge. The Nazis' 'fanatical hatred' towards Jews, also considered as the unique reason for Holocaust.

Primo Levi was an Italian Jewish, chemist by profession, and a Holocaust survivor. At the age of 24, he experienced and resisted the Nazi brutality, soon after his captivation as an anti-fascist partisan and later deported to Auschwitz. In his book *If This is a Man*, he declared his identity as an "Italian citizen of Jewish race" (10). His works were originally written in Italian and later translated into English and other languages. He struggled every day with several other Jewish inmates from different parts of Europe. Auschwitz followed an irrational principle where the Jews could not even question. Primo Levi has written various works mainly focusing on the experience of Auschwitz. His works include *If This is a Man*, *The Truce*, *The Periodic Table*, *The Drowned and the Saved*, *The Wrench*, *Natural Histories*, *Flaw of Form*, *Lilith*, *Other People's Trades*, *If Not Now, When*? followed by a few collections of essays and poems. His works memorialize the everyday Auschwitz. When Levi was asked about his writings in an interview (*The Voice of Memory: Primo Levi)*, he replied "My books are not history books. In writing them I limited myself strictly to reporting facts of which I had direct experience" (195). As readers, we observe in his writings intense expressions that one would find quite disturbing if stumbled upon in the present era. In his book, *If This Is a Man*, Levi states that "I have learned that I am a Haftling. My name is 174517; we have been baptized, we carry the mark tattooed on our left arm until we die" (23). This paper focuses on *If This is a Man* as this work highlights the pivotal journey of resistance and survival in Auschwitz.

Levi reflects beyond the underlying mercilessness of the camps as designed and functioned by the Nazis. Therefore, his chief subjects are not Schutzstaffel (SS) soldiers nor camp authorities but rather the inmates. The struggle to survive within the prison/camp society as inmates are said to have been ruthless. Furthermore, the godlike domination of the Schutzstaffel creates a gap so immense that the psyches of the Jews could not fathom or even interpret the occurrences to their lives. In *If This Is a Man*, Levi recalls the struggle to survive in the camp as he writes, "One had to fight against exhaustion, hunger, cold, and the resulting inertia; to resist enemies and have no pity for rivals; to sharpen one's wits, build up one's patience, strengthen one's willpower" (87). Levi survived the camp, but he and the rest of the inmates lived with the constant fear that they might get killed any time. But an urge to stay alive helped Levi survive, a will to survive and tell the world that Holocaust is real.

Viktor Frankl, Primo Levi and Logotherapy

Viktor Frankl is another holocaust survivor who shares the same dynamics in experience and thought towards the Auschwitz coercion. An Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who managed to survive Auschwitz partly because he, as a psychologist, was given worthy tasks and insured by the camp medical staff. And in his time of despair, he conceptualized the theory we now know of as 'logotherapy,' a form of existential

psychotherapy aimed at chasing after the 'meaning' of one's existence. In turn, the chase, the journey itself, becomes the meaning-in-itself. Therefore, the continuity of one's existence is required for Logotherapy to be successful and cannot achieve if one does not carry a sense of hopefulness. However, everything in hindsight may seem morose and doomed. One must imagine and attract the end of misery. In his memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Viktor Frankl unfolds his terrible yet inspirational conflict in the Auschwitz death camp for survival. Emphasizing his experiences, he tells:

> This book does not claim to be an account of facts and events but of personal experiences which millions of prisoners have suffered ... inside story of a concentration camp told by one of its survivors (2).

He makes sure that his readers understand the singularity and uniqueness of experiences that every individual at the camp must have recollected and etched in their memory. The need to profess as if his experiences are a source of ultimate verities of all collective experience is invalidated. So from his experiences, Frankl fostered a therapy called 'logotherapy'; loosely, it can be translated as 'treatment through meaning.' 'Logos' is a Greek word that is generally translated and understood as 'meaning.' For some, this theory differs from Freud's theory of 'will to pleasure' and Adler's theory of 'will to power,' where Frankl ensures that it is 'will to meaning,' which is significant. The thinking individual seeks meaning and purpose in their day-to-day life to make their journey more profound. However, this does not necessarily mean the existence of one true 'meaning' for omnifarious humankind, for if it did, then there would be no questions, no philosophy, no science. That means having each answer to every invocable question from every discourse of history, even ones of metaphysics and divinity.

So, the principles of Logotherapy reveal that man is responsible and must actualize the meaning of his life. Regardless of conditions and circumstances, one must always have the liberty to perceive his emotions and feelings. The individual's stance towards life shapes what our identity is and what we become. In that manner, the liberty or freedom given to each individual is crucial for their outcomes in the tiresome journey of life, where the sole destination is the phenomenon called 'death.' And while in the discourse of death, it should be clear that Frankl lost his father, mother, brother, and wife; he, in Primo Levi's words, 'reached the bottom.' However, amidst the crematorium smoke, and millions of unaided cries, he discovered what could help him carry on. It was during one of his conversations with a prisoner about their wives that Frankl had an epiphany:

> A thought transfixed me: for the first time, I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which Man can aspire … The salvation of Man is through love and in love. In a position of utter desolation, when Man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way. In such a position, Man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment (42).

What kept Frankl sane during the rise of terror with imprisonment, torture, and the brutality of eventual detainment, with uncertain death just a step away, was his love for his wife, Tilly, was his absurd yet incredible will to endure, to continue living. Though there was no way to speak with his better half and know about her whereabouts, he writes about his wife in his books. Frankl writes:

> More and more, I felt that she was present, that she was with me; I had the feeling that I was able to touch her, able to stretch out my hand and grasp hers. The feeling was very strong: she was there. Then, at that very moment, a bird flew down silently and

> perched just in front of me, on the heap of soil which I had dug up from the ditch, and looked steadily at me (64).

At this point, the necessity is apparent–the condition to 'imagine.' Though some would argue that the sign of the bird had nothing to do with Frankl's emotion and that it is nothing but a fallacy. The imagination and the deduction that the bird must 'mean' something, whether it be delusional or not to post-war readers, was the only thing that made sense in the absurdity of the war. The yearning is strengthened with each passing day of the beloved's absence. And so, the same kind of yearning is seen in Matthew Arnold's poem *Longing*:

> Come to me in my dreams, and then
> By day I shall be well again!
> For so the night will more than pay
> The hopeless longing of the day. (210)

Arnold's reflection on love is quite analogous to Frankl's, though the former wrote the passage in an environment quite unlike the brutality observed in the war. It was as if the answer had been there right in front of humankind. Individuals must discern for themselves the meaning of their suffering, as Logotherapy would have it. As foretold in the passage above, Frankl emphasized the necessity in the feeling and knowing of love, and even more, a constant reminder that we are entities capable of love. Still, many individuals attempt to transcend or forget the experiences of the death camps and the gas chambers. Some have the option to transcend or rise over the experiences by calling upon what Frankl calls "the defiant power of the human spirit." The meaning needed in the continuity of life after Auschwitz does not necessarily have to be love, for every soul experiences differently. Some are more hurt and disharmonized than others, and with such instances comes the will to existence with a vengeance, or revenge as meaning. Others are terminated of their search for meaning by implementing various styles of executions. Some are made to witness the defilement of their own family, and thus destroying beyond repairs their sense of confidence and certainty. Uniquely for Primo Levi, he considers his deportation to Auschwitz a good fortune, in the sense that he was one of the rare few that made it out of the infernal camps alive. For him, the ultimate objective was to tell his story to others and make others share the perception about the survivors before and after the liberation. He writes, "the Lager, and having written about the Lager, was an important adventure that has profoundly modified me, given me maturity, and a reason for life" (174).

However, unsurprisingly, in a morose change of mood, he further goes on to question the readers if he, despite all that he had suffered, persevered and arose unto life from such a horrendous encounter, is still to be considered a human being. In *Beyond Survival*, Levi states, "To tell the story, to bear witness, was an end for which to save oneself. Not to live and to tell, but to live in order to tell ..." (12-13). Before the captivity, Levi was then in his mid-twenties, living an affluent life in his hometown of Turin, Italy, when he was forced to join the anti-fascist militia and then captured along with hundreds of others. They were deported into a train destined for Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Acts of depersonalization were the principal strategy the Nazis practiced against the Jews to own absolute enslavement of their property, minds, and souls. Recognizing the situation, Levi writes:

> Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes, in short of everything he possesses: he will be a hollow man reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often loses himself […] It is in this way that one can understand the double sense of the term 'extermination camp,' and it is now clear what we seek to express

with the phrase: 'to lie on the bottom' (27).

A resounding acknowledgment of the concept brought forth by Frankl is seen in the above paragraph. Levi believed the dispossession of a man to be an offense that words couldn't describe, and all through the sections of his memoir, he puts forth a valiant effort to assemble words that leave a heritage for the victims and the survivors the same. For Levi, depersonalization, language, and torture were a few of the named conspicuous strategies of the Nazis that they used to perform the offense. His most significant worries and longings are for the loved ones of each forsaken soul that had to undergo the torments and separations of the Nazis. And thus, keeping in mind that there are no accurate words to describe the crime of the Holocaust, Levi utilizes words so brilliantly that the reader has no choice but to understand and emphasize his experience like it were one's own.

Apart from all this resistance, although he had been exposed to the heinousness in Auschwitz, what kept Levi moving on was 'the will' to bear testimony and write, which would only be possible if he survived. His interpretation of cruelty that he would have first-hand knowledge of had to be oozed onto papers as his ultimate testament; the message he relentlessly wishes to convey had to reach ears outside of Auschwitz. In an interview with Anthony Rudolf, Levi mentions: "When I returned home I was not at peace at all. I felt profoundly disturbed. Some instinct drove me to tell the story. … So I tried, and by writing it I felt a sense of healing. And I was healed" (Belpoliti, 26). It is also to be noted that Levi did not intend his books to be studied in the fashion of literature, placed in its systematic and academic analysis. In his collection of interviews *The Voice of Memory: Primo Levi*, Levi says that he has written in such a way as a "witness in matters of justice perform his task, which is that of preparing the ground for the judge. The judges are my readers" (186).

Conclusion

Levi survived Auschwitz and told the accursed happenings of the camps in his books, and after several years, his sudden 'accidental' death is still considered suicide. The sacrilege unto humankind by humankind, in the name of segregation, that one encounters during those trying times for the Jews must evoke abstract pathological disturbances to the mental health of many. It is evident that Levi managed to survive Auschwitz through 'will to meaning,' but assuming that he committed suicide here lays the question of Levi's mental struggle, which he had kept within himself. It is uncertain whether he died due to the death of the will be held on to until his final getaway from the camps. The concept behind Logotherapy is to find a meaning to sustain life, but in the case of Levi, it seemed to have helped Levi momentarily. His death raises more questions than it resolves. Holocaust writer Elie Wiesel talks about Levi's suicide that Levi died at Auschwitz forty years later. Many others gave similar reactions to Levi's death, assuming it to be a 'delayed homicide.' Analyzing several aspects of Levi's writings provides an open platform to discuss the varsity in his life and writings. Logotherapy indeed helped Levi to retain his life after Auschwitz. Logotherapy certainly is an excellent initiative to dwell deeper into understanding the trauma and its after-effects.

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Memories of Trips and Tea: Sips of Remembrance in Rishad Saam Mehta's *Hot Tea Across India*

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Abstract

Food carries symbolic meaning that is further nuanced with memory. These memories are created and recollected due to the sensory perceptions that the human body experiences making intricate connections and associations in the conscious and unconscious minds, leading to what 'affect theory' articulates as affective experiences. This paper closely reads Rishad Saam Mehta's Hot Tea Across India *(2011), a collection of accounts of Mehta's various trips across India, to explore the way memories are shaped, constructed, and recounted by the consumption of comestibles—tea, in particular, in this case. Personal or individual memory is looked into here, encompassing personal experiences, emotions, and associations further nuanced by affective experiences. To establish how consumption structures memory, this paper considers a few aspects of personal memory: the Proust phenomenon, habit memory, and prospective memory. Considering the work has the attributes of the genre of travel literature, a brief analysis is also made into its qualification as a travelogue that espouses culinary or gastronomic tourism.*
Keywords*: travel writing, memory, affective experience, food, culinary tourism*

Introduction

Tea enjoys great fame and has received many accolades being perhaps the most consumed beverage in the world. A gift from the oriental East to the rest of the world, this drink of the *Camellia sinensis* leaves infused in water has a flavourful history that is "steeped in ritual and religion, adventure and enterprise, smuggling and revolution, literature and social change" (Saberi 8). Most of these notes of flavours appear in Rishad Saam Mehta's *Hot Tea Across India* (2011). This collection of accounts of Mehta's various trips across India documents his travels, immortalising the people he met and the cups of tea that he shared with them, leading to the title of this book which foregrounds the importance of tea in the narrative that he constructs.

Tasting and Remembering

The human need for sustenance results in frequent acts of consumption. This process titillates all the basic human senses—taste, sight, touch, smell, and hearing. "[T]he senses, the sensorial, and the human sensorium" lead to what affect theory articulates as an "affective experience" (Highmore 119), tethering our presence in the world to the present while creating

vivid memories that will be looked back at from the future.

Food is wrought with symbolic meaning that is further nuanced with memory. Deborah Lupton regards the unquestionably inescapable relationship between food and memory as "symbiotic." The sensorial experience of procuring, preparing, and consuming food can evoke memories of associations and experiences linked with food, while memories, in turn, influence the perceptions towards food choices (668).

This paper closely reads Mehta's collection of travel accounts to explore the way memories are shaped and constructed by the consumption of comestibles—tea, in particular. The kind of memory at play here is personal or individual which encompasses the personal experiences, emotions, senses, and associations linked with a specific time and place (Assmann 109). Food is capable of creating and recollecting memories as it "acts both mnemonically and symbolically" (Ingram 32). Subjective "sensory-perceptual features" are often the first details to be retrieved from memory about a particular situation or event (Anderson and Conway 219), thereby establishing that these memories are usually anchored on these same perceptions. Roland Barthes has long since ascertained the symbolic capability of food in his claim that food is "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior" (24).

Marcel Proust's vivid description of the memories triggered by tasting a madeleine biscuit dipped in tea is largely considered "the most iconic scene of gastronomic recollection in European literature" (Tigner and Carruth 107). The depiction of this experience was so profound that many critics and academicians have taken to calling this evocation of memories and associations by sensorial stimulation as "the Proust phenomenon" (Herz and Schooler 21; Smith 38). Jon D. Holtzman argues that the ability of food to engage the senses and perceptions of the body lends it "power as a vehicle for memory" (365). The corporeality of food "compels" a winding web of memories created in the unconscious and conscious minds, leading Amy Tigner and Allison Carruth to assert that "[t]aste structures memory" (107).

Brewing Memories

Mehta begins his travelogue by evoking the image of the rustic tea stalls, for he finds that the one certainty" about the roads in India is the fact that it will be interspersed with tea stalls (1). He comes across numerous tea stalls on his travels in India, most of which have been via road on his trusted Royal Enfield Bullet motorcycle. He writes that he "like[s]" to drink tea, and quite often, this "like" escalates to a "need" for his survival (1).

Tea in India is as varied as the cultures encompassed within this geographic scope, and Mehta appreciates all the different "avatars" of tea that he has consumed from his pit stops during travel—some spiced with fragrant aromatics served in clay pots, others frothy concoctions served in the tiny glasses (1). Consequently, Mehta writes that this beverage truly "epitomises India" and is an "integral part" of all of his adventures and travels within the country (2).

Mehta's action of drinking tea on these trips becomes—in Paul Connerton's term—"habit memory," a memory that is created and "sustained by ritual performances" of the habitual action (70). His habit is evidenced by his insistence on a cup of "morning tea" (Mehta 9) to be consumed without fail during his travels on the road, as well as his "usual post-ride cup" (70). The creation and sustenance of this habit result in a strong linkage between Mehta's memories of his trips and the affective experience of tea consumption.

This connection between his memories and tea is also seen in the way that he recounts his

trips. Mehta associates tea, or rather specific cups of tea, in his memories with certain personal experiences and emotions, creating affective experiences. For instance, he forever bemoans the cup of tea from a tea stall near the border of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, as it "led to the most embarrassing travel moment" in his life that involved raw milk and an upset stomach (9). Conversely, he finds that the unforgettable taste of the tea from the eatery on the Manali-Leh mountain valley road has been rendered so by the "splendid location" (14) and the ambience that adds to the gastronomic experience and heightens the senses. By providing other sensorial details of the smells—the elements of touch and temperature in the camping trails through the mentions of spices, mattresses, and warm quilts—Mehta creates an intense yet idyllic multidimensional scene. A scene like this arouses all the senses—one that he has created and stored away in his memory to invoke at will.

Mehta vividly describes the memories tea associated with the people he encounters, the places he passes through during his trip, and the emotions he felt and experienced. He remembers the "divine cardamom tea" at his friends' home in Chandigarh (56), the "hot, sweet" drink poured from a "grubby" thermos flask belonging to a lone guard on an estate between Delhi and Chandigarh as a welcome respite from the sudden downpour (55), the cup of tea spiced with "Everest Tea Masala" prepared for him by a hired helper on his camping trip in Himachal Pradesh (19), and the "hot tea at the little tea shop" at the Jalori Pass near the Kashmir Valley (58). He opines that his favourite cup of tea in Leh is from The German Bakery, where they serve a cup that is "strong and dark, with a dash of milk and sugar and spice." He finds this as a welcome alternative to the other offerings on their menu: "delicate" infusions of chamomile and mint, which Mehta considers "degradation of tea" (67).

He remembers with awe the tea that he was served in Kargil from a dilapidated "ancient tea percolator," which belied the glorious concoction that was "flavoured with cinnamon, saffron and cardamom and sweetened with honey" (76). The feeling of comfort granted by the glass warmed by the tea ensconced within his palms gave him "hope" in fulfilling his trip to Srinagar (77). The tea he shared with a shepherd in the Zoji La mountain pass in Ladakh is one that he will never forget as one that used the "direct from source" goat milk (80). Another shepherd from Pahalgam in Kashmir endears himself to Mehta for his "purist" ways. He refused the "shortcut tea" made from the portable supplies of tea bags and condensed milk and instead whipped up a brew enlivened by saffron that intertwined with the aroma of "wood smoke and pine" from the surroundings in the hills to granted a memorable "unique flavour" (93).

Furthermore, Mehta's practice of drinking tea as one of the very first things that he does in a new place aligns with Edward Casey's assertion of this habitual memory functioning as a way of getting one oriented to a new place, thereby familiarising the unfamiliar and the strange (151). In the process of occupying himself in the quotidian acts of eating and drinking, he finds the space and time to slow down and comprehend the sights that he is exposed to and the feelings that accompany the same, such as the "sense of achievement" he feels on witnessing the sunrise in Kashmir characterised by its sublime "rolling green meadows, pine-forested gentle slopes merging into lofty white caps" (84). This vividly descriptive image of Kashmir will stay with him for a lifetime. Thus, by indulging in the familiar act of drinking tea, Mehta can ground himself even in the constant change of surroundings and faces around him.

Mehta's constant seeking of tea and tea stalls also results from "prospective memory" (Sutton 28) at play. His past experiences, memories, and associations surrounding the consumption of a hot cup of tea lead him to anticipate the future memories that will be created

as a result of the same practice. His associations of refreshment and renewed vigour with tea are a function of this prospective memory, the aforementioned habit memory, and the Proust phenomenon. Accustomed to his multiple cups of tea, he anticipates experiencing these associations just at the sight and smell of tea, thereby boosting his mood with pleasant feelings even before the actual act of consumption. A good cup of tea makes the world around him brighter, and "the lake and blue skies around" seem "even prettier" (Mehta 20).

Alternatively, prospective memory comes into play with other associations of tea that are not as positive as the ones mentioned before. Mehta delves into the loaded notion of "*chai paani*," which translates to tea and water and refers to the practice of indirectly asking for a monetary tip for a service rendered (25). He recounts the few negative experiences that he had with people asking him for *chai-paani*, one such involving a traffic policeman who is adamant about extorting money from Mehta. While he manages to escapes unscathed and the weight of his wallet unchanged owing to his friend's quick wit, he does not expect to be that lucky the second time around. The exorbitant amount demanded from him at the railway station in Delhi by the porter to unload his motorcycle from the train as *chai-paani* makes Mehta disbelievingly ask the porter if the money was to "finance the opening of a chain of tea houses" instead of just a cup tea (44). When a misunderstanding results in the motorcycle not being unloaded at the station, Mehta is left in a lurch as he knocks door after door of railway officials and station workers seeking help. As he waits for the requests of *chai-paani* that he is sure will be put forth, he is pleasantly surprised to face no such demand. This would perhaps be the first and only instance in the book where the author is left satisfied and content at not mentioning tea.

David Sutton asserts that "memories…are very much formed as an interaction between the past and the present, a point made by those working on memory in a number of different disciplines" (9). Mehta himself seems to be partly aware of this notion, as he writes about his trip to Rishikesh accompanied by his friend Mouneet. While river rafting down the Ganga River, their raft overturns. After an arduous rescue mission by the lifeguards, they find solace, warmth, and gratitude towards life and good fortune in cups of tea served to them. Mehta notes that Mouneet's "mind had already started giving heroic shape to his inelegant dunking in the river" (33). Through the numerous retellings of Mouneet's version of the accident to their friends, Mehta observes that each succeeding rendition of the memory was further away from the actual event. This exaggeration could perhaps be an unconscious response to the shock of a near-death experience, or it could just be his way of adding spice and drama to an unforgettable experience etched in their memories.

"[T]ea brings well-being, harmony, politeness, conviviality and hospitality," writes Helen Saberi (8). By partaking in drinking tea "huddle[d] around the wood stove for warmth" accompanied by the "soft slurping" (Mehta 39) sounds made by the other travellers, Mehta finds himself to be part of a community on the road and revels in the sense of belonging facilitated by commensality—the act of eating together in a group (Fischler 529; Goldstein 40; Sobal and Nelson 181). Mehta adds dimension to the recounting of his memory by adding more sensorial paraphernalia in his depiction of the sounds and indications of the weather that make his experience of drinking tea even more pleasurable. Tea extended as part of commensal acts of kindness reflects the "magnanimous heart[s]" (Mehta 55) of the people that he encounters on his road trips. Mehta remembers quite fondly a "[d]omicile bonding" that happened between him and a sentry guard at the Kargil Pass. When Mehta exhibits his bare minimum ability to speak in Marathi, he charms the guard by appealing to his regional affiliation. The guard offers him preferential treatment on the mountains by ordering tea from

the nearby canteen and bringing out "his cherished stock of biscuits and Wills cigarettes" (80). Another instance is of the tea that he shares with an old saffron merchant in Kashmir, and though Mehta does not leave with any saffron, he was happy to leave with the stories narrated by the merchant of the "good old days" of his youth (88). Commensality is extended towards Mehta by a nomadic group in the deserts of Rajasthan as well, who offer him a place in their simple dinner fare accompanied by tea made with "thick, sweet and creamy camel milk" (171).

Some of these relationships evolve from being fleeting acquaintances tinged with nostalgia to stronger connections that withstand the test of time and find themselves called upon in the present. The latter are carefully nourished with care and affection, such as the relationships he forges with Thakur Prakash in Shimla, and Navaz and Karandip in Chandigarh, among many others.

Narrative of Culinary Tourism

Hot Tea Across India does not fit into a travel narrative that espouses the traditional idea of culinary tourism, also known as gastronomic tourism, wherein the exploration of food through the local foodways is the main motive of the trip (Long 20). However, the narrative does adopt some aspects of the same, such as the "cultural encounter" (Kivela and Crotts181) encouraged by culinary tourism. This refers to a situation wherein communities' cultural and social differences are respectfully appreciated and experienced while celebrating the inherent diversity and uniqueness (Dixit 2). Mehta's travels have taken him to faraway places with cultures different from his own. However, a hot cup of tea on these trips have always grounded him in these places while forming a community among the others blowing and sipping at their steaming cups at roadside stalls. These experiences of consumption—in addition to the other detailed articulations of the local food and his eating experiences on his travels—mark the associated places for Mehta as ones to "revisit" and "relive" fondly and are an essential part of his rendering these travel experiences as "positive" and "memorable" (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen 295-296). He expresses these sentiments in his travel writing by waxing eloquent about his travels on the roads of India to tempt his readers to "experience for themselves" the "stunning locales in India" (Mehta 14). His attention to the consumption he indulges in on these travels and his effort to ensure that the sentiment is reflected through his writing qualify this work as one belonging to culinary travel literature.

Conclusion

Saberi echoes many tea sommeliers when she states that "the flavour of a particular tea will reflect the climate and soil of the growing environment, thus creating myriad teas with different tastes and flavours" (8). For Mehta, the memories of the flavour of the countless cups of tea he has consumed reflect the company he was with at the various stops in his travels.

Ultimately, Mehta's *Hot Tea Across India* is a collection of travel accounts steeped in memories of tea. The remembrance of each sip brings forth an instance of what Cruz Miguel Ortiz Cuadra refers to as the "palate's memory"—a "bond that unites food and dishes with vital experiences and remembrances" (51). Mehta recollects the palate's memory associated with each of the places he has been to and the various cups of tea he has partaken in with numerous people he has met along the way. "[T]he treasury of metaphorical associations that

link food with love and emotional nourishment" (Waxman 363) resonate in this narrative to elicit similar responses from the reader as well by encouraging them to sift through their memories flavoured by the many-layered tastes of food and drink.

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Multimodality, Modernity, and Maleficent: A Study of "Sleeping Beauty" in Modern Cinema

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Abstract

The influence fairytales have on the psyche and behavior of children is proven by many scholars. Moreover, it has been studied that the modernistic revision of fairytales can prove very efficient to build a broad-minded personality of children. This research paper aims to study the multimodal representation of fairytale of Sleeping Beauty *and how the modern cinematic revision of the fairytale in movies* Maleficent (2014) and Maleficent Mistress of Evil (2019) *has resulted in providing a fresh perspective towards the folklore. The research will showcase the positive aspects of alteration of classic fairytales in a new light and will contribute to deconstruction of the social and gender stereotypes and the establishment of contemporary ideologies to relate for the young generation. The goal is to illustrate the liberating outcomes of review of fairytales through studying binaries of witch/godmother, questioning the narrative authority, and the concept of sorority. The paper will conclude by presenting the redemptive and harmonious scope inherent in the amendment of fairytales not just for a particular gender, but for whole humanity.*
Keywords: *Maleficent, Modality, Modern Cinema, Multimodality, Sleeping Beauty*

Introduction

Fairytales across the ages have influenced the social and psychological development of children. It has been proved by many researches that the folklore influences the mental makeup of children, which further results into shaping their personality development as an adult. Fairytales make children learn the difference between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, and provide ideals for children to follow in their life. As a result, the ideologies presented in the fairytales should be properly analyzed and revised as these tales are existing since a long time and with each passing epoch, the moral values and beliefs of the society change, and in order to achieve a liberal society, fairytales must be modified to relevantly shape the minds of the future generation. The cinematic representation of fairytales has resulted in deconstructing the stereotypical narrative and has provided a fresh perspective towards the folklore. Barthes' deconstructionist approach regards the authority of classical myths as "ideological abuse" that is ingrained in culture and media (11). Thus, there is a need to peel away the layer of narrative authority that has been building up on the society's perspective since many centuries.

Multimodal Representation of "Sleeping Beauty"

Passing from the oral tradition to print to animation and finally to cinema, "Sleeping Beauty" folktale has acquired many undertones to its narrative, with major one being the movie *Maleficent* (2014) and its sequel *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019). These multimodal representations have influenced both young and adolescent children of their generation in their own unique ways. The remake "changes the storyline of the original film in order to insert some innovative thoughts into the narrative which from the current point of view and in the light of emancipation movements such as feminism or LGBT studies is outdated" (Vágnerová 97). Charles Perrault's *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* was published in 1697 and lays foundation for the traditional roles of men and women in the society. Perrault describes that the prince gets attracted towards Sleeping Beauty because of her "disposition of an angel." Thus, her role was clear cut to the angel in the house, serving only the role assigned to her by the patriarchal society of that a wife and a mother. Also, female rivalry represented in the curse given by Maleficent to Aurora puts gender identity at two extreme positions with no resolution in between. Aurora's role in the classic version of the tale is passive and she is almost negligible when it comes to taking over the role of building and defining the narration of the plot. Her deathly sleep renders her unable to take authoritative role in the narrative and her male companion takes over the dominant role in the discourse. As opposed to modern visual arts, the Disney animation of Sleeping Beauty in 1959 offers a virtually appealing yet hackneyed discourse of the tale with princess yet again moulded into the classic model of damsel in distress, leading critics such as Davis (2006) to categorize Aurora into "Classic Years Women" as women of this era were typically repetitive of female passivity.

On the other hand, we have a revolutionary Aurora in movie *Maleficent* (2014) where she becomes emblematic of the 21st century assertive woman who takes the power of her kingdom in her own hands and takes responsibility to restore peace in the empire by a harmonious union of the human and the fairy world, Moors. She accepts challenges, faces troubles, and thus challenges stereotypical female roles and offers a progressive view of the representation of the gender in the traditional narrative. Moreover, the evil Maleficent is shown as a sympathetic character whose story is given a massive makeover with the till-now witch being given the role of a nurturing and caring godmother of Aurora. Consequently, we do not just have Aurora as an outspoken and open-minded woman, but we also have Maleficent being provided a chance to showcase her story and expose her pain without any qualms of society. As a result, the revisionist representation of Princess Aurora and Maleficent in modern cinematic mode is very crucial for writing a new legacy of gender roles for young girls who can take the world on their own terms without any fear of the dominant order. This also validates the teaching of fairy tales to children in modern light so that they do not face a generation divide and accept the tradition with open arms. Bell states that using folktales for educational purpose results in pedagogy that teaches children the value of social justice (5). The goal of moral teaching should be making future generation a good human and not concretization of gender stereotypes.

Redefining Boundaries Separating "Witch" and "Godmother"

As we move from the classic narrative of *Sleeping Beauty* to the modern cinematic one, we observe the change in definitions associated with a witch and a godmother, respectively. In oral tradition, the witch has always been the Other who belongs to the outskirts

of the kingdom of the princess and is jealous of the life that the princess lives. Also, she is symbolic of everything that an ideal woman should not be outspoken, learned, revolutionary, alone, and not dependent on a male! She is never seen with children and many narratives typify her as a child-eater. In reality, she was epitome of the *femme fatale* that patriarchy fears as she is not submissive and lives life without being dictated by a male. Zipes (1987) has stated that the feminist representation of fairytale "conceives a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced." As a result, we have Maleficent taking back her biological role as a mother in the cinematic version, and she expresses her agency to curse and care at the same time. Both Aurora and Maleficent are not extreme female idols in the *Maleficent* movie, but presented as humanistic characters who can err yet resolve the problems at the same time. The inclusive approach towards the Other in the movie teaches a wonderful lesson to young viewers who learn to see life as not just black and white. Offering a grey area for the characters in the fairytale instills a sense of sensitivity in the narrative and provides young listeners/viewers a message of bonhomie towards every section of the society.

Outcomes of the Transmediation of the Folktale

Modern children seek for a new approach to the classics so that they can relate to them properly. Such a makeover is necessary so that they can visualize themselves as a part of the space and time in which the tales are set. Bacchilega states that the multiple versions of the classic folktale "retell history, values, and gendered figurations" (24). Folktales are considered as a mirror of the society, but the classics will lose their relevance and may become uninteresting for the future generation if they are not revised as per the conditions of the existing society. Hence, the literature taught to the children should see revisions as per change in the eras. The way the humanity perceives fairytales will obviously see a modification over time as per the alteration in value systems and lifestyle.

Many issues prevailing at the unconscious of both children and adults find their resolution if the narratives existing in the conscious are refined and changed for the better. Bettelheim connects Freud's psychoanalytic theory to the meanings of fairy tales perceived by children. He noticed that fairytales have the potential to help children cope with complex problems of life such as "overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalry…relinquish[ing] childhood dependencies, gaining a feeling of selfhood and of self-worth, and a sense of moral obligation" (6). The ideal of sorority was totally ignored in the traditional versions of fairy tales and females were always seen as conniving against each other. If they sought to speak up for themselves, they were side-lined by the entire community and reduced to the role of an evil woman who is a danger to the naïve damsels. *Maleficent* (2014) glorifies the individuality of both Aurora and Maleficent, with each female excelling in her own world rather than fighting against each other for gaining validation from the society.

An Inclusive Approach

A modernistic approach towards the fairytales helps children learn about the value of an equitable environment. The breaking of gender norms in *Maleficent* will significantly contribute to a behavioral change in children towards their counterparts who are not equal to them in gender, class, or race. The Moors are treated as an alien territory by the kingdom in the beginning of the movie, and the ultimate crowning of Aurora as the queen of both the

kingdoms is symbolic of acceptance and tolerance towards people who do not look or live like us. For the benefit of society, this is a major lesson that children must be taught at an early age to avoid conflicts based on class, caste, gender, creed, or race. Studying Barthes, Bignell states that the advertisements include "positioning the individual subject in such a way as to naturalise a dominant ideology" (47). Similar phenomenon one can observe in traditional treatment of folklore characters representing class, caste, and gender biases and it instills stereotypes in minds of the young audience. Offering a modernistic inclusive approach towards the fairytales in cinema reverses this cycle and makes a generation of open-minded individuals receptive to the ideologies of the Other without any conflict.

The Role of Narration

Vyas and Shekhawat state that each film genre "has its own conventions and stages of development" (1). Thus, a cinematic version of a fairytale is destined to offer a renewal of a classic fairytale and with change in narration we see a shift in the authority. In *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy Tale Films* (2011), Jack Zipes describes a fairy-tale film as:

> … any kind of cinematic representation recorded on film, on videotape, or in digital form that employs motifs, characters, and plots generally found in the oral and literary genre of the fairy tale, to re-create a known tale or to create and realize cinematically an original screen-play with recognizable features of a fairy tale. (Zipes 9)

In *Maleficent*, the director highlights the problematic role of the storyteller as the one who narrates the story takes an authoritative role. In the film, the audience gets to see the other side of the story and Aurora is shown as having empathy for the wronged Maleficent. Barthes (1972) said that myth "transforms history into nature" (129). Thus, in order to be a progressive society, there must be timely revision of the narrative authority of the folklore so as to deconstruct the dominant ideology suppressing the other hidden discourses.

Deconstruction of Social and Gender Constructs

Maleficent shatters the binary constructs existing in the classic Sleeping Beauty folktale – nature/nurture, black/white, prince/princess. A "detailed analysis of topography, art, dance, dialogues, costumes/attire, captured by the camera" shows how culture is manifested in different ways (Srinivasan and Shekhawat 4). Most of the traditional fairytales show ideologies being constructed on the aesthetic appeal of the characters and thus we have Aurora as sun-kissed, naïve beauty and Maleficent as a hag clad in black. Thus, beauty has been the major signifier to create social and gender norms in the past. Studying Pierce's views on semiotics, Bignell deduces that beauty becomes a hallmark sign that signifies that a particular signifier is worth the value (11). Naturalizing the binary leaves out any scope for the characters to cross their concrete identities, and makes the sign a universal phenomenon. So, the classic version of fairytales work at deeply imprinting the ideal role of a female/mother in the minds of young listeners/viewers, which later interrupts with the modernistic tendencies of the civilization. As a result, fairytales should not be treated as pastime narratives for kids but as ideologies that shape the worldview of children in their tender years.

Depiction of Real Evil

The war between the Good and the Evil has been the center point of the narrative of all the fairytales: "The function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organise the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we call the play of the structure" (Derrida, 2008).The dominant discourse pits one side against the other to reinforce the stereotypical ideas. *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* movie shows the arbitrary nature of the good and the evil though the character of Ingrith and Maleficent. While Ingrith seems polished and good from the outside in her white wardrobe, she turns out to be the real evil in the end. On the other hand, the audience comes to know about the motives behind the curse of Maleficent and the pain and betrayal she had to go through, which resulted in making her bitter towards the humanity. So, there is a display of the difference between the evil in the inside and the evil perceived by the world, which children should learn to differentiate. Generally, classic fairytales depict a woman with old face, drab clothes, and no money as an evil persona, and the good characters are affluent, neat, and youthful. But, the young audience must realize that goodness and evilness does not reside in someone's clothes, face, or bank balance.

The Scope for Redemption

In traditional narrative of Sleeping Beauty, Maleficent is the evil witch who curses the innocent princess and the prince rescues the latter with his kiss. *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* sees a role-reversal of the redemptive figures where the prince takes a side role in the story and the supposedly evil Maleficent turns out to be the person who neutralizes the curse with her kiss. The transformation of the of Maleficent and her ultimate union with Aurora provides a redemptive stance not just for the sorority but also for the humanity as a whole by teaching the audience the scope for restoration of capability to love and accept toward the fellow beings.

Restoration of Faith and Peace

Like all fairytales, *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* too ends on a peaceful note with restoration of peace and faith in both the kingdoms: the human world and the Moors. But, this ending differs from classic modes as here Aurora is crowned the queen of both empires by Maleficent, and she becomes a responsible ruler who holds status as a supreme powerful figure, not just a complementary figure besides the prince. In cinematic version, the peace is not restored by forcefully imposed phallocentric order, but a sensitive acceptance of the feelings and the ideologies of all living beings in the kingdom.

Conclusions

The multimodal representation of the fairytale of Sleeping Beauty has been through many revisions as per the era in which it was reproduced. The cinematic portrayal of the fairytale in movie *Maleficent* and its sequel *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* has turned out to be the most modernistic treatment of the folklore by presenting both Aurora and Maleficent in a new light. This disruption of the center and giving new meaning to the narrative signs will

result in creating a generation of young minds who are accepting and sympathetic towards other discourses prevailing in the society and will result into progression of the mindset of the society as a whole.

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*The author acknowledges with gratitude the grant of Junior Research Fellowship by the University Grants Commission to pursue research.

Representation of Dalit Victimisation in Cinematic Narratives

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the representation of Dalits in Indian Cinema by exploring the causes of their exploitation and denial of equal access to administrative and legal institutions to them.. Caste based oppression of one set of people by another has been an integral and highly problematic part of Indian society. The picturisation of unwarranted entitlement of dominant upper castes to inflict violence on Dalits, despite constitutional provisions, offers new perspectives on caste dynamics and foregrounds the failure of dispensations. Any form of oppression disenfranchises human beings of their fundamental rights but when it comes to castes in Indian society it requires certain nowhere-found structures to be questioned. This unique caste based exploitation has been negotiated with various new sets of cinematic techniques by giving articulation to Dalits. Cinema has made the journey of liberation of the underprivileged a reality to some extent.
Keywords: *Oppression, Cinema, Dalits, Margin and Women*

Cinema, as an art, exhibits varied hues of Culture convincingly and plays a vital role in our society. The complex issues are dealt with deftly in a way that it shapes our thoughts. It is a widely accepted fact that the enacted Visual Arts leave a strong impression on the human psyche and that the audiences correlate themselves with the plausible stories. This is something that gives Cinema an edge over other art forms. The other remarkable aspect is that it reaches far and wide and can influence society at large in one go. Cinema remains both commercial as well as artistic. A good amount of glamour as well as sensitive issues of the society are effectively managed by it. It cannot be said that Cinema has fairly fulfilled the social responsibility for it is governed by commercial laws of profit and loss and it has maintained upper caste hierarchy but it is also hard to refuse its contribution to the betterment of society. The responsibility of Cinema is to provide a platform to raise issues of the marginalized sections, to unearth the truth about them and to sensitise the society at large.

Oppression of one group of people by the other has been an integral part of human society. Even the ancient civilisations of the world had interest in Slavery. The oppression, either based on caste or race, denies the basic human rights but all communities have had their own experience which varies from one society to other. In some societies, this form of exploitation is based on colour or class, but in Indian society it is more specifically caste-oriented. The endeavours of the Cinema to incorporate Dalit issues, so that the journey of liberation of underprivileged could be a reality, are commendable.

Designation of a community is a political act involving social process of inclusion and exclusion and attaching privileges, rights and disabilities within a framework of an ideology. In India, Manudharma, as a caste ideology, designated communities,

> placed them in a structured caste hierarchy and deprived Dalits of their wealth and social esteem. They have been challenging their designators since the days of *Rig Veda. Rigveda, Upanishads, Manusmrithi and Mahabharatha* gave a degraded picture of Dalits. (P. Muthaiah, 387)

The trajectory of Dalit struggles against casteism can be traced in long cultural history of India. Dalit writers rediscovered many lower caste saint poets like Chokamela, of the Bhakti Movement, who fought against unjust caste hierarchy which was firmly established in Indian society. The emergence of Dr. Ambedkar, on the political horizon of India during the 1920s , mobilised Dalits to get their due rights. To challenge the static caste hegemony and extreme subjugation led them to find relevance eventually in Buddhism. This further led to the full-fledged Dalit Panthers movement in 1972 in Maharashtra. Referring to various folklores, it asserted that Dalits were indigenous and were uprooted by the Aryan invasion. It would not be an exaggeration to say that most Dalit stories are sites of anger and protest conveyed through specific narratives and are available in the regional languages. Discrimination and untouchability constitute the bottom line of all Dalit expressions but the degree of oppression differs and does not get reflected in the Dalit stories today.

In India, Dalits are one of the most oppressed social groups and there has been a long history of their pain. If we explore the pages of Indian history we can easily find out the traces of their oppression and sufferings. It is embedded in the cultural past of India. Indian Cinema has been vocal about the plight of untouchables and explored the root causes of their sufferings. This critical insight of the Cinema contributed in sensitising the society about the pathetic state of the Dalits. Commenting on the state of the Dalits in India, S.M Michael writes:

> To be an Untouchable in the Indian Caste System is to be very low and partially excluded from an elaborate hierarchical social order. Untouchables are persons of a discrete set of low castes, excluded on account of their extreme collective impurity from particular relations with higher beings, both human and divine (16)..

Some of the movies based on Dalit lives have been analysed in this paper to highlight their voices of pain, anguish and also their strife to build an identity equal to the upper caste.

In Indian Cinema issues of Dalits were reeled for the first time in the year 1936 with *Achhuth Kanya* (Untouchable Maiden) which was directed by Franz Osten. The effort was to deal with the inter-caste love affairs and about the status of Dalit women in the Indian society. It can not be denied that one of the forces that encourages directors to make movies on such taboo subjects is capital gain. This movie fortunately turned out to be a super-hit. The movie is about the love affair of a Dalit woman Kasturi and a Brahmin boy. The fate of the couple was decided by the society which is ridden with caste issue. The movie filled the heart of the audience with sympathy for Kasturi and contempt for normativity. It would not be wrong to mention that the film was the first attempt to portray the pain of the Dalit women on the big screen.

Shayam Benegal's movie, *Ankur* (1974), also explored new dimensions of Dalit identity. The movie took a very sharp look at the prevailing caste dynamics of Indian society. It projects a different image of Lakshmi, a poor Dalit woman, residing in rural Andhra Pradesh. Lakshmi seems to defy the conventional fold of society by being a courageous woman although she belongs to Dalit community. The conservative and casteist society could not resist her insubordination. Lakshmi is governed by her own dreams and aspirations. She is depicted more daring than Surya, another leading character of the movie. She has an extra-marital affair with Surya. She is involved in adultery and this appears to be a very bold step

taken by a Dalit woman in the conservative Indian society, where adultery is a very serious offence. Lakshmi is a voice against the social taboos and very explicit about female sexuality. She raises her voice against the rigid social structure and claims her demand on her own body, which is the prerogative of every woman, but this thinking is against the unwritten, entrenched social norms which are supposed to be followed by each and every woman and more specifically by a Dalit woman. This movie showcases the hypocrisy of upper caste and discrimination meted out to the oppressed. Lakshmi is ostracized for having an affair with Surya and later in the movie is compelled to commit suicide. The movie foregrounds the fixity of societal norms which deepen and further strengthen the idea of exclusivity. Any transgression of demarcated periphery by Dalits makes them encounter existential threat.

With effective cinematography through visuals and aesthetics, Cinema evokes the plight of Dalit woman. The state of extreme marginality of Dalit woman is deplorable as they face lots of discrimination in society. Though they are treated as untouchables yet they are physically abused by the upper caste nonetheless. Their humiliation and sexual exploitation in every possible way by the upper caste put the notion of purity, embedded in scriptures, in question. They are socially excluded and are not equal to upper caste women but when it comes to their bodies they are not considered untouchables and are used by the upper caste men for sexual gratification. They are treated as sexual toys to gratify the lust of those who are able to use either money or might. They, therefore, are just for the entertainment of the upper caste. These are emotionally dead women as their emotions and dreams have no value before the caste-ridden society. They are so helpless that they cannot even dare to raise their voice against this injustice.

People occupying constitutional positions are also infested with the curse of casteism. If somebody dares to resist he or she is accused, humiliated and tortured both physically and mentally. This reflects the failure of ruling dispensation. The voice of Dalits fades away into limbo. The dominant toxic mentality in institutions of Judiciary and other enforcement agencies manipulate the system and justice is always denied to those who are at the lower rank of society. This mockery of justice has been substantially explored and analysed in the Indian films. Subjectivity of the judgements in the judicial system deprives Dalits of their fundamental rights, which can be addressed only by introducing inclusiveness and appointing Judges from all sections of society. Here the accused is the Judge himself and the victims are punished just because of their caste affiliation. Even today in spite of India's modernisation and growing economic growth, Casteism remains a reality.

Aarakshan (2011) based on the much debated issue of reservation, unfolds various complexities by negotiating deftly with this issue. Reservation was implemented to give representation to the backward and the oppressed communities of India in government services to mitigate the social divide. The movie centres on an idealistic educator, who strongly believes that reservation is meant to provide equal opportunities to those who have been exploited and never got a place in the mainstream, but this kind of idea is vehemently opposed by the powerful caste groups who consider aarakshan as an unfair practice. The gripping narrative of the movie elaborates on the education of weaker sections and the mushrooming of the tuition system. The movie revolves around the subject of reservation and its role in bringing about upward social mobility for those who are at the receiving end. Well-written dialogues of the movie divulge the fear of the upper caste about the reservation and the counter arguments showcase reservation as indispensable for social inclusion of the Dalits and the weaker sections in the society. Mithilesh is a professor who belongs to the upper-caste. Once passing a sarcastic judgement on reservation, he says, “humare bachche din raat ragad

ragad ke padhte rahen aur jab admission ka mauqa aae to khairaat loot lijye aap log. Dar lagta hai na mehnat karne se?" (Our children work hard day and night, and when it comes to admission, you loot it like a charity. Are you afraid of hard work?). The kind of statement is crucial to understand the viewpoint of the dominant upper castes, their resistance to social inclusion of those oppressed for centuries and those who had to struggle even for the basic human rights. The sarcasm of Mithilesh was taken by Deepak Kumar, who responds in strong words, "Ok! So you are teaching us the lesson on hard work? If you have forgotten, go and read history again. Then you will know who slogged and who looted it like it was their birth right. For centuries you people filled up your coffers with handout and you accuse us of living on charity? We ploughed fields, we reaped your corn, grazed your cattle, we carried your daughters and wives in palanquins, we cremated your corpses, stitched your shoes, drove your oxen, rowed your boats, cleaned your filthy drains and we even carried your shit on our heads and now you will teach us about hard working." The movie problematises the attitude of maintaining status quo in society based on an unjust Varna System. Such issues when projected on the big screen appeal larger audiences to introspect about the social wrongs. Cinema has been an important tool to discuss such social problems and also brought change in the society.

Another movie, *Manjhi*, which was released in 2015, directed by Ketan Mehta, is a tale of the heroic trajectory of the man but it also exposed the difficult realities of the prevailing Caste System in India. The movie also attacked the feudal mindset and the perception of the upper caste about the oppressed or subaltern. Dashrath was born a Musahar (a community of bonded farm labourers once known for hunting and feeding on rats) destined to be a lifelong slave. This is one of the most marginalized community subjected to utter discrimination and deprivation at the hands of the upper castes.The saga centres on Dashrath Manjhi, known as 'Mountain Man.' He is an excellent example of the embodiment of inner strength and vigour of the common man who can never be defeated. The resistance by Dalits against the centuries old caste privileges holds the thread of the film. What makes the outcaste underprivileged lies in the dominant religious texts, implanted with the codes to be adhered by the society. The encoded traditional practices mortified and fossilised these communities in the perpetual state of oppression. There is a dialogue in the movie where the treatment towards an underprivileged is very much visible. This is about the encounter between a Mukhiya (Village Headman) of the village and a man from the Dalit community. This man dared to wear shoes which are made only for the privileged or upper caste people. The audacity of dalit man infuriates the Mukhya who punishes the man by nailing a horse shoe. "Juta pahan kar laat sahib banega?" (You want to put on shoes like Sahib? Make him wear such shoes that he doesn't need it again throughout his life.) Even the basic things were denied to the Dalits, which are needed for survival of a human being. The Mukhiya or people of higher caste never want to see Dalits with these basic things. It engenders a sense of insecurity making them feel afraid of persecution. The upper castes are not ready to accept the Dalits though the caste system based on oppressive tradition has been abolished. There is another dialogue showing apprehension of Mukhiya of the village, Gehlore, about the new Government rule promulgated against the Caste System. One of his party members pacifies him by saying that "kanoon bnane se ka hota hai? Laagu kaun karega?" (What if the law is made? Who is going to implement these rules?) There are many such instances exhibiting the attitude of the upper castes towards the downtrodden. This has been a reality of our country, and still people like Manjhi, who belong to marginalised communities, are fighting against social exclusion.

The recent movie *Article 15*, directed by Anubhav Sinha, articulates quite convincingly the atrocities against the Dalits. Though it had to face criticism from the Dalits, this movie talks about the oppression of Dalit women nonetheless and how craftily it is justified by the upper class. The focus of the movie is caste–based atrocities, a grim reality of the Indian society. The film is broadly based on the 2014 gang rape case in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh, where two minor girls from the Maurya community were raped and hung from a tree. The movie is about the struggle of the marginalised to get justice. The main protagonist in the movie is shown as a saviour of the Dalits and has been cast in the movie as a casteless or caste-blind although he belongs to a Brahmin family. There is popular dialogue in the movie when he asks his subordinates "Mai kis jaat ka hoon?" (Which caste do I belong to?) as if he was unaware of his caste. His upper caste status entitles and authorises him to question like this. This narrative defeats the purpose as hierarchy is recreated again in the society which is trying to position Brahmin above others. The movie successfully surfaces Dalit issues to the audience by producing the feeling of pity for Dalits.

Quite a few movies focus on multifarious issues of oppression and exploitation of Dalits and the state of women in these communities. The rhetoric that is employed in the narrative framework of these films evokes plausible pictures. The dialogue and language of Dalit characters reflect their state of being subaltern. These movies present the privileged with "messianic attitudes," maintain hierarchy and project stereotypes of Dalits who are still unenlightened and dependent. Some amount of work has been done to achieve inclusivity in terms of inter-caste marriages and some access to state resources but more needs to be altered as the film industry is marked by exclusivity. Things could be made better if Cinema observes objectivity and 'impersonality' in its approach to such sensitive issues to usher in social change. Ironically, sometimes it is found that the oppressive forces are very hegemonic in Indian Cinema..

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Mediatized Economy of Laughter and Memes: A Study of Digital Public Sphere

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Abstract

Cultural theorists look at memes as digital artifacts located in the complex dynamic of contexts and sub texts in the socio historical matrix. The influence of 'meme' was fathomed by Dawkins when he wrote, 'When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for meme propagation in just the way a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell'. The interactivity, anonymity, connectivity and the collaboration offered by memes allow for digital ecosystems to construct new ways of looking and configuring our reality; and being able to laugh at it. Online discourse and pop culture have made memes an integral part of communication: politics, social constructs, realities, entertainment, religion and philosophy nothing is off limit. We are participating and building new cultural templates, we are negotiating and engaging through 'memes' with representation of reality. The paper explores the idea that memes bear the inherent stress and obscurity of society and illustrate the 'cultural logos of participation' with all its frills and faults.
***Keywords**: Memes, Culture, Discourse, and Genre*

Humour has had a checkered past: from not being acknowledged at all (existing as scribbles on the edge of the writings of great philosophers like Plato, Hobbes, Kant); to being openly criticized and attacked (Plato scorned at laughter for it outweighs the deliberately crafted self control; called it 'educated insolence' and describes 'the ridiculous' as some kind of 'evil') (Hamilton and Cairns); to being considered a subject of the state that must be tightly guarded and firmly restrained; to theology and culture reinforcing the abrogating ideas and representations concerning humour (John Chrysostom in 1889 puts it, "Laughter often gives birth to foul discourse and foul discourse to actions still more foul…) (Schaff 442); to an understanding which believed that humour releases 'animal spirits' 'nervous energy' for it challenges our mindset of expected patterns and ideas; to psychoanalyst like Freud who categorized laughter into three categories: *der Witz,* comic and humour and each facilitating release of repressed emotions, distressing anxious energy; to Schopenhauer and Kierkegaad describing humour and laughter as the 'last stage of existential awareness before faith' (Kierkegaad 448); to Ted Cohen offering a new concatenation underlining the collective social advantages of telling jokes and accentuating the contours of humour and laughter as virtuous. The idea of humour has travelled afar, through its humble beginnings at the margin of history of ideas to it's coming into the mainstream and making space for ambiguity and diversity. It is now looked at as glue that binds people, a collective experience.

Humour in books in sequential art form (comic strips) caricatures is based on 'story telling'; this story is essentially located in the cultural, social, economic and political paradigms of knowledge. The laughter it evokes is a collated laughter that underpins the shared cumulative experiences of an individual in a culture; offering a matrix of subtexts hidden behind the joke. There is nothing simple about a joke as it traverses through the terrain

of memories, history, social hierarchies, constructs and eccentricities. It has been called a 'work of art' (Ted Cohen); a reflection of people, times and trends. The present paper looks at the emerging landscape of participatory digital sphere, the evolution of memescapes as cultural artifacts, and consequent shift in the idea of public discourse. The paper explores digital memes as new public discourse, with its genesis in online collective spaces negotiating disparate identities, offering maverick arguments as they integrate differences with an involved participation.

New Configurations of Cultural Participation

In the contemporary cybernated world the joke has shape shifted into a more visual frame, has permeated our screens with its ubiquitous presence, infiltrating our digital spaces and chats: what we now call and recognize as 'Meme'. A meme has been variously and vicariously defined: Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'an image, video, piece of text' humourous in nature, copied and spread by internet users often with slight variation'; but it was Richard Dawkins who coined the term 'meme' in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976) drawing it as a parallel to Darwin's idea of 'gene' evolution, for Dawkins 'meme' is a 'unit of cultural evolution':

> We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission or a unit of imitation. 'Mimeme' comes from a suitable greek root, but I want monosyllable that sounds a bit like 'gene'. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to meme. (206)

Dawkins' idea of meme has metamorphosed, and grown in varied ontological dimensions. The computer and interwoven social communication networks have led to exponential growth of 'meme' but have, nonetheless made it very difficult to define. Memes in the age of information and technology behave much like human genes as they evolve, mutate and replicate. Internet memes are deciphered in terms of 'cultural replicators', offering representations located in cultural and social paradigms, navigating spatial temporal arteries of human history; affecting both vertical (generations) and horizontal (people across societies/countries) frames of references. It is evolving continuously as collective online platforms recirculate images and ideas leading to a new turn in public discourse. Memes are truly participatory as they make space for diverse identities and discourse.

The artistry of 'meme' lies in its inherent ability to adapt and remix the iterated messages; allowing members to not only spread but add and adapt the content in relevant contexts. In the 'infosphere' memes are considered 'cultural information' that moves from individual to individual, as it gradually becomes part of a shared social phenomenon; they ape successful gene behavior: copy fidelity (to replicate accurately), fecundity (fertility of replication) and longevity (stability over time) (Knobel and Lankshear 2007).

Memes and Digital Public Sphere

Cultural theorists look at memes as digital artifacts located in the complex dynamic of contexts and sub texts in the socio historical matrix. The influence of 'meme' was fathomed by Dawkins when he wrote, 'When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for meme propagation in just the way a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell'. Memes are metaphorical but the ever-increasing usage of the terms

'computer virus' (192), 'viral video' also underlines the biological parallel that is drawn. Seth Godin's *Unleashing the Ideavirus* (2001) threaded the notion of an idea to the power of the Internet. It was TIME magazine in 2006 that recognized the brilliance of an 'individual idea' and power of digitally networked world, when it declared 'You' as the person of the year. It underscored that web was no longer a place limited for intellectualists and officials. Instead it is a 'tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter'. For the connoisseurs of the text memes make space for imitation, satire, parody, participation; offering an ingenious shift to production from mere consumption. The interactivity, anonymity, connectivity and the collaboration offered by memes allow for digital ecosystems to construct new ways of looking and configuring our reality; and being able to laugh at it. Online discourse and pop culture have made memes an integral part of communication: politics, social constructs, realities, entertainment, religion and philosophy nothing is off limit. We are participating and building new cultural templates, we are negotiating and engaging through 'memes' with representation of reality. Newcomb and Hirsch (1987) described TV as cultural platform way before the channels added Twitter hashtags as part of new participatory discourse and mediated understanding.

Memes are the 'operative signs' of our world as they amalgamate text and images, manipulating and transcribing the well-known tropes of farce and wit. To configure 'meme' in terms of gene has a controversial history both in biological sciences (Sterelny 2006 and Blackmore 1999) and in humanities and cultural studies (Johnson 2007 and Sperber 2000). Dawkins however, discerns that all that is considered extraordinary and uncommon about human civilization can be summed up in one word 'culture' (203).

> The new soup is the soup of human culture… Just as genes propagate themselves in gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process, which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. (206)

Essentially memes are artifacts that move from one set of individuals to another by means of 'cultural imitation' and 'appropriation': 'tunes, ideas, catchphrases, clothes fashion, ways of making pots or of building arches (206); ideas defining and delineating language, philosophy, religion art are 'memeplexes' (Dawkins 1982) built from micro level utterances and experiences. Memes have been divided into neat categories: template meme (set in a format that is easily recognizable, it accommodates new text, joke and lasts longer because of its flexibility); ad-hoc memes (uses images from events that have been in news recently or are recognized in popular culture) and peripheral memes. The categorization helps to underpin the chaotic 'infoshere' where 'meme' is essentially part of 'web diet' of perpetually connected individuals in the contemporary world. They may look trivial but 'meme culture' thrives on, and needs disparate users across the world creating and circulating playful images in a world no longer marked by boundaries and borders; connected to the idea of laughing. They've been described as 'multimodal artifacts' where the integration of text with image not only conveys the joke but also offers an observation, discernment and sometimes even an argument.

Memes as Social Texts and Cultural Artifacts

It was Maisie Post who curated an art exhibit in 2016 at the Back Room Gallery of Hobham's Arcade, London called 'What Do YOU meme?' elevating meme to an art form, a cultural icon that we consume to comprehend and critique the world around us. Art is an ever

evolving construct reflecting the truth of humanity at large and for Post, 'memes have transferred from URL to IRL… no longer to be viewed as poor taste or low culture. I see memes as a type of folk art, made for the people, by the people. Memes are a running commentary on society…gives a comical twist on current affairs'. (Meme as Art) Another Art Exhibit 'By Any Memes Necessary' at Junior High Gallery in Los Angeles in 2017, the curator Ka5sh explained, '… memes are part of the neo-Dada movement . . . I'm Andy Warhol rn with mf pop content memes.' (Meme as Art) Much like pop art movement of the 1960s, the memes offer ordinary objects, people and life as coherent subject of art. 'Infosphere' is the contemporary space to gather, contemplate and build a discourse; memes are favorably comprehensible art form that offers a visual dialogue, as Xiao Mina states, 'Memes are street art of the social web . . . varied, expressive and complex and they must contend with existing politics of our public spaces.'(Meme as Art)

Brad Kim, Editor in Chief of KnowYourMeme.com explained when he curated 'Two Decades of Memes' art exhibit in 2018, 'I want to bring [memes] to a level beyond [a joke] and [show] how they interact with the social affairs in the world' (Meme as Art). Memes are facilitating us to document what is influential, significant and overwhelming in the contemporary world, they affect us beyond the digital world, as they've become part of our cultural psyche. They have become our prosaic social texts, acting as organic material for cultural artifacts put together pieces of reality and 'truths' argued and debated as the contemporary reality is seen through these 'textual artifacts'. The interplay between micro texts and macro discourse is recurrent for the text is part of the discourse and the discourse informs the text.

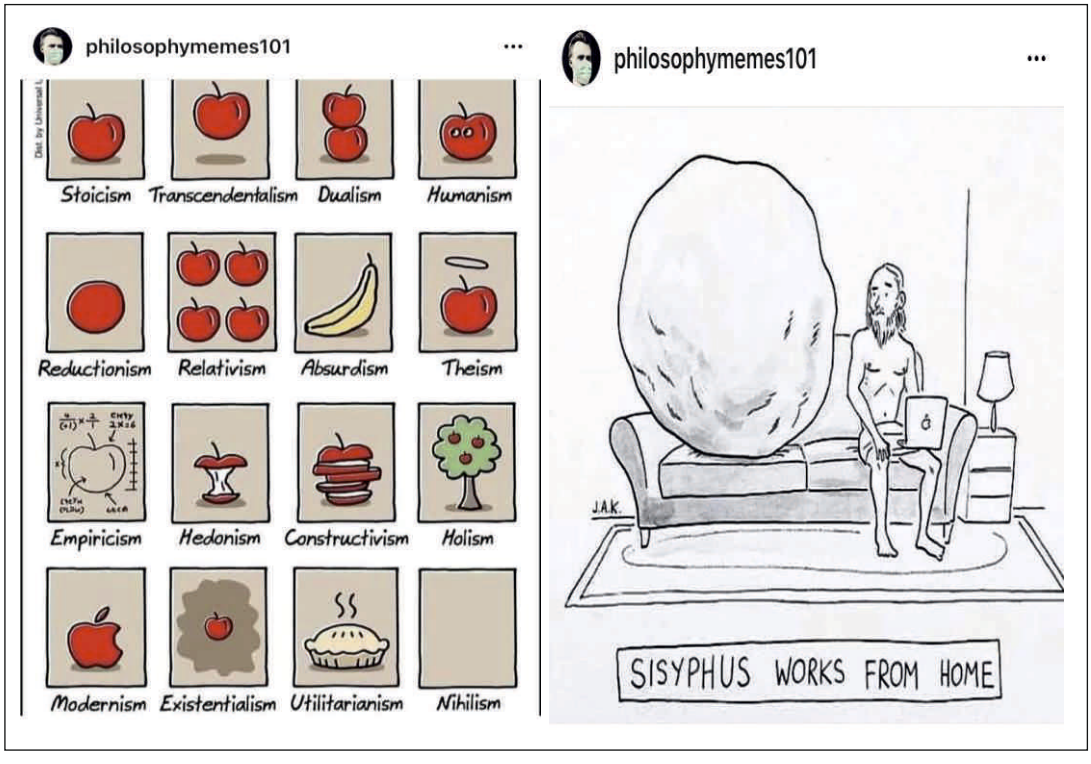
Memes as Participatory Media

For Bakhtin (1986) any discourse within social set up is 'cited, imitated and followed' and aligned with individual utterance. A social text like 'memes' is a 'form of cultural capital, as a realization of speech act force, as a mode of naturalizing and familiarizing social realities, as an instrument of authority and as the medium (and the measure) of political debate' (Hanks 119). Fairclough (2003) and Wodak and Meyer (2009 a) recognize the recursive nature of the discourse, as social texts and practices evolve and strengthen each other mutually through statements and sentences. Memes are weaving together micro and macro realities. Michel Foucault (1972) charts the cultural lineage of discourse when he talks of network between texts and discourses; 'the order of discourse' as offered by Foucault is that discourse comes before reality. Social discourses come before truth, construct the truth and not subsequent to truth; the truth is fashioned by how we comment about it; the cultural 'archaeologies' are manufactured by 'textual artifacts':

> . . . instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizing group of statements, and sometimes as the regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements. (80)

It is easy and convenient to draw a dichotomy as we delineate discourse as either a set of statements, or as networks of cultural and social practices that clone and repeat those statements: Fairclough (1989) this is an alluring ambiguity for it underlines, 'the social nature of discourse and practice, by suggesting the individual instance always implies social conventions (28); Wodak and Meyer (2009) believe that social practices have an impact on the statements and 'grammar' that colour these statements. Memes help us to explore these digital

discourses in order to analyse and discern the dominant discourse in negotiated participatory culture; as we do recognize that discourse (as individual utterance/text and as pervasive ideas and constructs) fashions the social world and mirrors embedded perspectives. Memes offer a parallel to Ferdinand De Saussure's ideas about language: 'Meme templates' are 'langue' (constructed structures of expression) and 'memes' are 'parole' (individual utterance that draws itself from constructs and structures formed in the social and cultural matrix).



Bourdieu (1984) pointed out food, fashion, and entertainment may be banal and shallow but are extremely relevant when it comes to cultural capital; Kupiers (2002) defined jokes as pieces of pop culture public discourse because of their great variability, fast change along with 'absence of clear author and existence across national boundaries' (451); Hebdige (1979) explained that subcultures offer their own discourse and these are often 'expressed obliquely . . . at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is the level of signs' (17); even Habermas (1962) regarded that honest and candid public deliberations happened in coffeehouses, salons, cinemas; Dahlgren (2009) recognizes that to expand the ambit of what we believe to be valuable and significant to 'public discourse' translates into expanding the ambit of who are participating in the discourse, and people participate, 'via more accessible formats and styles of presentation, helping people feel more incorporated into society as citizens' (46); Shifman (2012) defines meme, 'as a prism for shedding light on aspects of contemporary digital culture'(190) and underscore 'human agency as an integral part of our conceptualization of memes' and explains them as 'dynamic entities that spread in response to technological, cultural and social choices made by people'(190). Public discourse is coalesced with pop culture and discursive analyses of memes offer insights into the micro level

complexion of the public discourse as it navigates collaborative cultural discourse, that is a marker of contemporary social interaction.

Memes are now a new genre of communication along with being 'artifacts of participatory digital culture', it was Bakhtin and Medevelev (1985) who opined, 'each genre possess definite principles of selection, definite forms of seeing and conceptualizing reality and a definite scope and a depth of penetration' (131); Kamberlis (1999) further explained that texts of various kinds are produced, distributed and received according to their genre (404); and they have been described as 'pop culture artifacts', as they provide insight into how everyday 'media texts' weave with public conversations, prevalent in society and cultural transactions.

Conclusion

In the contemporary mediatized economy of laughter in the digital sphere memes are a new area of interest for both cultural as well as discourse analysts; memes are the new texts, offering a delineation of social identities, an account of political events. Memes bear the inherent stress and obscurity of society today and illustrate the 'cultural logos of participation' with all its frills and faults. Replicabilty, interactivity and reach have helped to mutate the meme and Dawkins puts it, 'cultural artifacts are passed on quite unlike the particulate, all or none quality of gene transmission'; 'meme transmission is subject to continuous mutation and also blending' (209); often leading to interactions and connections across class, race, age, culture and continents. 'Memeplexes' reassign meanings as they re-appropriate dominant discourse: movie blockbuster, political/ protest movements, pop culture, public/political figures, and philosophical statements. It's the ability of a meme to juxtapose and interweave the political with the popular; the overarching dominant with the closely negotiated; and the familiar with the strange. Memes not only intersect identities and discourses as they participate in over arching political schemas but also make space for debate, dialogue, diversity and democracy but most of all they make space for dogmatic, orthodox and marginalized representation. Digital public discourse has become more vibrant, polyvocal, accessible and diverse because of memes. The structures that the world uses to define itself: identity and politics are now open to unique perspectives, reconfiguring the discourse in the digital public sphere as collaborations, conflicts and commentaries through images find their way to our screen.

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The 9/11 and Muslim Identity in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*

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Abstract:

H.M. Naqvi, one of the emerging South Asian diasporic writers of Pakistani origin, writes his debut novel Home Boy *(2010) against the backdrop of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America. The 9/11 attacks that took the lives of nearly three thousand people and left the entire nation traumatized, are considered momentous events in the history of America. In the wake of the attacks, the US government declared 'a war on terror' to eradicate the terrorist organization al Qaeda and other terrorist outfits. As the 9/11 terrorist attacks exposed the lapses in the security apparatuses, the government adopted stringent security measures to thwart potential terrorist attacks. In doing so, the government developed a great deal of skepticism towards its Muslim citizens, trampled upon their civil liberties, harassed them and even went so far as to stereotype them as potential terrorists. As a result, the innocent law-abiding Muslim citizens who had a great sense of belonging to the country of adoption found themselves in a terrible crisis. The present article attempts to critically analyse the crisis the Muslim immigrants underwent as represented in the novel. In doing so, it shows how Naqvi exposes the operations of neo-Orientalism that creates stereotypical and essentialist views about Islam and Muslims and violates the spirit of multiculturalism in the West.*
Keywords*: 9/11, Terrorists, Trauma, Muslims, Islam, Stereotype, Crisis, Neo-Orientalism, Multiculturalism*

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in the US claimed the lives of nearly three thousand people and left the entire nation traumatized. In the wake of the attacks, the US government declared 'a war on terror' and was determined to eradicate the terrorist organization *al Qaeda* (and similar other organizations) responsible for the attacks. As a fallout, Muslims in the US, both citizens and non-citizens, were treated cruelly. President Bush floated the idea of two categories of Muslim identity: good Muslims and bad Muslims.[1] This put "all [good] Muslims under obligation to prove their credentials by joining in a war against 'bad Muslims'" (Mamdani 15). With the 9/11 attacks exposing the lapses in security apparatuses, the US government tightened security measures within the country with a view to thwarting potential terrorist attacks. In doing so, the government developed a great deal of skepticism towards the Muslim immigrants, came down heavily on them and cast them "in the role of The Enemy, transforming them into scapegoats for the entire society" (Cesari 35). The government security officials and the investigating agencies not only trampled upon the civil liberties of the Muslim citizens, but also harassed them. They even went to the extent of stereotyping them as potential terrorists. It is against this backdrop that H.M. Naqvi (1974-),one of the emerging diasporic American writers of Pakistani origin, published his novel *Home Boy* (2010). Along with many Muslim and non-Muslim writers, he contributes to the growing corpus[2] of writings on the 9/11. This article makes an attempt to critically examine

the identity crisis of the Muslim immigrants in the US as represented in Naqvi's novel *Home Boy*. In doing so, it shows how Naqvi reveals the operations of neo-Orientalism[3] in the Western mind and how it is responsible for stereotypical and essentialist representation of Islam and the Muslims. The article will also show how the neo-Orientalist mindset impedes the very spirit of multiculturalism in the nation space.

II

Naqvi's *Home Boy* revolves around the lives of three Pakistani Muslim characters in the New York City — Chuck, the central figure, also known as Shehzad, and his two friends Ali Chaudhry and Jamshed Khan. Living a care-free life, these characters embark on a mission of fulfilling their American dreams. But the September 11, 2001 attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center by the *al Qaeda*, also known as the 9/11 attacks, change the national scenario in the US.

As we have seen earlier, Muslims became the target of both the government and the white citizens in general, and Islam was considered "as both the enemy outside and the enemy within" (Cesari 2). With a view to combating terrorism, the government empowered the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), but the Bureau singled out the Muslim citizens. In the novel *Home Boy*, Chuck cites an instance of harassment: "'I switched on the TV to a local news channel and caught a story pertaining to a compatriot: *'Twenty-four- year old Ansar Mahmood, a Pakistan born permanent resident, asked a passer-by to photograph him against the Hudson. A guard at a nearby post called the police because the shot included a water treatment plant. Although the FBI found that Mahmood had no terrorist objectives, an investigation revealed he had assisted some friends who had overstayed their visas, making him guilty of harboring illegal immigrants…*'" (91, emphasis original). This compatriot of Chuck's becomes a terror-suspect in the eyes of the FBI officials because of the latter's ingrained prejudice against Muslims. But ultimately he is proved innocent because no evidence of his connections to terrorism is found.

The FBI officials have the assumption that the American Muslims are inwardly happy about the 9/11 terrorist attacks So, one day, as in the novel, one of the officials asks the narrator Chuck, "How d' you feel about what happened on September eleventh?" (107) and "Did it make you happy?" (107). Baffled by such questions, Chuck responds, "This is ridiculous" (107) because the 9/11, for him, is a traumatic event and is a national tragedy for the Americans, irrespective of religious affiliations. But the FBI officials who think that all Muslim citizens must have gloated over the 9/11 attacks, might have been guided by the fact that some common people of the Arab world indulged in the open celebration of the 9/11 attacks. David Thaler states that the reaction on 'the Arab street' to the acts of destruction of the World Trade Center shown on the television "seemed to be one of satisfaction, even glee. Americans naturally had a visceral reaction to scenes of celebration, especially in ostensibly friendly Arab states, over an event that tore at the very soul of the nation" (125-126). Hence, the FBI officials make no difference between the common Arabs and the Muslims living in the US. Thinking that all American Muslims must have been happy about the 9/11 tragedy, the FBI officials deny them their American identity and treat them as the Other. Chuck looks helpless when the FBI officials mete out such a treatment to him: "You' aren't American!" (107) and "You got no fucking rights" (107). Muslims cannot be homogenized into a single group. Underlining the differences that exist within the community, Tariq Modood observes:

Some Muslims are devout but apolitical; some are political but do not see their

> politics as being 'Islamic'(indeed they may even be anti-Islamic). Some identify more with a nationality of origin such as Turkish; others with the nationality of settlement and perhaps with citizenship such as French. Some prioritize fundraising for mosques, others campaigns [sic] against discrimination, unemployment or Zionism (193-94).

Through Chuck Naqvi seems to critique this ignorance and uncritical assumptions of the government and its investigating agencies about Muslims.

The 9/11 attacks are conceived and carried out in the name of Islam. This may have led the most Americans to believe that the terrorists represent Islam and that Islam is a religion of violence. David Thaler observes, "Most Americans took the claims of the terrorists at face value. They were hard-pressed to discriminate between the ideologue who claimed to speak in the name of Islam and the vast majority of more moderate Muslims" (126). With a deep-seated prejudice against Islam and Muslims, the FBI officials also think that Islam is a religion of violence represented by the terrorists. Chuck feels that the FBI as a government agency carries out a misinformed policy agenda and indulges in the process of otherizing Muslims. He seems to offer a critique of such agenda and at the same time he seeks to educate the government, its agencies and the white westerners in general about Islam and Muslims. He says, "As far as I understand, Islam, historically speaking, was not associated with terrorism. It was like associated with empire—the Ottomans, the Mughals in Pakistan, in India, the Safavids next door" (116). He asserts that Islam was not involved in acts of terrorism; rather it had been gloriously represented for several centuries by the rulers of the Mughal empire, the Ottoman empire, the Safavid empire. Now Islam, as Chuck implies, is being (mis)represented by a fraction of Muslims who carry out un-Islamic acts of violence like 9/11attacks, thereby tarnishing its true image. The presence of such educational components as part of the authorial project of critiquing the Western political establishment is unmistakable in the text. Moreover, the FBI officials think that the Muslim Americans are aware of the reasons behind the attacks since the 9/11perpetrators are their co-religionists. They ask Chuck, 'All I want to know is why the hell did they have to blow up the Twin Towers?" (117). In response to their query, Chuck says, "Your guess, sir, is as good as mine (117). What he suggests is that having the same religious affiliation does not mean that one should know the motives of the terrorists behind the attacks.

When it comes to dealing with the issue of national security, the US government causes excessive harassment to its 'enemies within' and even violates their human rights. Chuck who is historically informed provides an example of the harassment of Japanese Americans by the US: "You threw a hundred thousand Japanese into camps, whole families—women, children, old people—because they posed a security threat. That's not right. That's wrong. And now it's us. It's me"(136). Chuck connects the issue of harassment of the Muslim Americans with that of Japanese Americans, another marginalized community, thereby connecting the isolated cases of racist treatment into a historical pattern. He asserts how history repeats itself when he talks about the degree of harassment and ill-treatment meted out to him and other Muslim citizens: "I've been in jail for the last forty-eight hours. I was humiliated, starved, physically and mentally abused. Mini Auntie's brother, Ali, is still inside. We're not model citizens. I'm not a citizen at all—but I can tell you this much: we've done nothing wrong. This is no way to treat human beings, and this is no way to achieve security!" (136). For Chuck, the Muslim immigrants, according to the White national imaginary, do not fit into the social fabric of America and do not fall under the category of model citizens. They are not treated even as human beings in the post 9/11times, let alone as

citizens. As in the novel, despite suffering humiliation and often torture at the hands of the FBI officials, Chuck speaks on behalf of all law-abiding Muslim citizens and pleads innocence but that plea goes unheeded.

The FBI officials harass the Muslim immigrants even in their private life. One Muslim individual in the novel recounts how the FBI officials intrude into his private family space and subject him to a horrible harassment: "The FBI came into my house. They were waking up my six-year-old daughter, treating us criminally. They were asking, 'What your relationship to the Shehzad boy? Your are knowing he is terrorist?" (184). He feels "like bursting into tears" (184) when they treat him as a criminal and stigmatize him by disregarding the fact that he has built a home with a great sense of belonging to his hostland It is worth noting how the Western countries, particularly the U.S. shifts its focus from the ethnically determined groups like the Blacks and Asian-Americans to a religiously identified minority group.

On the pretext of national security, the US government goes on harassing the Muslim immigrants, stereotyping them as potential terrorists, suspecting them of having connections to terrorism or having knowledge of possible terrorist strikes. Acually, the actions of the Western countries in general and the US in particular are governed by Islamophobia[4]. Many of the essentialist and stereotypical attitudes of the West to Islam and Muslims are the reflections of neo-Orientalism. In fact, such attitudes are informed by the century-old hostility towards Islam and Muslims. "In the post September 11 context, both European and American Muslims" as Jocelyne Cesari observes, "have faced relentless correlations between Islam, seen as an international political threat, and Muslims in general (even those living in democratic nations, as has been shown by the hostile reactions that followed the attacks of 11 September 2001). This suggests the permanence of an essentialist approach to Islam and Muslims which is rooted in several centuries of confrontation between the Muslim world and Europe [and other Western countries]"(52). The US actually seeks to establish the supremacy of the western culture over the Islamic culture. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Robert Stephen Ricks hint at this secret agenda about Islam and Muslims when they observe:

Many political analysts believe that in the two decades since the collapse of the Soviet empire the US has been searching for another evil to be vanquished. Now it appears that the enemy has been identified, and "terrorist Islam" rather than communism is portrayed as the enemy of freedom, godliness, civilization and all that is good. Some seriously question whether such an enemy can be part of American society, even one that proclaims itself to be multicultural and /or pluralistic.(23) So, the law-abiding Muslim immigrants suffer a terrible crisis in the post 9/11 times when they fall victims to such a hidden political agenda of the US.

III

In his novel *Home Boy,* H. M. Naqvi voices his concern over the crisis the Muslim immigrants suffer following 9/11 as they are subjected to harassment and torture by the US government. He protests against the government's acts of singling out the Muslim citizens and doing grave injustice to them often by exploiting the concern over the national security. He contests the US government's stereotypical constructions of the Muslims being potential terrorists and at the same time he exposes its neo-Orientalist attitude to the law-abiding Muslim immigrants. He seeks to convince the Westerners that a fraction of Muslims who are carrying out acts of terrorist violence in the name of Islam, are tarnishing its true image. In the

novel, he also makes an attempt to dispel the westerners' misconception that Islam as a religion condones terrorist violence. By challenging the Western perception that the Muslims are not compatible with the western societies, he asserts that the immigrant Muslims have a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the host countries, and that they can effectively become part of the American nation. Most importantly, Naqvi makes a plea for treating Muslim immigrants not as Muslims but as Muslim Americans, yet another kind of Americans. Broadly speaking, he looks forward to the ambience which is conducive to the integration of the immigrants of different cultural backgrounds into the American society. He thus seeks a proper restoration of multiculturalism in the US which is, in the ultimate analysis, a nation of immigrants.

Notes

[1]According to the US government, 'good Muslims' would be secular, modern and westernized, whereas 'bad Muslims' would be doctrinal, anti-modern and violent. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the US issued an ultimatum to the American Muslims declaring that the Muslims who would not be joining in the war against terrorism would be indirectly considered 'bad Muslims' and thought to be taking the side of the terrorists. These two categories of Muslim identity were politically motivated. Mahmood Mamdani is critical of such arbitrarily constructed identities. He argues: "There are no readily available 'good' Muslims split off from 'bad' Muslims, which would allow for the embrace of the former and the casting off the latter, just as there are no 'good' Christians or Jews split off from 'bad' ones"(16).

[2]Khaled Hosseini (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*,2007), Mohsin Hamid, (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*,2009) Shaila Abdullah (*Saffron Dreams*,2009), Nafisa Haji (*The Writing on My Forehead*, 2009) et al have written their works of fiction against the backdrop of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, particularly criticizing the US government's treatment of the Muslim immigrants. Non-Muslim writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (*Queen of Dreams*,2004), Jonathan Safran Foer (*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*,2005), Don DeLillo (*Falling Man*, 2007) et al have responded to the 9/11.

[3]The term neo-Orientalism has come into currency in contemporary critical discourses. It refers to a re-emergence of Orientalist thoughts among the Westerners, particularly in the post 9/11 period. While seeing through the lens of neo-Orientalism, the westerners tend to stereotype Muslims as potential terrorists.

[4]In this connection Tomaz Mastnak observes: "Today Islamophobia is a global phenomenon. Because the contemporary world system is dominated by Western states, several of whom colonized Muslim territories in the recent past and still dominate them today, the forms of Islamophobia that pervade international media and global political discourse tend to reflect the interests and anxieties of Western metropolises"(29).

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"We all Froze Like Dancing Statues": De-ethnicizing and Re-ethnicizing the Minds in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*

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Abstract

For exorcising the Muslim demons, the United States took an altogether different Post-Oriental stance because, 9/11 as the pulverising flash of history spawned dire consequences that not only altered the geo-political scenario but the notion of self also underwent a great deliquescence. Muslim immigrants fleeing from Karl Marx's so called un-representable spaces endeavoured to ethnicize themselves to the unprecedented possibilities of prospect, however, belonging to the emerging empire are labelled as the villains of modern civilization. Therefore, critically analysing H.M. Naqvi's Home Boy *(2009) this paper illuminates the immigrant troubles, who consider themselves as unadulterated citizens of space of migrancy sacrificing their spatial identity of inheritance to blend in the space of libratory possibilities just to become trapped in the viscous circle of exploitation. It exemplifies the approach of bonafide Americans who ultimately de- and then re-ethnicize their minds by adapting an extreme fundamental attitude towards the falsely unifying rubrics.*
Keywords: *Geopolitical Infrastructure, De-ethnicizing, Re-ethnicizing, 9/11 Catastrophe, Migrancy Spaces, Home Boy*

Introduction

War on Terror montage manifested by the United States of America after the 9/11 attacks proved nothing more than a camouflaged rhetoric of national security to commit collateral damage in countries who were blamed as architects of the great catastrophe. Hamid Dabashi in *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (2009) unveils the imperceptible totalitarian discourse that a developed country like America wreaks over countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan on the name of War on Terror. Dabashi bases its argument on Edward Said's exploration of Orientalism that is somehow critiqued for not representing the primacy of the question of postcolonial agency. He takes it further with a Post-Orientalist approach to inscribe the minorities to "tease agency and authority to speak out of the historical traumas that have in fact, sought to silence him/her" (Dabashi xii). This post-oriental discourse further exposed by H.M. Naqvi in *Home Boy* depicts the plight of bonafide Americans of Pakistani origin who are treated as "other" despite their assimilation. This text displays how the Pakistani immigrants are threatened to be thrashed away because of their religion and manifests how their American identity vacillates after the collapse of twin towers.

Two different scenarios are witnessed in the lives of Muslim immigrants: one before the attacks and the other after the attacks. As H.M. Naqvi's trio (Ali, Jamshed and Shehzad) asserts that we, before the attacks fancied ourselves as "boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men" (1) but "become Japs, Jews, and Niggers" (1) just after the attacks. Their

notion of self and identity underwent radical alterations because the new post-oriental approach adapted by the American natives after the 9/11 catastrophe appears direct brunt on the lives of Muslim immigrants. After the attacks America was narrating blazing rhetoric of patriotism through media and journalism to deflate Muslims by representing them with fanaticism ready to inflict tragedies. Because of this unfolding the Muslim immigrant vulnerability became their predictability and their religion turned out to be an institution designed for elevating terrorism.

H.M.Naqvi's Pakistani protagonists reckoned themselves with the American modern civilization, because, their space of inhabitancy they belong to has been defined as "either a disease" (Thomas Barnet), "Un-representable" (Karl Marx), "career" (Benjamin Disraeli) or a "dead civilization" (Bernard Lewis). However, their spirit towards the American identity is nullified because the religion and the region they actually belong to is held responsible as a source for constructing terrorists due to the reason Naqvi through one of his protagonist named Chuck aka Shehzad asserts how "in the name of the national security, states commit crimes" (136). Likewise, Mohsin Hamid in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) unearths through Changez's recounting that "I recognised that if this was to be the single most important priority of our species, then the lives of those of us who lived in lands in which such killers also lived had no meaning except as collateral damage" (Hamid 178). Similarly Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in *Queen of Dreams* (2005) exemplifies how the identity of the South Asian characters portrayed fluctuates between the staunch American to Indian American citizens, however, ends up in believing in the necessity of integrating the Indian legacy with American experience. Divakaruni demonstrates how American space to the South Asian immigrants before attacks was characterized as free of inhibitions and racial differences, however, eventually gets unmasked displaying an unlike scenario by humiliating and abusing them.

The dominant cultures play an important role in the identity formation of the immigrants. Despite the immigrants attachment exhibited towards the migrant spaces they are at times made unable to feel at home. Due to which the moderate attitude of immigrants who unwaveringly wish to be recognised with the space of migrancy eventually attains a "counter-orientalist" approach to finally de-ethnicize themselves with the policies of host nations. With the result whatever thoughts immigrants hold in their minds turns quite contradictory in reality because the conviction of calling themselves as American citizens gets spurred from their life. They are pushed back from where they started and are eventually made to feel like unwanted squatters oscillating between past and present.

Debunking the Magniloquent Proclamation: De-Ethnicizing and Re-Ethnicizing the Minds

Naqvi's trio fled from their space of inhabitancy to the space of migrancy subsequently experiences that "the theoretical premise of America had more tangible implications" (15) by claiming like they "were self-invented and self-made and certain […] had fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic" (1). Living in New York for couple of months the three Pakistani immigrants thought as if "we were content in celebrating ourselves and our city with libation […] we were protagonists in a narrative that required coherence for our own selfish motivations and exigencies" (6).

Chuck (the narrator) with fondness of assimilation within the American space considers America after all "the land of the freedom, home of the brave" (81). With all his

friends he believes "that there was something heroic in persisting, carrying on, in returning to routine, to revelry" (6). America anticipated itself as a space free of all discretions to the immigrants of different nations where they do not have to explain themselves and where "institutionalised racism was only a few generations old and latitudinally deep" (15). While living in the New York City the immigrants feel as if they are not different from the natives, and are ascertained as if every immigrant of whatever background is his own man and has freedom to choose whatever pleases him. One of the Naqvi's protagonists Ali Choudhry with great passion while living in New York utters "'this is my place in the world', 'I will do with it as I please'" (16).

The inclination of Muslim immigrants to claim the space of migrnacy seems quite elementary to themselves, however, relatively intolerable for the "most relentless apologists of vintage orientalism" (Heidemann 289). Among these relentless apologists comes the name of Samuel P. Huntington who in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World* Order (1997) develops novel overpowering and contentious analysis regarding the civilizations as the biggest threat to the world politics by adhering to the fights going on in Bosnia, Chechnya, Central Asia, Kashmir, the Middle East, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Sudan and many other places. Pakistani immigrants sharing the space of great metropolitan city, so called "pillars of city's expatriate Pakistani community" about to change the "contours of the modern discourse" (17) are introduced with great hyperbolic statements as "special people […] without whom New York is not New York!" (18). However, they are later deflated from their statures after the 9/11 catastrophe and their "enigma of arrival" (126) is "compounded by the fact that the new world was so unexpectedly new" (126) with a different page demonstrated for the immigrants where their imagination abruptly changes with an altogether devastating state of affairs where "every New Yorker has a 9/11 story, and every New Yorker has a need to repeat it, to pathologically revisit the tragedy, until the tragedy becomes but a story" (94).

Migration from Muslim countries to United States started at brisk in the second half of the 20th century. However, after 9/11 attacks Islam as a religion and the Muslims as part of it were characterized as terrorists with no "fucking rights" (107) to prove themselves not guilty. "Though we shared a common denominator and we were told half-jokingly, *oh all you Pakistanis are alike,* (2) like the Brawler no 1 in the Jake's "hissed A-*rabs*" (23), "Moslems, Mo-hicans, whatever, Brawler no 2 snapped (24). We were not the same and with their approach: "Came their reply in tenor that suggested violence [...] we all froze like dancing statues […] like we weren't just contenahmadding with each other but with the crushing momentum of history" (23).

Orientalist attitude towards the Eastern people is identical although belonging to different places. Generalizations are made that all brown skinned people are either Indian or South Asians. Devoted to their self-constructed Metrostani identities "Cheers! Skull! Adab!" (81) Naqvi bestows his protagonists with different "nicknames that constantly unsettle their perceived ethnic characterization" (Heidemann 291). "We weren't the same AC, Jimbo and me. AC—a cryptonym […] for Ali Chaudhry—was a charming rogue, an intellectual dandy, a man of theoretical presence […] and the only immigrant" (2). The second protagonist Jamshed Khan, "universally known as Jimbo, was a different cat altogether, born and bred in Jersey, Jimbo was a bonafide American" (2). And the novels first person narrator Shehzad Lala explains "they call me Chuck and it stuck" (3). Chuck arrives in New York City from Karchi to attend college four years before the 9/11 catastrophe "and, though I was the only expatriate among us, I had since claimed the city and city had claimed me" (3).

Before the attacks on the World Trade Center the immigrants somehow feel the conditions very congenial for living because the aboriginal residents make them feel identifiable irrespective of the differences on the basis of religion, color and language. While spending some months in New York City Chuck ascertains that you feel like an original resident and yells with great fervor "You could spend ten years in Britain and not feel British, but after spending ten months in the New York, you were a New Yorker, an original settler" (15). However, "when tragedy strikes you can either open up or shut down […] I shut down on the day of September the eleventh" (94) and "we didn't know which side to join, and like nobody wanted us, so we banded together like the last of the Mo's" (4). After the attacks all the feeling of being one with the aboriginals "vanished like a vision" (7) and we like the "Mujahideen—the Holy Warriors" (10) who were invited to Washington to fight the Red Army" (10) were "transmogrified into the villains of modern civilization" (11) and pushed on the "wrong side of the history" (11). Muslims immigrants were seen with the eyes of suspicion and were believed to cause stir everywhere in the American spaces, misunderstood for always talking about "blowing up something" (70-71) and for the threat of being haunted the "muslim cabbies bore American Flags" (74). "*Bunch of brown men in the car"* (76) was seen as a threat to the very security and it made crystal clear "*for every nation, in every region […] either you are with us or you are with the Terrorists*" (98).

Post-Oriental stance was adapted by the American agencies where the Muslim immigrants were deprived of their rights and further compelled to de-ethnicize their minds against the expression of calling themselves as American citizens. Naqvi's trio decided to go on "for the Shaman run" (57) driving from Jersey to Connecticut provides them a reason to figure out their *Jihad* as the trio feel "something is not right" (22), "Shaman is gone missing" (22) and it seems to them as their duty within the fraternity to "find him immediately" (22) no matter what it takes them to do so "we need to go to his house stake it out break in, whatever it takes. We are his friends maybe his only friends. We owe it to him [...] we owe it to ourselves" (22). As Ali Chaudhry (AC) in an overpowering manner asserts that "you have to remember, we have responsibilities to each other [...] we are the glue […] keeping civilization together" (20). America's diplomatic cunningness breached all this diasporic fraternity and created an unavoidable void amongst them. Although before the attacks the immigrants sacrifice everything for their own ethnic people without allowing themselves being cauterised, however, afterwards discarded all relations with each other. For instance Chuck after being fired from the job was offered a new job a cabbie driver by a Pakistani expatriate. Nevertheless, after he was arrested for being a terrorist his imprisonment resulted to such an extremity that while visiting his cabbie owner's house he receives rebellious attitude that almost collapsed his self. "Dare you show your face? ... The FBI came into my house ... They were asking, you are knowing he is terrorist?" (184).

Caught and arrested in the Shaman's residence the trio so called Metrostanis "world has turned upside down" (201) as if haunted by a "goddamn blizzard" (196). The treatment in the prison roused a great resentment, a thought of revenge against the officials who vanquished their self and left them in shambles about their identity. They finally thought of "Unsavoury Company" (189) by "thinking sabotage, acts of terrorism […] there we would detonate certain rudimentary smoke bombs […] there would be panic pandemonium" (196). Calling ourselves New Yorkers "yes of course" (158) Chuck utters "some of my fondest memories reside in the streets of this city" (158) we were arrested over the weekend in the Shaman's residence as we entered without least sensing about the consequences. Our fate was written "like a wounded buffalo on the Serengeti […] only dimly aware of the vultures

circling above" (168). After my arrest I was taken to the Metropolitan Detention Centre and "according to later, possibly hyperbolic headlines, MDC was America's Own Abu Ghraib" (105) where the cops told me straight on my face "the name of the game is: we ask questions, you answer them" (105). Within the MDC Chuck reveals that "Unlike the gritty, brick borough precincts, the building seemed to be a recent construction, featuring tiled corridors and slick fixtures. There were cameras everywhere, monitoring my every step, gesture, moves" (118). Chuck thumped with resentment utters: "Like them, I considered how fate has conspired to put me away, and for the first time anger welled within me. If AC was really a terrorist, I thought, why he hadn't enlisted me in the cause" (109).

As it was publicised that the 9/11 attacks were designed and implemented by Muslims so for the reason to get great insights the American Cops arrested Muslim immigrants without least taking into consideration their feelings and sentiments towards the American dream nevertheless in one way or the other "wish to understand why Muslims terrorise" (115). Islam as a religion was embodied as a terrorist academia and Muslims as part of it were normalised as terrorists with the capability to threaten the American civilization. Chuck says in prison "I finally got it. I understood that just like three black men were gangbangers, and three Jews a conspiracy, three Muslims had become a sleeper cell" (121). Impolite attitude towards Muslim immigrants after the attacks changed everything within their lives and finally they are made to believe "that life changed the city changed and it is no time to live" (206) and the feeling when you arrive in the dream land "you improvise because you didn't anticipate the end, just like you were unable to anticipate the beginning" (208) and "this place looks no different from the day you arrived, as if you were squatter all the time, not an original settler" (208). The attitude of oneness feels just like a wanderer with nothing into his density to decide for himself makes us a part of an "Unsavoury Company" where you are not aware of "what evil lurks in the hearts of men" (173). This sensation compels you to think that may be "*they had already decided they were going to arrest somebody that night"* […] and although nobody said it, I am certain that the following question was in the back of everybody's mind: what if 9/11 never happened" (174). Their minds which they have prepared for the acceptance of being called bonafide Americans finally decides to re-ethnicize it and adhere to their own civilization without being further the victims of the new organisations where the dominant discourses jot down the fate of minorities.

Conclusion

Home Boy exemplifies how the connotations of quite customary discourses adhered to roots, ethnicity, and religion under shadowed until now within the proposition of multicultural society uncontrollably breaches open with the gust of unexpected violence. This manifests how sides for Muslim immigrants are picked by the new post-orientalists under the rhetoric of patriotism. This rhetoric testimonies America in reality a new emerging orientalist nation with the intentions to exfoliate the Muslim immigrant's to avoid the emergence of new empire. Naqvi's *Home Boy* deconstructs the different dynamics constructed by the American agencies against the Muslim nations that actually echoing Edward Said's views, Stephen Morton in a paradoxical manner asserts that discourse of terrorism reverberates from orientalism and justifies the new dominions the liberty to commit collateral damage. *Home Boy* shows how the powerful nations determine and write the histories of the minorities in their own terms. How they turn the assets into liabilities and compel them to rectify the ethnic posture to finally re-ethnicize themselves and adhere to their own innate nationality without

further being victims to the supreme fictions.

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Perpetrator's Perspective of Bangladesh Liberation War: Reading Sorayya Khan's *Noor*

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Abstract

The Bangladesh Liberation War has inspired many literary gems from Bangladesh, but a stoic silence from Pakistan hinders any holistic understanding of this war. Sorayya Khan, a Pakistani Diaspora writer, breaks this silence of decades with her novel Noor *and uncovers not just the incidents during the war but also the guilt-ridden psyches of soldiers of the West Pakistan Army who were the perpetrators of barbaric acts committed on their own people. This paper traces the perpetrator's perspective as it examines Ali's participation in the war and his trauma and disillusionment as a consequence. It argues that not only the victims, but soldiers too, were traumatised by war. Ali is trapped in his own conscience, which holds him responsible for heinous crimes. His attempt to remain silent and forget the war is repeatedly foiled by his granddaughter Noor and her paintings. Her paintings represent the scenes of war and violence that resurrect memories from the deep recesses of Ali's mind. This paper traces how Khan uses a child with extraordinary painting skills, as a tool to unravel the perpetrator's perspective.*

Keywords*: Bangladesh Liberation war, Pakistan, Perpetrators, Silence, War, and Violence,*

Introduction

The Bangladesh Liberation War has inspired much discussion and discourse as, over the years, different interpretations have emerged. The extant historiography of Bangladesh does not present "an authoritative and exhaustive history of the liberation war" (Samaddar 219) because of insufficient documents. On the other hand, the official documents of the Pakistani government are difficult to access, so historians and writers have relied on public statements and secondary sources to write about the event. Both countries (i.e., Bangladesh and Pakistan) have their own versions of the same war, but to understand the conflict that led to a national movement, we need to understand the reasons that led to a war, that altered the cartography of the Indian subcontinent.

The Bangladesh Liberation War: An Overview

Some notable works by Bina D'Costa, Yasmin Saikia, Sarmila C. Bose, and Srinath Raghavan enlist economic, geographic, cultural, linguistic, and geo-political reasons for the

genesis of the war. Firstly, since its inception, the leaders had "no genuine vision of how Pakistan's nation-building could actually include Bengalis" (D'Costa 83). They gave secondary status to the Bengalis of East Pakistan and repeatedly tried to limit the use of Bengali. In this context, D'Costa comments in her book, "The daily tokens of national identity – coins, currency notes, postage stamps – of the new Pakistan excluded Bengali as a language" (86). Secondly, even though East Pakistan had great trade relations with many countries and "it produced 60 percent of the goods, it received less than 30 percent of its imports" (83). West Pakistan's unjust resource-sharing policies instilled resentment in the people of the East. Furthermore, territorial remoteness escalated the economic disparity that existed between the two regions. Because of West Pakistan's control over economic and administrative decisions, "the Bengali majority was reduced to secondary players in the polity and the Punjabi and Urdu-speaking minority in the West established their position to become the power brokers" (Saikia, *Women, War and the Making of Bangladesh*, 47). As Srinath Raghavan adds, apart from these reasons, "the uprising in Pakistan mirrored, in many respects, the movements in other parts of the world" (15). He pointed at the Cold War between the USSR and the USA and the rise of the Third World after decolonization. Finally, when West Pakistan denied Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's right to form the government after the Awami League's victory and usurped political power, nationwide protests transformed into a liberation movement.

While there are multiple interpretations, Sorayya Khan, a Pakistani diaspora writer, offers a different perspective on the 1971 war in her debut novel, *Noor*. According to her, she drew inspiration from her parents' recollections, which she confirmed by interviewing the Pakistani troops who had participated in the 1971 war. She persevered to make "loss comprehensible to others, to discover in the loss, what is shared by the audience and, therefore, to explore the shared loss in all of us" (Khan, "The Sound of Conversation" 193). Her efforts were acknowledged as *Noor* was accepted as the first novel in which the writer had done "substantial research work to interview the soldiers and families that were directly influenced by the war" (Alam 4). Although one couldn't deny the fact that, before her novel *Noor*, literature on this war was produced, but as Bandana Chakrabarty observes, "very little of it had come from Pakistan" (91).

Khan's *Noor* aims to deconstruct the psyche of the soldiers of the West Pakistan Army (WPA) who had perpetrated horrors on others and had later slipped back into society "as if they'd been away on a hiatus, a vacation of some kind" (Chakrabarty 124). With this aim, she mainly probed the conditions of soldiers and later delineated their experience of perpetuating war through the characters' journey.

The novel differs from other contemporary fictions written about the same war, like— *In the Times of Others* (2018) by Nadeem Zaman, *A Golden Age* (2006) by Tahmima Anam, or other translated works. Notably, all these works have originated from Bangladesh and share East Pakistan's common perspective on the incident. Secondly, all these works depict a few incidents to represent war and mainly focus on the repercussions of violence from the victim's point of view, not from the perpetrator's perspective. On the other hand, Sorayya Khan dismisses the pervasive silence and forgetting of Pakistan's historiography and tries to capture the trauma caused by war.

Silence over History

Even though there is a silent gap in the official records of history, yet, "in unexpected places, buried under the debris of the war violence, in perpetrators' memories... a faint, yet,

resilient human voice survived, refusing to die a silent death" (Saikia, "Perpetrators' Humanity" 74). It is this memory that Khan has unraveled. After publishing *Noor*, she published an essay titled, "The Silence and Forgetting That Wrote Noor" which documents her experience of interviewing 1971 war survivors. Regarding the gap in the records and history, she significantly remarked:

History textbooks generally tell us only one side of history. For example, in Pakistan, recent local history textbooks provide a sentence or two on the 1971 crises that divided the country. Alternatively, of course, Bangladeshi history books devote much more space to the events and say something quite different about their Independence War. (Khan, "Silence and Forgetting" 122)

Sorayya Khan through her first novel, *Noor*, attempts to bridge this gap by depicting the actions and thoughts of West Pakistan army soldiers who were forced to kill or torture East Pakistani citizens. She recalls, while searching for reasons why soldiers committed heinous acts on their own people, she met a captain, who said that he had waited his whole life to unburden his soul, and she exclaimed, "His words acted like a zoom lens finding focus in my project" (Khan, "Silence and Forgetting" 125).

Perpetrator's Perspective in *Noor*

The novel *Noor* traces the trajectory of Ali, when he returns from the war. He returns home with a disturbed psyche and an orphan–Sajida, as his adopted daughter. After years of psychological trauma, Ali's attempts to make peace with his past are foiled by Noor. Noor, Sajida's daughter, was born with Down syndrome but was blessed with the artistic ability to draw. With her skillful imagination, she uncovers the forgotten incidents of history, suppressed in the deep recesses of the minds of Ali and Sajida. Her painting with a fishing boat and fishing net resurrect a memory of the cyclone that killed Sajida's biological parents; her drawings of war scenes remind Ali of his participation in it. Although Noor occupies the central place in the novel, the focus shifts to the war and the involvement of all significant characters in it. The novel is more about the troubled memory of war because it focuses on Ali's introspection and his disillusionment with war and nationalism. As an enthusiastic nationalist, Ali had enrolled in the army and was sent to the East wing to save his country from breaking up. But his experiences during the war changed him forever. He returned with a scarred psyche, detesting his own role in the violence that took place. It disillusioned him and shattered his belief in his people and his country. Yet, when Noor painted images that brought back the haunting memories, Ali was traumatised and his life was disrupted. With his thwarted soul, he indulges in self-torture by trying to suffocate himself in the bath, or by banging his head in the drawer and "the second time he lowered himself into the water, he fortified the drawers with more nails, and the colour of blood, deep and dark as it remained even when he had seen it swallowed by mud, stayed inside" (Khan, *Noor* 59).

Since his return, neither Ali nor his family talked about the war. His mother, Nanijaan, noticed his uneasiness, initial insomnia, and later fitful sleeping. With time, Ali silently pushes the war and its memories into the past, but not completely, as Nanijaan silently notes, "He can never sleep during the monsoons" (143). He decides not to marry and devotes his life to the welfare of his family. With the passage of time, Ali and his family had carefully suppressed the memories of the cyclone and the 1971 war, but Noor's paintings resurrect life-shattering memories from the past. The innocently drawn paintings force each member of the family to accept the incident they have witnessed or perpetrated. The paintings weave many

stories of violence, loss, betrayal, destruction, etc., and meagre them with nationalism, forgiveness, love, care, and acceptance. Khan observes that 'silence and forgetting' is one way to get out of the threatening trauma of the past, and Ali did the same. The official history of Pakistan may have erased the horrors of war; the crimes committed by the West Pakistan army are memories that Khan has tried to reclaim and revisit through the novel. As the elements of silence operate at a 'societal' level, Khan breaks society's silence on the violence committed by their army during the 1971 war and examines the true sense of nationalism. The novel offers a spectrum to witness the terrible impact of war on ordinary citizens' lives and exposes the hollowness often associated with the idea of nationalism. For the protection, progress, and social upliftment of the nation, authorities mislead citizens by manipulating the ideology of nationalism. The motive behind bringing out Ali's memory could be to encourage soldiers to introspect their role and acknowledge the trauma buried in their psyches. It deconstructs the often-glorified myth of serving and protecting one's nation. It illustrates the struggle of the nation to sustain power and protect its boundaries, even at the cost of massacring its citizens and raping countless women. In this regard, Paromita Chakrabarti observes, "Sorayya Khan is one of the first voices to break the silence around the almost genocidal extermination of Bengali men and women during the 1971 Civil War" (qtd. in Chakrabarty 91).

The soldiers ordered to protect borders and crush the rebellion returned home with scarred psyches because of the orders they were forced to execute. A common mandate followed during this war was raping women with the purpose of destroying the purity, security, and future life of the rebels. Raping women served a dual purpose for the West Pakistan Army—it inflicted humiliation and shame on the rebels; and openly displayed power. As Bina D'Costa opines, "the control of women and their sexuality is often central to nationalist projects. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Indian subcontinent" (2). Similarly, the novel *Noor* highlights women as victims of war as there are many incidents that show the cruel side of the nation-state or nationalism. For instance, the way Ali's commander ordered women to be brought for his sexual gratification shows not only the barbarism of the commander but also the helplessness of the victim:

The commander pushes her to the floor. He pulled and stretched the breast that was large and firm until it sprayed a stream of milk. He laughed, called her a whore, and much worse. Stopping only to lick drops of her milk, which landed on his lips. Then he forced his rifle into her mouth, tore her sari, and sat on the top of her. When he was done, he stuffed his belt between her legs, letting the oversized buckle catch and tear, laughing at how cleverly he had leashed her… the milk still leaking from her breasts was kicked into the same heap. (*Noor* 60)

The incident not only demonstrates the suffering of the woman, but it goes to highlight Ali's silent suffering as he was forced to witness the barbaric act of his superior. A number of times, he was asked to assist his commander in mass rape and murder. In order to "make a man out of him," (Khan, *Noor* 131), his commander repeatedly ordered him to rape some women. But this incident left an indelible mark on his mind, as even after many years, Ali could vividly recall, "I was alone with the girl, my pants still down. I took a few steps towards her; I couldn't enter her. I pulled up my pants and covered the woman with the sari from the floor" (155). While his commander and colleagues ridiculed his masculinity and inability to rape the woman, it did not trouble him as much as his compliance with the orders. Ever since the incident, he has detested his own actions and repeatedly thought, "Shameless, right? I knew what I'd done. I could never change that"(155). Ali felt trapped in the situation, and he could not distance himself from it because he had taken an oath to obey commands.

This compelled him to frequently commit the heinous crimes ordered by his commander. His disgust with the act led to his lifelong abstinence from any sexual relations. The scenes of rape and torture resurfaced as he failed to forget how women and their bodies were tortured and mauled for the pleasure of his supervisors and colleagues. His alienation from his nation and his people makes him a recluse. When he finds a little girl sitting alone on the street, he instantly takes her with him. He not only saves her life but brings her home as his adopted daughter, Sajida. This deed is Ali's attempt to reduce the guilt of being one of the perpetrators of the crimes committed against women in the war. The girl becomes his only means of redemption as he turns atheist and gives up meat. "God because nothing Ali had seen (or done) could have been divined by God. And meat because he'd smelled flesh in every possible manifestation. Freshly dead, not-so-freshly dead, rotted, singed, burned, baked, and every variety in between, and he never wanted to set eyes on it, much less his tongue on it, again" (157). Commenting on the perpetrators' conscience Yasmin Saikia opines:

> Recognition of the self as a perpetrator is not an easy task. The process has been long and torturous for many. An intriguing topic that many brought to the discussion was the subject of *Zameer* or conscience. The admission that they were troubled by their conscience opened the way forward for the gradual transformation of perpetrators, to move from the state of denial to acceptance of the atrocities that they had committed. ("Perpetrators' Humanity", 80)

After realising his participation in violent crimes, it was not easy for Ali to get out of the trauma. His troubled psyche is haunted by innumerable memories, as he remembers a lady roaming on a railway platform who had no breasts. Some soldiers from his army had badly mauled her breast, and as a result, she had developed an infection. Ali recalls, "She was virtually in front of us, and there were two huge pink infections oozing pus, yellow, where her breasts should have been. Chopped off, they were. What kind of knife? I wonder" (Khan, *Noor* 69). While taking this lady to the headquarters, Ali listened to her stories of the brutality of the West Pakistan Army. The stories of a family that was slaughtered with a scythe; "a baby was thrown into the air, caught by a bayonet," another about "men forced to eat they're cut off penises" added to the guilt Ali carried in his conscience for being a perpetrator (128). When the lady died, the officer ordered Ali to throw her into the muddy river, where many dead bodies had been thrown. After years, Noor's painting once again reminded him of the bodies that "floated like paper boats. What is the physics of this- no sinking? Dogs swam out to pick them and birds flew low. Digging the grave took a long time because we had to dig a grave deep enough to protect the body from the animals" (204). The horrendous act of rape, the plight of victims and their traumatised stories, mutilated dead bodies, the acts of physical violence like injuring the private parts of women – all became part of Ali's memory. These horrific images were permanently etched in his consciousness but were foregrounded by Noor's paintings. Besides the sexual violation of women, the incidents of bloodshed and inhuman treatment of other human beings left an inimical impression on his mind. Being an eyewitness to countless murders and brutalities transformed him. The incident of his friend Khalid's murder had a profound and lasting impact on him, as he recalled, "it was the most merciful killing I saw..." (190). He was killed by one bullet, "The bullet went in and out of his chest, and the windshield cracked" (190). Ali preferred dying instantly instead of the tortured death that his army was inflicting on people. Hence, Ali's character brings out a new dimension in the perpetrator's thought process. He exhibits the vulnerability and despondency often depicted in the victims of war. Khan's delineation blurs the definition of victims of war and eschews the previous narratives on the Bangladesh liberation war.

Hannah Ardent, an American-German philosopher, stated in her book, *On Violence*, that "the advancement of the military and greed for achieving power created the false image that no political goal could be achieved without violence" (1). To achieve their aim, all political leaders struggle to dominate or rule over others, and to achieve their aim, they do not hesitate to use the ultimate kind of power, which is "violence". Similarly, in order to protect their territory, the West Wing used all forms of violence to curb the rebellion.

Conclusion

This study leads to the conclusion that the official narratives tend to remain silent about certain aspects, but when one moves beyond the fixed labels, beyond "the capacity of recognizing the coexistence of multiple histories and divergent memories of the war," (Saikia, "Perpetrators' Humanity", 84), it might be possible that the gap between reality and silence can be bridged. The primary reasons for such silence are the misuse of power by authorities (political and military) and the suppression of the media's voice and an altogether attempt to subvert history. Through this novel, Khan tried to present the perpetrator's perspective. She resurrected the chapter of West Pakistan's history, which was buried under an embarrassing silence, and positioned it as a reminder of inhuman actions. Her work significantly contributes to the corpus of war narratives as it presents the trauma and disintegration of a soldier who became an agency of violence. Ali represents the suppressed guilt of scores of soldiers who lived under the burden of mortifying silence. Through her writing, Khan looks critically at the use of state-sponsored violence to suppress rebellion, at the same time dismantles the glorified notions of patriotism and nationalism.

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A Tete-a-Tete with Professor-Poet Molly Joseph

Dr. Molly Joseph *is a Professor, Poet (Bilingual Writer) from Kerala, who writes Travelogues, Short stories and Story books for children. She has published fourteen books,12 Books of poems, a novel and a Story book for Children. She has won several accolades which include, Wordsmith Award 2019 India Women Achiever's Award 2020 and the Best English Poetry Book of the Year Award 2020 (ALS , New Delhi) for her book 'Water Sings Over the Stones.' She believes in the power of the word and writes boldly on matters that deal with the contemporary. With her Doctorate in Post war Poetry, she has won Galaxy Award in Experimental Poetry, developing an indigenous diction characterized as 'Ribbon Poetry' with simple words and lines flowing, coiling up to approximate contemporary reality.She can be reached at mynamolly@*gmail.com

Dr. Cijo Joseph Chennelil, *an ardent lover of literature and currently Head of the Dept. of English at Kristu Jyoti College, ,Changanassery,,Kottayam,(Kerala), interviewed Molly Joseph.*

Can you briefly shed light on your literary Odyssey so far?

Even as a five year old, I experienced the 'pain of too much of tenderness' as Kahlil Gibran puts it. After reading the story book of the elephant who came down to the forest to see his friend the girl child, who gave him bananas, but was treated as an elephant encroaching, cruelly chased by the villagers to be put to death, I would weep and sob inconsolably for hours. My parents asked me to put it down in paper... thus began the literary Odyssey mostly as a curative safety valve. Immersing myself in the world of reading, I developed a love of language of both English and Malayalam my mother tongue, as a supple medium to express my understanding of the world, to sense the inner rhythm of nature, man and his place in it. Then grew the yearning to share my takes on the world. As a student and as a Teacher I carried this world within often humming to myself. My pet name was Mynah and I was good in singing. A few I wrote was published in school and college magazines. Later the hectic immediate absorbed me, studies, career, teaching, family. But all the while I was conscious of a vacuum inside to be filled up. After three decades of official academics, I retired and took up the pen. May be the inner kernel of my being was seeking self realization through writing, "as a single leaf turns not yellow, but with the silent knowledge of the whole tree." (Gibran). The first book *Aching Melodies* was published in 2013, by Patridge India Publications (Penguin) followed by 14 books till date. 12 books of poems- (2 in Malayalam, 10 in

English) a Novel (translation) and a Children's Book.

Are your poems reflections of the changing patterns of society?

Yes. I believe a Poet has to develop an idiom in consonance with the changing times. When the world around, the flux, with its infinite permutations, variations inundate, as Heraclitus puts it "No man ever steps into the same river twice for it is not the same river and he is not the same man." A writer has to negotiate that reality, the topology of these teeming layers, and an ethno pluralism has to be maintained accommodating all.
My poems deal with these changes, the eco hazards due to man's rash meddling to master the universe, man's self obsession on power, race, creed, blind religiosity. High time we needed to redefine the existing anthropo centricism into eco centricism to keep our small planet habitable for the posterity. Many of my poems aim at this conscientisation through interrogation.

Better late than never

Isn't it late for a debate
healthy, wholesome, holistic?
for us anthropocene
to survive ?
Better late than never...
Mother earth
on death bed ,
her swan song
resonates...
we the culprits
short visioned, greedy
drying up oceans
blocking rivers
to build hydel projects
destroying balance
of bio diversity
now planning
to set up satellites
in space, with mirrors
so huge, for harnessing
sunlight
in desired directions
destroying
the organic rhythm
of earth...
Where are we heading to?
high time
to stop
our blame game
to sit around
the table of debate
healthy, wholesome, holistic.

How did you develop this unique style of poetry?

My Doctoral work was on Post War America Poetry in the cusp of the modernist, post modernist era. The dancing disarray and fragmentation around had necessitated condensation of thought and expression evoking the maximal through the minimal as expounded by Ezra Pound and his Imagism. Well chosen images would be like pebbles thrown into the reader psyche causing ripples, at last sedimenting into the depths with right sparks of wisdom so calm. My poet was William Carlos Williams who with Zen like newness, approximated the moment, the reality, treated things as raw and fresh giving a wide berth to multiple perspectives.

I explored the dimensions of free verse to flow free since my thoughts were in tandem with the random waves of contemporaneity. After all as Mukarovsky puts it, "the violation of the norms of the standard, its systematic violation is what makes possible the poetic utilization of language; without this possibility there would be no poetry"

Here is a part of a poem of mine.

Life slips away

Behind the
polished
paneling
silently,
slowly
white ants
eat away
the wood...
life slips
away...

Thus it evolved, my writing. I could not compartmentalise my thoughts into rigid poetic framework. For me it was like cutting off the feelers of the crab to fit it into a box. Poetry flows through me that way only. Readers feel a difference and in literary circles, it has been characterized as ***Ribbon Poetry*** in the Experimental Mode of Poetry.

What is your take on Contemporary Poetry? Do you believe that there is an aesthetic rupture in relation to our comprehension of literary works today?

Contemporary poetry addresses the realities around boldly, explicit or implicit. Covid has turned us global. We have learnt to break up geographical linguistic barriers and to express our indigenous experience that carry universality. We mark our place and time that bears the contours of contemporaneity. The local becomes the universal... More than ever, now there is the agony of domination, displacement and migration, highlighting the need of redressal, retrieval and redemption. Since we are on the verge of a precipice, culturally, climatically, in a car careening out of control, the world has to listen to our voices of sanity and wisdom and no force can stop it. Genres are mixing up, painting, poetry architecture, sculpture, music, dance and electronic installations with new kinds of collage and montage (as it was displayed in Cochin Biennale 2019) with so much of immediacy and intensity are coming into vogue. A new eco consciousness, cultural consciousness is being fostered. Yes, an aesthetic rupture has

occurred with works of art and literature climbing down from imaginary ivory castles to confront the contemporary, weaving multiple layers of the real, imaginary, virtual, augmented, magical reality. Not to belittle the great works of art and literature that stand the test of time, but present trends intersect the timeless and the temporal.

Do your poetic works go to the extent of criticizing the unsavory aspects unfolding in different domains of life in this world today? Do they address the marginalized and penalized masses of the world?

Yes, the marginalized and penalized need focus. Be it based on gender , race or creed, the very ordinary and innocent are the soft targets, especially women and children. Even Covid estranged people, nations, nationalities, dislocated labourers, families nation wise, state wise, people fleeing as exiles, the way every usurpation and war does. Many poems of mine are blatant critiques on these issues, the hegemonic usurpation of power centres, discriminating suppressing others on the basis of cults and ideologies, gender. Humans have to turn more humane. I strongly believe voices of dissent and resistance should come from writers to set the wheel of life on right track.

What is your honest opinion regarding the divergent and unconventional poems delineated in the world over today?

Frankly I believe in giving a wide berth to creative divergence that can propel a change and bring in something new. But there should be some method in the madness. The post post modern wild revelry over the flux that lead you to some blind alleys, can get us nowhere. Let us explore the silver lines, and work on cheerful survival strategies.
I loved performance Poetry, so boldly and cheerfully expressed by the African Youth in the campuses of Kisii and Riara Universities in Kenya while I visited them a year back. It is the spirit of a resilience so promising. One more thing to be noted. Intelligibility cannot be overlooked in all our oeuvres. To be simple can be profound...

Since you are a Bilingual Poet, would you be able to give a rare insight concerning the sensibilities and sensitivities innate in your Malayalam and English poems?

As a Bilingual poet, in Malayalam poetry also I imbibe the same sensibility and sensitivity I have for my English Poetry. Here too there are Status Quo Poets following the orthodox, conventional mode and others raring and daring enough to go for experimental. Malayalam being highly musical, poetry gets a deepening nuance through the auditory, through the right rendering… My Malayalam poems are written, both ways, i.e. by using the lilt of the language through metered verse as well as by nonconventional prose poem mode... But as a whole I feel the fluid intimacy to accommodate all forms has to pick up more in Malayalam domain, though great poets like Dr. Ayyappa Panikker had heralded the way.

Do poets have social responsibilities or are they mere imaginative beings? Speak about your latest work, 'Beyond Mist Mountains'.

I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF THE WORD, THE WORD INCARNATE.

Poetry has healing power. We have the social responsibilities as torch bearers. My new book "*Beyond Mist Mountains*" is an effort to cheer up and clear up this depressing, Covid stricken Mist Mountains that shroud our vision. The Children's story of how stars appeared on sky resonates. When it fell like a black blanket, the sky, a little sparrow tried to peck at it and others followed. With their tiny beaks they tore parts open and radiance streaked in as stars... hah! in a similar way I am also pecking at it (another Mynah), this dark envelope... My book starts on this note.

Beyond Mist Mountain
emerges
a world of solace
free from
frets and furies
radiant…

I will like to quote from Dr. T.S Anand's insightful Foreword: "The poems in this book posit a welcome stance against negativity. The lovers of poetry cutting across age, gender, region and religion are in for the rewarding visuals of Nature, pulsations of human heart and the tug one may feel over what one has made of life, and savour glimpses of the reassuring world that awaits *Beyond Mist Mountains*."

Can you explicate the contributions made by you for the advancement of Children's Literature?

My book *Adventure of Billu, Dillu and Thrillu* was an earnest effort to mould little minds. I wove, magic and adventure into interesting stories, deftly imparting a message of care for nature and animals, importance of sharing, small tips on proper civic sense and social responsibility. The capsule well coated with cheer and suspense and attractive pictures, was well received by children, parents and schools. It gave me enormous satisfaction that I was moulding young minds for the future. Children's Books can go a long way in that direction.

What is your take on the inconsistencies, contradictions and ambiguities present in contemporaneity. What is your wider vision?

Yes, life pulsates on the random, aleatory, ambiguous. We need a balanced, multipronged approach to things, where nature is our best Teacher and life the threshing floor of experience, knowledge. When all is said and done, our average life tapers down to a mellowed acceptance, mind growing co extensive with the universe, merging into horizons of eternity. But like the tangerine trails of a rainbow that has disappeared, something would linger... will always, already be there, like the sun that has gone down into the eventide or the moon that is hidden behind the morn. That's all. That's enough.

FROM PROF. SWARAJ RAJ'S BOOKSHELF

Rodrigo Garcia. ***A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir***
HarperVia: London 2021, pp. 157, INR 499/-

The dead surround the living. The living are the core of the
dead. In this core are the dimensions of time and space.
What surrounds the core is timelessness
- John Berger. *Hold Everything Dear: Dispatches on Survival and Resistance*

The year 2022 arrived under the ominous shadow of Omicron, a new Covid variant, whose past avatars had caused unprecedented misery the world over. After a brief lull in Covid pandemic in the last quarter of 2021, the number of people falling sick and being diagnosed as smitten by Omicron had started going up steadily in December. The spectres of a debilitating lockdown throwing life out of gear, emaciated migrant workers trudging back to their homes with their meagre belongings, a large number of people suffering, the sick not being able to find enough oxygen cylinders in hospitals to stabilize their plummeting oxygen levels, and the dead not finding dignity in death or even after death, were returning to haunt us once again. The media – both mainstream and social – unbridled by any scruples whatever, was once again fuelling ontological insecurities and pathophobia, thus reducing our capacity to be human. The situation had been made grimmer by the biting cold wave that had the entire North India in its grip.

January 8 was a frosty morning. The headlines of newspapers were screaming Omicron. It was in this all-pervading gloom exacerbated by the bone-chilling wintry conditions that I learned about Rodrigo Garcia's book *A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir* from Rajesh Sharma, Head, Department of English at Punjabi University, Patiala. He had mailed his short, crisp and well-crafted review of the text. The memoir itself appeared to be a meditation on death, dying and suffering; and hence, a meditation on life and living as well, since it is not possible to dwell on dying and death without dwelling on life and living. In fact, it turned out to be not only that, but much more.

I could not wait to read the memoir. I ordered the text and read it not just once, but thrice, once daily on three consecutive days. The author Rodrigo Garcia is a screenwriter and director in Los Angeles. But most importantly, he is the son of Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Gabo to his family and friends), one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. The memoir is very slender, just 157 pages and that includes an album of family photographs also. The book is divided into thirty-two chapters spread across five sections. Each section has a quote from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's works serving as an apt epigraph. Some of the chapters are very short, only half a page or so. The prose is lucid, unflinchingly lucid; even so, the placidity is that of the surface of an ocean with depths greater than we can fathom. There is utter lack of critical jargon that characterizes most academic writing. This surely comes to Rodrigo from his great father Gabo for he says in the memoir that Marquez was suspicious of the words that were obscure, did not belong to this world but "belonged to academia and to intellectual concerns …" Not only this, we learn from him that Gabo, despite decades of adulation was always suspicious of "celebrity and of literary success." He did not think that he had achieved his success, but it was "something that had happened to him." He disdained highbrow academic theories also that claimed to throw light on the symbolic element in his writing.

Writing about death is not easy; it is painful because it means reliving the trauma and giving a coherent form to the lacerations resulting from the traumatic experience, a very tall order indeed. It poses many dilemmas, especially if the deceased happens to be a national icon, a celebrated Nobel Laureate, and the author of the memoir, his son. About his own dilemmas, Rodrigo says: "Writing about the death of loved ones must be about as old as writing itself, and yet the inclination to do it instantly ties me up in knots. I am appalled that I am thinking of taking notes, ashamed as I take notes, disappointed in myself as I revise notes. What makes matters emotionally turbulent is the fact that my father is a famous person. Beneath the need to write may lurk the temptation to advance one's own fame in the age of vulgarity . . . But as with most writing, the subject matter choses you, and so resistance could be futile." Even the first reading of the memoir affirmed that the author is right in suggesting that the subject matter chose him. He had to write it; there was no escape from it. This is again something that connects the author with his father. Rodrigo quotes his father in this regard: "If you can live without writing, don't write." Rodrigo endorses it and adds, "I am among those who cannot live without writing, so I trust he would be forgiving. Another of his pronouncements that I will take to my own grave is this: "There is nothing better than something well written."'

This memoir is exceedingly well written. Rodrigo, a cinematographer in the beginning of his career before turning to becoming a director and screenwriter, has written it like the scenes in a movie; long shots alternate with close-ups of various events in his parents' lives. Short chapters are like snapshots. He makes good use of analepsis. He goes back into the past, and then returns to reflect on the past and the present. Some magic realist elements also find their way into the memoir, as portents of what was to follow. One such incident happens on the Thursday morning, the day when Gabo's heart stopped beating. A bird was found dead in the glass walled porch. Rodrigo surmises that the bird, disoriented in the glass enclosure, must have smashed against the glass and fallen dead. Strangely enough, there is a similar scene in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Ursula Aguaran, a very important character in the novel who lived the longest, had died on Good Thursday and her death was followed by disoriented birds flying into the walls and falling dead.

(By way of an aside, I want to add that it was in the first week of February when I started working on this review that hundreds of yellow-headed blackbirds fell mysteriously from the sky in the Mexican city of Cuauhtémoc on 7th February. The news made it big on the TV and social media only on 14th February. It was a Thursday. There can be no rational explanation for such inscrutable coincidences, except perhaps that magic realism is not confined only to novels; life itself is full of mysteries we know little about.)

Rodrigo talks about his father's disarming simplicity, his secretiveness despite having a gregarious nature and being a great conversationalist. He tells us about his prodigious talent, work ethic, powers of immense concentration, austerity and tenacity: "He worked most days from 9 in the morning until 2:30 in the afternoon in what I can only describe as a trance. When my brother and I were children, my mother would sometimes send us into his study with a message, and he would stop writing and turn to us while we delivered it. He would look right through us, his Mediterranean eyelids at half mast, a cigarette going in one hand and another burning in the ashtray, and reply nothing. As I became older, I would sometimes add, "You have no idea what I just said, do you?" and still get no answer. Even after we walked away, he remained in that position, turned toward the door, lost in a labyrinth of narrative. I came to believe that with that level of focus there was little one couldn't

achieve." And he did achieve a lot, his life being one of the most "fortunate and privileged lives ever lived by a Latin American."

Rodrigo becomes deeply philosophical when he confronts his father's dementia and the way it affected his memory and identity. His father's declining health makes him reflect upon time, life, dying and death. Dementia sneaks slowly, its march barely perceptible at the time of its onset. Gradually it makes its mark through short term memory disturbances and lack of concentration. But as it progresses it disorients the affected person by effacing long term memory traces. His father's memory, as Rodrigo writes, was his tool and raw material. He could not work without it. Marquez himself knew that his mind was slipping away and he sought the help of his sons and wife to stop his decline. He knew his memory was slowly failing him. This was the toughest period for him and the entire family. Then a time came when Marquez reconciled to it: "He regained some tranquility and would sometimes say, "I'm losing my memory, but fortunately I forget that I'm losing it," or "Everyone treats me like I'm a child. It's good that I like it."

Such acceptance of the inevitable and the equanimity that accompanies such acceptance as ennobling. The memoir abounds in instances of poise attending acceptance of the inevitable. The text itself strikes a balance between the serious and the funny, sublime and absurd.

The destruction of memory devastates Marquez. Rodrigo saw him disintegrating bit by bit. However, his dementia ravaged mind remained till the end a "cauldron of creativity that it always was. Fractured, perhaps, unable to return to thoughts or to sustain story lines, but still active." What survived despite his dementia was his sense of humour. Rodrigo's own wry humour punctuates his moving description of the irretrievable situation in which he found his father, especially after he had stopped recognizing his wife and their sons.

Rodrigo's grieving is devoid of mushy sentimentalism. 'Dignity' is the word that comes to my mind when I look at the way he grieves and the way he meditates on grieving. The night before Gabo's death, Rodrigo had a choppy sleep since he expected to be woken up any time by the news of his death. In the morning Rodrigo finds that his father had not stirred at all throughout the night. He was breathing imperceptibly, alive but looked like someone else "an austere twin brother with gaunt features and translucent skin that I don't know as well. I feel differently about this guy. Detached. Maybe that is the purpose of the transformation, to help you uncouple, just as a simple look at your newborn instantly triggers feelings of attachment." If detachment defines this encounter, it is also the encounter that conjoins life and death, attachment and 'uncoupling.' The reader cannot move on without dwelling for some time on this uncanny coupling of death and life.

Seeing his father slowly drifting into the unknown, Rodrigo remembers that like so many writers, Marquez was also obsessed with loss and death: "Death as order, and disorder, as logic and nonsense, as the inevitable and the unacceptable." He was obsessed with death for another reason too; he hated it because "it would be the only aspect of his life he would not be able to write about." He even complained about this fact. And yet, we, his readers know that there are many scenes of death in his novels, particularly in *One Hundred Years of Solitud*e and *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. He deals explicitly with death in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.

Rodrigo was in Los Angeles airport for a flight to Mexico when he learnt from his brother that their father had less than twenty-four hours. He speculates on the predictability of death and unpredictability of life: "Life, as old as it is and as many times as it has been lived, continues to be mercifully unpredictable. Death, when it orbits this closely, seldom disappoints.". However, this philosophizing did not stop his tears running down his face when

he walked toward the baggage carousel. This intertwining of impending personal loss and its acceptance dignify the act of mourning and lend it a certain metaphysical poignancy.

In fact, this word 'dignity' appears many times in the memoir at very crucial moments. Talking about the way his father was being looked after when he lay disoriented in bed and his cancer had spread to his lungs and liver, Rodrigo writes: "But I don't think he would have found any lack of dignity in how he was taken care of." After Marquez's death, he was wrapped in a body bag which was strapped to a stretcher and two men brought the stretcher down the narrow stairs: "The men move expertly, but nothing in their demeanor betrays any excessive familiarity, let alone boredom, with a task that they have performed innumerable times. . . Their attitude imbues the task with dignity. It's what even strangers do always and everywhere for people who have died."

Not only this, Rodrigo tells us how they tried to keep the news of his father's illness away from the prying eyes of the press. There is a moving description of how when Marquez arrived home from hospital, close to one hundred people – his supporters and press reporters – had gathered outside their home. Rodrigo describes how Marquez was brought in from the ambulance: "The ambulance carrying him backs into the garage, but it is too long to allow the garage door to close again. My brother, a housekeeper, and my father's secretary hold up bedsheets to protect him from being photographed as he is carried out the back of the ambulance and into the house." The next day's newspapers carrying photos of his brother holding up bedsheets to protect their privacy infuriated him. But then he realized that most of the people gathered outside were his father's admirers and from serious press outlets, not from tabloids.

Another very touching moment in the memoir is when Rodrigo is alone with Gabo's dead body in a room in the mortuary. Standing there, his mind moving back and forth in time as he was "trying to build bridges in my mind between my living father and my dead father and my famous father and this father here in front of me …," he was overcome with the desire to take his photograph. Which he did with his phone. But he felt sick and disgusted for having violated his privacy so violently that he deleted it immediately. He then took a photo of one of the yellow roses which Rodrigo's niece had placed on his body. This is an intense expression of unwavering deference to the solemnity of the moment.

While reading this text, the whole idea of treating the dying and the dead with dignity set me thinking. Did we, during the times of the pandemic, treat those suffering from Covid with dignity or even decency? Something Dr. Rieux, the protagonist of Camus's *The Plague* suggests: "It's a matter of common decency. That's an idea which may make some people smile, but the only means of fighting a plague is — common decency."

When I recalled what had happened during the pandemic, I found both dignity and decency missing from our conduct. There were a few exceptions, though; there always are. But we cannot forget how, at many places, even the nearest kin of the dead did not come forward to cremate them. We cannot forget the horrible scenes of dead bodies rotting outside cremation grounds, corpses floating in river and half-burnt corpses surfacing when the winds blew away the sand in which they were buried on the banks of rivers.

It actually reminded me of a poem by Harold Pinter titled "Death" which he had read out as an epilogue to his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 2005. In the overall context of Pinter's speech in which he made references to wars being fought in different parts of the world, the poem "Death" is about tortured and violated body denied love and dignity in its final hours and treated as dangerous flesh, expendable, and decaying waste matter. The entire poem is in the form of questions about how the dead body was found, who found it, and how it

was treated. This is how the opening stanza goes: "Where was the dead body found? / Who found the dead body? / Was the dead body dead when found? / How was the dead body found?" Pinter, by not using any punctuation or question marks in the entire concluding stanza, bombards the reader with very disturbing questions; perhaps because there are no answers, or because the answers are already known, there are no pauses: "Did you wash the dead body / Did you close both its eyes / Did you bury the body / Did you leave it abandoned / Did you kiss the dead body."

During the second wave of the pandemic in our own country, when a prominent Gujarati poet Parul Khakkar, through her Gujarati poem *Shav Vahini Ganga* (A Hearse Called Ganga), tried to speak truth to power and to prick the conscience of the nation by calling attention to the indignities being heaped upon the dead and the indifference of the high and the mighty, she was vilified, trolled and abused by our infamous troll army and by some politicians as well.

Pinter's poem, written about fifteen years before the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, proved to be prescient. Denied all human rights before death and all dignity after death, the Covid infected body was traced merely as a dot on a Covid tracker graph, an eminently expendable bare life, as Agamben would say.

Though a major portion of Rodrigo's memoir is about Marquez, and he deals with his mother's death in the last section in the main, yet she is present all the time. If Gabo led an enormous life singing the rawness of deep experience that Lorca once called 'deep song,' Mercedes was no less than her husband in her own right; she was an "original – eccentric and grounded, formal and outrageous, always testing the limits of political correctness."

Mercedes, addicted to smoking, died of diminished lung capacity in 2020, a little more than six months after Marquez. In deference to her wishes, Rodrigo did not publish his father's memoir while she was alive. He knew she would not like it.

Her first reactions to the news of her husband's terminal illness recorded with characteristic detachment by Rodrigo, reveal the strength of her character: "Before her expression betrays anything, her phone rings and she picks it up, which takes me completely by surprise. I observe her, stupefied, while she talks to someone in Spain, and I marvel at this living, breathing, textbook example of avoidance. It is, in its own way, beautiful as well as endearing. For all her strength and resources, she is just like everyone else . . . She nods, taking it all in, then asks: "So this is it? For your father?"' The last sentence says it all; her fortitude, her strength to confront the worst form of tragedy about to befall her.

She remains remarkably composed when Gabo passes away. A few hours after his death when the entire family was sitting with the mother, a phone bell rang and she answered it: "It's a friend … He's calling to inquire about my dad's health … My mother listens patiently and thanks him perfunctorily, but at the first opportunity tells him that my father has already died … She goes on to explain that it all happened just in the last hour, as if she were talking about a food delivery."

Even when her own health was declining, "she did not seem overly anxious about her condition. I couldn't see major cracks in her demeanor." Rodrigo wonders if it was "fearlessness, denial, or pretense." And then he adds, "She excelled in all three areas at different times." In fact, as Rodrigo reveals, she had inherited the quality of keeping a stiff upper lip from her parents and she was afraid of big expressions of emotion. She even encouraged her children also to be uncomplainingly stoical.

We see the best of her when she takes charge of the funeral, looks after the mourners who came to commiserate with them for three days after the funeral. Their house turned into a

cocktail, "… with drinks and snacks around the clock and my mother holding court, cajoling, interrogating, passing judgment, indefatigable." Despite the grief and exhaustion, she was calm and cordial. On the fourth day, before departing for the memorial service in Bellas Artes, her marching orders were: "Nobody's allowed to cry."

She reveals her true resilience when in his address at the memorial service, the Mexican president refers to her and her sons as "the sons and the widow." She was furious: "Later my mom speaks her opinion in no uncertain terms, grumpily. She threatens to tell the first journalist who crosses her path that she plans to remarry as soon as possible. Her last words on the subject are … I am not the widow. I am me." She was a woman of substance, like Gabo, her famous husband.

Absence of our parents, Rodrigo suggests, makes us grow fonder of them and more forgiving. This truth resonates in the heart of all those who have lost their parents. This realization comes from the recognition that "our parents were walking on feet of clay like everybody else."

Rodrigo, in his memoir which is a like a long, loving letter to his parents, presents them as utterly human. This is precisely what matters the most. Mirza Ghalib once said: "*Bus ki dushwar hai har kaam ka asaan hona / Aadmi ko bhi mayassar nahin insaan hona* … While it is difficult for every task to become easy / Even men do not succeed in becoming human."

A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir is about being and becoming human.

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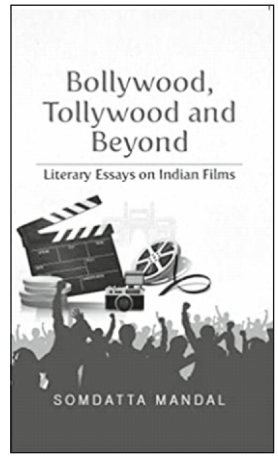

Somdatta Mandal. *Bollywood, Tollywood and Beyond: Literary Essays on Indian Films*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2021. 340pp. ISBN 978-93-82178-34-7. Price: Rs. 1200/-

Dr. Koushik Mondal*

Cinema as an art form not only entertains the masses but also acts as an important cultural signifier of a society. Though due to its birth in the West, cinema has long been thought of as another emblematic cultural apparatus to instill the dominant ideologies of the Euro-American culture into the hearts of the subcontinent, its genesis in India has a completely different trajectory. Hence to analyse an Indian film produced in Bollywood, the mecca of Indian cinema, or in any other regional film industry in India from the Hollywoodian perspective is a grave mistake. Though in a globalised world order of transnational cultural flows it's very difficult or naïve to maintain its cultural purity, yet one cannot ignore the context and the milieu in which a particular film is born. Hence a book on film criticism from someone who is well versed in the indigenous culture and its politics is a significant contribution.

Indian popular films from its fledgling state have entertained the masses with its populist elements of melodrama, action, fantasy, eroticism, song and dance numbers. For this it has often been considered a philistine art form and so lacked any serious attention. However, whether as a hegemonic capitalistic institution, or on the contrary, as a subversive art form of social concern, cinema had compelled the artists and the academics alike to shake off the cultural high brow gradually. In the postmodern world of textuality, film is as important a cultural text as any other form of art. Besides, its close contiguity with literature has demanded serious attention inciting the controversy of adaptation or transcreation from one medium to another. Thus film studies has become an established discipline in the academia. However, though there are many books on film theories avaiable, the paucity of intriguing books in film criticism often is a huge setback. Hence Somdatta Mandal's book *Bollywood, Tollywood and Beyond: Lierary Essays on Indian Films* (2021) is a timely intervention in this burgeoning field of film studies.

Unlike the naïve and insipid film reviews available in journals, blogs or newspapers, this book is a serious academic engagement by someone who was a professor of English for a long time and writes on films on a regular basis. As the subtitle of the book makes it obvious,

the book attempts to interpret the film texts from literary points of view. It contains eighteen essays which are divided into three sections – i) Thematic Studies, ii) Eminent Personalities and Directors and iii) Individual Films. In the short introduction, while the author engages with the key aspects of cinema related to her discussion, she also tries to give short summary of the sections that the book unfolds.

In the first section of "Thematic Studies", the first four chapters deal with the pertinent issue of Indian partition and its cinematic representation. The first chapter not only brings forth a chronological study of the films made on the subject of Bengal partition beginning from Nemai Ghosh's *Chinnamul* (1950) right up to Kaushik Ganguly's *Biswarjan* (2017), but also comments on its distinctive uniqueness from those films made on the partition of Punjab. However the author is cautious enough of the mistake of homogenising these films on Bengal partition. Referring to the renewed interest of the issue in recent commercial Bengali films, the chapter offers some brilliant observations on the "development of post-partition cultural identity as expressed through Bengali films made during the past seven decades." After discussing the fictional representation of the issue of partition in films, in the second chapter Mandal focuses on the non-fictional representation of Bengal partition in the three documentaries made by directors from both sides of the border.

Analysis of Indian partition films cannot be complete without referring to the cinematic representation of Punjab partition that separated India from West Pakistan (now Pakistan). The next chapter solely focuses on the films on Punjab partition and how and why they differ from those on the Bengal partition. The author has the insights to understand that while the films on Bengal partition in neo-realist mode avoid the graphical representation of violence and instead concentrate on the trauma of this cataclysmic event focusing on the "construction of post-partition identity", the films on Punjab partition, most of which issued out of Bollwood with salability in mind, often take recourse to the populist elements of gruesome violence as well as cross-border inter-religious romance to satisfy the mainstream Bollywood appeal. Thus the chapter attempts to provide a comprehensive study of the celluloid representations of Punjab partition beginning from M. L. Anand's *Lahore* (1949) to the very recent *Viceroy's House* (2017) by the British Asian filmmaker Gurinder Chadha.

In spite of some repetitions of films discussed in the earlier chapters, the distinctiveness of the fourth chapter lies in the fact that it succinctly grasps the change that has taken place over the years in the nature of the celluloid representation of the issue of partition and border. Border studies has emerged as a new and emerging genre in postcolonial studies. While films made at the wake of the partition zeroed in on the holocaust of migration, communal violence and post-partition dystopia, most of the the recent films like J. P. Dutta's "War Trilogy" (1997-2003), Anil Sharma's *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001), Yash Chopra's *Veer Zaara* (2004), Indo-Canadian director Vic Sarin's *Partition* (2007) and Kaushik Ganguly's *Biswarjan* (2017) focus on border-crossing, cross-border romance and the other ways of survival across that liminal space of the border.

The next chapter elaborates on how Indian cinema represents the minority communities like the Muslims and the Anglo-Indians as 'Other'. The stereotypical representation and the cultural 'othering' of the Muslims in Hindi films as varied as *Pukar* (1939), *Mirza Ghalib* (1957), *Garm Hawa* (1973), *Umrao Jaan* (1981), *Mission Kashmir* (2000) or *Padmaavat* (2018) result in the Islamophobia which has been further complicated with the rise of the Hindu majoritarian politics in the recent decades. Of course there are some exceptions like *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008), *My Name is Khan* (2010) or for that matter *Gully Boy* (2019) which endeavour to dispel the myths surrounding the negative stereotypes. The essay

also refers to the doubly marginalised status of the women who are represented in these films. However, the issue needed more explanation and further clarification. Dismissing the homogenising category of 'Islamicate' which the film scholars use to refer to these films about the Muslims, the author proposes to consider these films in more secular and commonsensical categories like 'epicals', 'chronicles', 'romances' 'comedies' etc. As the second section of the essay explores the Anglo-Indians too have been represented as "exotic other" in the silver screen. However, unlike the representation of the Muslims, there have been at least some earnest endeavours to portray this community as a significant part of India's national culture. As the essay elucidates, the Bengali film industry is more sensitive to the representation of this community than Bollywood which relies more on the entertainment aspect and the salability of a film than on its social role.

The penultimate chapter on LGBTQ issues is a very important contribution to queer studies since books or materials encapsulating the history and growth of Indian queer cinema are very few. The author observes how the scenario is gradually changing and the cinephiles are doing away with the hackneyed representations of gender and sexuality and making bold attempts to portray queer issues and thereby helping the queer community to come out of the closet. But the acute observation of the author dissuades her from becoming celebratory at the increase of the queer films in India. Rather, she deplores the fact that either most of these films continue to portray the tragic lives of the non-normative characters while being serious or the heteronormative audience are still not comfortable with these issues and thus miserably fail the expectations of a sincere director. The final essay of the first section deals with one of the most recurrent motifs in Bengali cinema, which is nothing but the issue of motherhood. Though the essay restricts itself to the discussion of Bengali films alone and which could have been more interesting had some other representative Hindi films or regional films been covered, yet it's a telling commentary and a feminist critique of the ubiquitous patriarchal mindset of 'mothherhood being the sole criteria of judging a woman's capability and role in society'. Ranging her discussion from Satyajit Ray and Purnendu Patrea to the contemporary directors like Aniruddha Roy Choudhury and Rituparno Ghosh, Mandal maps the phenomenon of barrenness versus motherhood expressed in different nuances in Bengali films. In this context she also observes how Rituparno Ghosh's aesthetics differs from his avowed mentor Satyajit Ray while dealing with this same subject.

II

The second section entitled "Eminent Personalities and Directors" provides us with the glimpses of three eminent personalities from Bengal – Rabindranath Tagore, Satyajit Ray and Rituparno Ghosh. The section contains six essays, first three of which are on Tagore, the next one is on Satyajit Ray and the last two on Rituparno Ghosh. It is quite intriguing when a book on film criticism consists of a chapter on Tagore's ideas of this art form. The first section of the essay refers to the historical records and evidence to flesh out Tagore's love-hate relationship with this emerging art form. The last part of the essay focuses on the adaptations of Tagore's narratives by film directors. Commenting briefly on the debate surrounding the adaptation of a literary text into a film, the author moves on to explore how the reapropriation of a Tagore text varies depending on the subject position of a specific director. Mandal concludes that the present-day directors 'have started being more bold, more experimental and have taken enormous amount of liberties with the original story by Tagore than the directors in the twentieth century.' The chapter ends with an exhaustive list of Tagore films

including the documentaries which will be beneficial for researchers and also the ordinary reader.

The following chapter analyses some of Tagore's women-centric works and their film adaptations to ascertain whether Tagore was a feminist. As the article explores, Tagore was of course influenced by the feminist movements in the West of the time and also sympathised with some of the ideologies of the movement but he could not be considered a 'feminist' in the traditional sense of the term. Rather it would be wiser to consider him a womanist who concentrated more on establishing the individuality of his woman protagonist than berating the patriarchal ideologies and institutions openly. In the following essay, the author reiterates that almost every major film director, especially from Bengal, exploited Tagore either as a "rite-of-passage" or because Tagore has a salability in the cultural market in Bengal. It focuses on ten such transcreations of Tagore text, all made in the twenty-first century, where the directors have done away with the fidelity concern and reinterpret the original text from their own ideological viewpoints. While some of these films like Rituparno Ghosh's *Chitrangada* (2012), Quashiq Mukherjee's *Tasher Desh* (2013) or Aparna Sen's *Ghawre Baire Aaj* (2019) are quite pathbreaking experimentation from the contemporary perspectives, some others like Pranab Chowdhury's *Musalmanir Galpo* (2010), Raja Sen's *Laboratory* (2010) and Agnidev Chatterjee's *Charulata 2011* (2012) could not meet the expectation. The chapter ends with the brilliant observation of the author: "We have also to remember that in this globalized postmodern world these transcreations of Tagore's works co-exist in a non-hierarchised cultural space and though purists are becoming rarer these days, it is best to accept them simply as a new kind of interpretation."

Though analysis of Satyajit Ray's feature films has found wide readership but discussions on Ray's documentaries have remained a lacunae in film studies. The next chapter attempts to address that understated area. Mandal categorically explains the different styles and aesthetics of five completed and one incomplete docu-film made by Ray. She also explains how Ray's documentaries are unique and hence cannot be co-opted in the established categories of documentaries. The next chapter is a full length study of the entire canon of Rituparno Ghosh. Mandal discusses each and every film made or acted by Ghosh chronologically. While she discovers the key motif of Ghosh's oeuvre to be the human relationship and its intricacies, she also maps the significant changes that took place in Ghosh's journey as a director. She argues that such an artist who excels in many other aspects of auteurship must be studied in totality – "as a conglomerate of his films, his writing, his considerable scholarship, his eccentric lifestyle and his sexuality." The next chapter is an extension of the previous one, since the essay engages with two very important motifs, namely sexuality and gaze in Rituparno Ghosh's oeuvre. Though the discussion remains restricted to two films – *Chokher Bali* (*A Passion Play*, 2003) and *Antarmahal* (*The Inner Chamber*, 2005)– it could be extended to many of his other films. Referring to Ghosh's interviews, the chapter explores how Ghosh's use of blatant sexuality in these two period pieces received harsh criticism and how Ghosh defended his own position. While Ghosh's erotic presentation of women in these films have entertained the male fantasy, he at the same time has reversed the male gaze giving agency and subjectivity to his heroines.

III

As Mandal states, "Five essays in the third section concentrate on individual films." The first essay considers the problems of adaptation with reference to Satyajit Ray's

transcreation of Tagore's *Ghare Baire*. Both of them being masters in their own field, it's very difficult to affront one text for the other. Instead of going into that argument, the essay concentrates on exposing the changes that Ray brought in and contends that "an adaptation is always, whatever else it may be, an interpretation" and hence one must not compare the book with the film. The next chapter also on the issue of adaptation, zeroes in on the New Theatres trilogy of the film *Devdas* (1935) made in Bengali, Hindi and Assamese by Pramathesh Chandra Barua. The chapter very elaborately explains on how Barua's adapatation of Saratchandra's cult text brought a revolution in Indian cinema not only in its social appeal but also in terms of the technological innovation. Barua's learning experience of cinematographic production in the West helped him introduce the techniques like 'flashback', 'close-up', 'montage', 'jump cut', 'intercut telepathy shot' and 'natural low-key acting', something that was never present in regional Indian cinema. Besides, Barua's portrayal of the character of Devdas himself on the silver screen made such an appeal throughout the subcontinent that the novel has found ample number of adaptations in different languages. The next chapter is a study of Bimal Roy's *Udayer Pathey* (1944) and how it celebrates modernity with the introduction of social realism in Bengali cinema. The film is an important milestone not only due to its technologcal innovations but also due to its social concern regarding class hierarchy and colonial exploitation. Briefly discussing the journey of Bimal Roy from a cameraman to a director, the chapter shows how this particilar film dreamt of a modern India devoid of class, caste or gender hierarchies and exploitation or oppression. The problems of adaptation again resurface in the next chapter where the author discusses how the delineation of a subject changes with the shift of medium. Deepa Mehta's crossover production *Earth 1947* (1999) is an improvement on Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candy Man* (1988). Though the primary issue, which is the partition of India, remains same for both the artists, Mehta omits many important parts of the novel and fits the narrative according to her cinematic vision. However, unlike many other adaptations, in this case Sidhwa wholeheartedly endorsed the film by even making a cameo appearance in the end. The last essay of the book is quite an exception from the other essays of the book since this one deals with the issues of 'diaspora', 'identity crisis', 'ethnicity' etc. vis-à-vis Eisha Marjara's *Desperately Seeking Helen* (1999). This Indo-Canadian director exploits the medium of cinema to come to terms with her confused diasporic identity and Helen, the yesteryear Bollywood vamp, becomes a conduit through which she attempts to rediscover herself. The film becomes a representative of those crossover films through which many South-Asian diasporic artists desire to redeem themselves from the cultural schism. Helen's iconic image as the dancing queen of the Indian cinema and her cross-cultural identity amply helped the Indian diaspora to negotiate between the home and the host culture. However, the film also exposes the limitation of this "autoethnography" since multiple subjectivities come into play while one searches for a stable identity.

Though the thrust area of the book is film criticism but this is often enmeshed with the other genres of academic disciplines like social history, partition studies, queer studies and theories of adaptation and thus becomes an interesting book on interdisciplinary studies. The book would be an immense help not only to the film studies scholars but also to any other literature and culture studies students and any film buff in general. The uniqueness of the book lies not only in its wide ranging variety but also in its critical attention to those significant films or documentaries which demand careful analysis but are very rarely discussed. Though there are some repetitions of some films or issues and a few editorial lapses in the book, yet the literary and artistic expression with the nuanced use of the language by the author makes the

reading of the book a rewarding experience. The inclusion of relevant film posters or still pictures from the films in black and white is not only a visual treat for the readers but also makes the analysis more conspicuous. The cover design of the book containing the pictures of the fundamental filmmaking equipments like camera, film reels, clapboard with the silhouette of ecstatic crowd below and the image of Gateway of India at the background is very attractive and also very significant in respect to the thrust area of the book. On the whole, the importance and relevance of the book can hardly be exaggerated.

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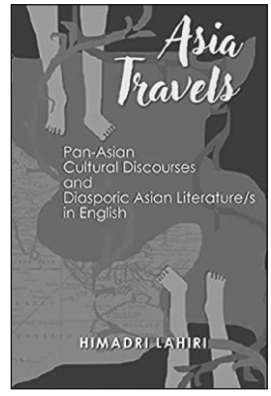

Himadri Lahiri. Asia Travels: Pan-Asian Cultural Discourses and Diasporic Asian Literature/s in English. Bolpur: Birutjatio Sahitya Sammiloni, 2021. i-xxiii + 270 pp. ISBN 978-81-953067-8-7

Dr Sukriti Ghosal*

Reading a book in an emerging field caters to our curiosity and that by an eminent academician expands the horizon of our knowledge. Both these sayings are true of the book under review, Himadri Lahiri's *Asia Travels: Pan-Asian Cultural Discourses and Diasporic Asian Literature/s in English*. With a 'Foreword' by Nilufer E. Bharucha, the book has three Sections, each having four Chapters. In addition, there are five 'book reviews' in the Appendix which add flavour to the topic in question.

The highly informative 'Introduction' makes it clear that the book is about transnational travels which helps one discover the limitations of singularistic identity and sensitizes one to the need to go beyond the national identity when taken parochially. At the outset the author dwells upon the history of the emergence of the geo-cultural concept 'Pan-Asianism' – a term used to describe a number of Asian countries which, despite their differences and rivalries, are envisaged as a single space. What binds the different political states of the space popularly known as South East Asia is a shared commonness – anti-Westernism and recognition of the value of cultural heterogeneity due to the presence of Confucianian, Vedic, Buddhist and Islamic ideas. The author traces it to the Japanese victory in Russo-Japanese war in 1905, Sun Yat-sen's multicultural Asianist vision, the Pan-Asianist discourses of Okakura Tenshin and Rabindranath Tagore and to Sister Nivedita's projection of India 'as a metaphysical and spiritual idea rather than a territorial and political entity' (xii). While this Pan-Asianism ran the risk of Asia-centricity which is the other side of Euro-centricity, the author shows that in the post-Civil rights era, the intermixing of races, the formation of Asian Diaspora augmented by large scale migration from Asia, and the prevalence of the spirit of multiculturalism in Europe and America have created a more liberal sense of solidarity of the Asians in the West. Lahiri has made elaborate study of the works of different authors of Asian origin in search of reflection of Pan-Asianism in their literary conscious. In range and depth the study is literally astounding and the authors selected for study are well-known in their own countries as well as outside their national territory. Some like Tagore are world famous; a few may be less known to general readers but certainly are familiar faces to readers interested in Asianist culture.

In Chapter One of the First Section ('From Home to the World: Pan Asianism and

Diaspora') the author uses 'cultural lens' to search the prospects of Pan-Asianism. He mentions the 'politics of earth labelling' and 'intra-' as well as 'inter-' 'national conflicts' – be it the Civil War in Sri Lanka, the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the partition of India or the Sino-Japanese conflict – which have often ruptured the cultural affinities of the countries located in East Asia. Yet the presence of English as a unifying language, the publication of collaborative literary anthologies figuring authors from different South East Asian countries, the shared historical experience of being colonized by the West, trans-cultural cooperation in South East Asia, especially the activities of Lahore based SATCO which took initiative in organizing performance of plays with 'multi-national cast, and, to cap them all, the political coalition of Asians in the Western diaspora have collectively contributed to the formation of Pan-Asian fraternal space. In this context the author has justly pointed out the significance of reading literary output of neighbouring countries which is a kind of symbolic 'cultural travel and cultural mapping that is free of hegemonic trappings' (11). The author has studied two stories – Tagore's 'Kabuliawala' and Mahadevi Verma's 'Chini Feriwala' – to establish how a so-called 'foreigner' becomes one's own man and how, at moments of 'humanitarian crisis' (20), cultural divergences wither away, paving the way for the emergence of familial bond, filial or fraternal.The next Chapter explores the mission of Tagore, 'a cultural ambassador', in strengthening the cultural solidarity which is a way of resisting Western imperialistic strategy of 'divide and rule'. The author makes an in-depth study of Tagore's 'Letters from Java' where Tagore speaks of traces of Indian national consciousness' in Bali and Java and then analyses why he faced a rather cold reception when he visited China in 1924 and, going against Western materialist culture, encouraged the Chinese youth to feel the importance of rescuing 'the human soul from the grip of greed which keeps it chained' (39). Chapter Three elaborately discusses the conditions leading to the birth of brand Asian-American literature in the post-Civil Rights movement era – a condition marked by resistance of White hegemonic culture which indirectly nurtured the consolidation of the comradeship among the Asians in the USA. The essay makes a scholarly analysis of the various nuances of the term 'Asian-American' which apparently may strike as an essentialist label hiding the differences of American immigrants of Asian origin but which actually is an attempt to redress the marginalizing monoculturalist attitude of the White Americans by bringing into visibility the literature of the ethnic groups hailing from Asia. The author is conscious of the problems of racial and ethnic categorization which on the one hand erases the particularities of different ethnic groups, on the other calls for further sub-divisions. Yet the rubric 'Pan-Asian' is handy, not only because it reveals the 'asymmetrical relationships operative in American power structure' (50) but also because the formation has a back-up of togetherness that makes it a meaningful label. The last Chapter of the Section theorizes about the formation of Diaspora due to displacement and relocation which opens up the possibility of cultural negotiation in the hostland. An academician long engaged in Diaspora studies, Lahiri here relates Pan-Asianism to Diaspora wisely touching upon the link between travels and enrootment. He interrogates the view of diasporic subject as an 'ever-floating individual' and argues that although the diasporic condition is extremely 'volatile' (58) because it implies crossing of borders, sprouting of the scattered seeds, that is 'community formation on the basis of common origin or interests' (60) – or to put it differently, 'transportation of cultures across continents and transplantation of the same in the new soil' (60) must be admitted as the hallmark of Diaspora. True, the identity gets hybridized in the process, but this hybridity is also a precondition for the availability of 'plurality and simultaneity of points of view' (61). The diasporic space is of immense importance especially in the context of Pan-Asianism

because it dismantles nationalist walls and 'envisages an alliance of the marginals' (63).

Such insights lie scattered all over the other two main Sections of the book. The Second Section, appropriately named 'Shadows in the Nations: Diasporic Perspectives', analyzes a number of texts that expose the fissures in the solidarity. Chapter Five, the first of the Section, is a study of Japanese author Monica Sone's autobiographical narrative *Nisei Daughter* and Hisaye Yammamoto's fiction 'The Legend of Miss Sasagawara'. It explains how historical events like the bombing of Pearl Harbour during WW II, led to racial profiling of the Japanese and their internment, which impacted the life of even second/ third generation of Japanese born in America and having nothing to do with the 'Land of Rising Sun'. This injustice inspired a feeling in other ethnic communities of Asian descent that they too were victims of discrimination and thus fostered Pan-Asianism. Chapter Six zooms on Ranbir Sidhu's 'Border Songs' and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* – two classic partition tales. Incidentally, communal atrocity ripped through the Indian subcontinent in the wake of the Partition and creation of two states, Pakistan and India, at the end of colonial rule in 1947. One may at first be surprised why Partition stories should be included in a book on Pan-Asianism, because these stories by exposing the enmity and rivalry of the new-born twin states are likely to jerk the issue of solidarity signified by Pan-Asianism. But the inclusion is justified. Outwardly it is because of the absence of communal wall in day to day life, as exemplified by the fact that the suitors of Ayah in Sidhwa's tale belong to different religions – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh. But more plausibly it is due to the presence of the element of travelling, the mass exodus of Hindus from Pakistan and of Muslims from India. But most appropriately, it is because the same destiny of victimhood marks the people cutting across religious and national identities and stresses their akin-ness at the deep structure level. The perspective broadens in the last two Chapters of the Section as Lahiri proceeds to examine representative texts produced in Afghanistan and the Himalayan countries. Chapter Seven sheds light on the glorious cultural past of Afghanistan and through a perceptive reading of Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner*, shows how internal turmoil and repressive forces stand in the way of achieving transnational broadness. The main focus of Chapter Eight is on Tibet which holds a unique position in the Pan-Asian cultural context. First, national identity which is secular is indistinguishable from religious identity of the Tibetans who are Buddhist by faith. Secondly, the main Tibetan Diaspora is in India where many Tibetans found their refuge when they fled their country under the leadership of Dalai Lama in 1950. Here also is a case of Asia *travelling* and from an alien soil nostalgically dreaming of *homecoming* when red guns will no longer boom in the silent hills.

The Third Section entitled 'Settling Down: Response of the Authors in Diaspora' (which appears in Contents as 'Settling Down in the Diaspora') analyses the works of writers who have not only crossed the borders but also found moorings in a new cultural milieu. Chapter Nine, the first of the Section probes the struggle for selfhood as revealed in the 'mother-daughter dyad' (145) in the novels of two Chinese American women writers – Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. Lahiri shows that while mothers in 'ethnic sub-society' find it hard to part with the cultural baggage, the daughters born and brought up in America resent imposition of code of ancestral culture but cannot altogether resist it. This brings out the diasporic paradox of being simultaneously connected and delinked as evident from a line quoted from a story by Amy Tan: 'I talked to her in English, she answered back in Chinese' (155). Although using different tongues, both of them can follow each other's language, or else all communication would have broken down. Chapter Ten studies Bharati Mukherjee's novels like *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Jasmine* to unfold the problematic of staying connected

to distant culture in the fluid diasporic environment where one has to struggle hard to balance 'here' with 'there', 'now' with 'then' in defining one's identity. If Tara finds it difficult to ward off the country of her past from her expatriate sensibility, and like Bharati's own sister Mira, chooses to live in America 'to maintain an identity, not to transform it' (167), Jyoti in *Jasmine* has no scruple to adopt a new name (Jasmine) which suggests that re-configuring of identity in the process of integration and acclimatization is inevitable for many Asian-Americans of second/third generation. Chapter Eleven concentrates on the stories of Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* to find out how Asian American family-space is impacted by migration and cultural interaction consequent upon such travels. The last Chapter of the Section is a summing up of the conclusions drawn in previous chapters and also a re-examination of them in the present context. Lahiri justly contends that while terms like 'South Asian American' or 'Asian American' 'tend to homogenise or essentialise heterogeneous groups' (201), these are products of history of ethnic communities trying to resist Western cultural hegemony and discriminatory culture. In a world devastated by Covid 19, mankind should accentuate cosmopolitanism and the need for crossing borders. The author thinks that 'the urgency for building up pan-Asian platforms' has been on the wane in the present context of increasing empowerment of the ethnic groups as evident from the career of Kamala Harris who is the current Vice-President of the USA. Still, Lahiri's book helps us recognize the value of 'plural sigularity' (202) which is a precondition for imbibing a global vision. Lahiri pertinently refers to Bharati Mukherjee's idea of interculturalism as the basis of true multiculturalism. The sooner we understand this, the better.

The title has a bearing on all the essays which fall under two broad categories – Pan-Asianism and South Asian Diaspora. It is 'Travel' that is the link word between the two concepts – 'Pan-Asianism' and 'South Asian' Diaspora. A sense of kinship with counterparts inhabiting a space split by borderline is the essence of Pan-Asianism – a feeling necessitating crossing many symbolic walls which enclose us in narrow cocoons of identity and also isolate us from humanity at large. Similarly, Diaspora implies negotiation of cultures which is not possible unless one steps out and grows conscious of the non-sustainability of all fences. Although most Chapters of the book were published as articles in different journals, the book is not just an anthology of critical essays, not only because these have been structured with meticulous care but also because there is a single critical focus. The style is lucid and the vocabulary is not jargon-ridden, although it has the critical fibre expected from high standard academic publication. The printing is decent enough and there is almost no typo, something one rarely comes across in products of not-so-well-known publishing houses. In short, the book is assuredly an enviable collection-piece of scholars.

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Narinder Jit Kaur. ***Dawn to Dusk: A Collection of Middle Articles***
Authors Press, New Delhi. 2021, Rs. 295, pp. 151

Prof. Swaraj Raj

Dawn to Dusk, as the subtitle of this text claims, is a collection of 58 'middle' articles penned by Narinder Jit Kaur, who is a Patiala based retired Associate Professor of English. These articles were published in several newspapers over a period of seventeen years, from 2004 to 2021. The book has five sections viz., Wit and Humour, Soulful Serenade, For Old Time's Sake, Tryst with Technology, and Pandemic Peril. Irrespective of the date of their publication, all the articles have been arranged topic-wise under these five sections.

The subtitle suggesting the write-ups to be 'middle articles' is a bit misleading to me; these are actually short essays and stories that belong to the domain of creative non-fiction, a genre that is considered as the fourth genre today. In writing these essays, Narinder Jit draws on her vast repertoire of memories and her varied experiences as a student, college teacher, mother, wife, friend, and most importantly as a person in love with life. She fixes these memories and experiences in delightful aesthetic forms with her deft mingling of reality and fiction. She reminisces about the past, watches herself reminiscing, casts sideways glances on the present as well as on what the future holds. In distancing herself from herself, she is able to create stories that are not just about one individual only, that is about Narinder Jit Kaur alone, but these stories appear to the readers to be their own. This, despite the fact that the author's 'I' is a strong presence in each story. This is no mean achievement for any author worth her salt.

The spur for these stories comes from the diary entries she has been making since her school days, a hobby she is addicted to as she reveals in one of her articles "A Journey that Began with Writing Letters." Summoning the original experiences, meditating upon them from some distance, allowing her imagination to work on them, shining a spotlight on them with subtle wit and self-deprecating humour, and recreating them in a narrative form, this is Narinder Jit's forte. She is never afraid of telling the truth with disarming candour, but often does it with a slant, as Emily Dickinson once wrote in a poem, "Tell all the Truth but tell it Slant – / Success in Circuit lies …"

It is very easy for the readers to relate to her stories which are devoid of jargon. Her prose is limpid except for an occasional hyperbolical expression she employs for the sake of humour and gentle satire. The 58 essays cover a wide spectrum of subjects that include human relationships, technology, education, womanism, adolescence, growing up, generation gap, travels, literature, literary authors, and many more. She handles most of these topics with ready, sparkling wit. For example, in "Caring but Interfering, Moms will be Moms", which is the first story in the book, she throws light first on her own attitude towards her mother when she (the author) was very young, and then compares her own attitude as mother towards her sons. In doing so she lays bare how the anxieties of mothers about their children lead them to pry on the youngsters, something they resent. She gives the story a very interesting twist in the end:

Once when my sons were studying and I hovering around the room, I heard some whispering. Perhaps they were talking about me and my interfering nature, because the moment I popped my head inside, they gave a hearty laugh, and the younger one said, "Aa gayi Bandit Queen"

Indirectly it is a signal to overprotective mothers to let their children be; and at the same time it is a signal to youngsters also that they may think whatever they like to about their

independence and autonomy, but mothers will always be mothers, come what may. What is remarkable about this story is that without adopting the stance of a preacher peddling in-your-face precepts, she hints at configuring some kind of negotiable space where ambivalent attitudes of children and their parents towards each other can find a convivial dwelling. The message is there, but it is not forced; it is incidental to the aesthetic function, which is the delight this tale of generational rift and abiding love parents have for their children, gives to the reader.

For her readers who are or have been teachers, her stories "Bound in Brackets" and "Three Challenges of My Teaching Career" ring true to the core. These two stories found a deep resonance in my own mind. I was reminded of a scene in Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red* in which a miniature painting by Bihzad is being discussed. The painting, Bihzad knew, was so much in his signature style that he did not hide his signature anywhere. But according to the elderly master commenting on Bihzad's art, "Where there is true art and genuine virtuosity the artist can paint an incomparable masterpiece without leaving even a trace of his identity …. What was venerated as style was nothing more than an imperfection or flaw that revealed the guilty hand." In other words, good art is like perfect murder with the murderer leaving no trace or clue about his identity. Narinder Jit's short stories, despite bearing unmistakeable signature of her identity, do elicit a similar response from her readers as a perfect murder will from anyone: "Look, I would've have written these stories in a similar way. They are so much my own stories!" Narinder Jit's self-effacing narratives do not let her "I" become obtrusive at all. Her creative journey, as she declares is from "Personal to Universal."

Her take on growing up, in fact about growing old to be exact, reveals that she likes to live with gusto. In "Baby Boomers Are Aging with Attitude", she talks about making her "post-retirement a celebration of life" with her positive attitude; and in "Sixty and Growing Younger by the Day" she welcomes new medical and digital technologies that help people stay young longer than our grandparents. An apt lesson for any grumpy gerontion with "dry brains in a dry season" like Eliot's old man in his poem "Gerontian."

The last section of the book dealing with the perils of the Covid pandemic, disruptions caused by the virus and the ways and means the author and people in general have dealt with it, is imbued with topical poignancy. She thinks sympathetically about that section of society which was "hard hit by the shutdown, grappled with the situation on a daily basis, devising new ways for their survival ("The Noise of Survival"). She talks about how physical nearness gave way to digital propinquity. She is quick to adopt digital technology to stay in touch with friends and relatives. Her faith in resilience of the humankind and her penchant for looking at the brighter side of life comes to the fore even in this section also.

In the story "When You're Good with Faces, Bad with Names" she narrates an incident about giving lift in their car to an old Pahari woman while driving down from Shimla to Kandaghat. Once in the car, the woman dozed off immediately, depriving a small talk to the author. Both remained utter strangers to each other. When the old woman's destination arrived and she got down, she casually invited Narinder Jit to her house someday, eliciting an affirmative response from her. Pondering over this small incident, Narinder Jit writes: "What a conversation! Here were two strangers who didn't even know anything about each other … While her invitation warmed me up, my accepting it brought a smile to her face. What else do we need in life? It doesn't cost anything to be amiable."

Using her own words, I can say "What else do we need in life?" except looking around and finding joy in small things, like Narinder Jit does setting many examples for us?

She definitely makes us rethink our priorities. While going through her stories, Theodore Roethke's words "All finite things reveal infinitude" were never far away from my mind.

We live in strange times that we cannot even understand. Living in this world of information overload, negativity being spread day in and day out by the screaming, endlessly breaking news which often erases the distinction between truth and falsehood, we just crave for a few moments of noise-free comfort. Scott Russell Sanders, an American essayist in his essay "The Singular First Person" published in *Fourth Genre, The: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction* suggests that "In this era of prepackaged thought, the essay is the closest thing we have, on paper, to a record of the individual mind at work and play. It is an amateur's raid in a world of specialists. Feeling overwhelmed by data, random information, the flotsam and jetsam of mass culture, we relish the spectacle of a single consciousness making sense of a part of the chaos …. The essay is a haven for the private, idiosyncratic voice in an era of anonymous babble." Narinder Jit's essays and stories, records of her work and playful imagination, are like warm friends gossiping with you when you sip tea from your morning cup. This is what you need to stay away from the anonymous babble and life-denying breaking news without brakes.

Dr. Jernail S. Anand, Ed. *Cosmic Poetry: An Anthology of Liberating Verses*,
Vol.1, The Poetry Society of India, Gurugram (Haryana), India.
August 2021, Rs. 650, pp.135

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The *Cosmic Poetry: An Anthology of Liberating Verses*, Ed. Dr. Jernail S. Anand skilfully brings together the poetic expressions of sixty one poets, to alleviate our inner darkness by exposing it to some of the finest sensibilities of the present world. By enkindling the lamp of spirituality it aims to enlighten our soul that in turn soars high to reach the infinite. As the title "*Cosmic Poetry"* suggests, the unifying thread of the anthology is developing 'cosmic consciousness' that tends to become a dialogue between the 'self' and the universe. Besides, for encompassing a large variety of other themes explored in the poems both at the level of microcosm and macrocosm, the anthology moves beyond to become a pleasant, engaging and illuminating interaction between our beloved earth and the cosmos and this is how it does justice to its title.

What is remarkable about this collection of poetry is here one hears voices of the poets across the world. Different regions, different nationalities, different experiences and different sensibilities coalesce to create a unified whole that in turn conveys the message of love, faith, unity and mutual understanding - the poetic approach to the issue of sustenance. Wonderful it is to hear the same language of love and peace reverberating from almost all the corners of this globe, manifest in poems as "The Cosmic Voice," "The Torturous Waves," "I am the Refulgent Mother," "Don't Be," "Light," "The Bedouin's Song," "Spirits of Peace and Love," "Cosmic Voices," "Life is Moment," "The Ocean of Love," "Service to Humanity" and "When Life Goes Spell Bound." While the same conviction is echoed in poem after poem it creates a magical effect on our soul, more like 'symphony orchestra,' the very first poem having set the tune. The sense of unification it brings to a reader owes to the unseen 'conductor button,' here the editor and his team who brilliantly arrange such a grand array of verse, which in spite of their diversities are thematically interconnected. The other distinctive feature of this anthology is here there is the amalgamation of poems from poets of varied experience levels. Here we hear from young and emerging as well as established poets. It further enriches the collection by investing it with a greater variety of thoughts, expressions and poetic techniques. Further, it leads to a sense of completeness and most importantly it brings to it vigour and a quality of freshness. Moreover, what is unique about this anthology is that here we find the earth and the cosmos in dialogue with each other. The poems like "Pearls From the Ocean," "The Stars Are My Witness," "Civilization Crisis," "To Dear Planet Earth," "The Eyes in Love With the World" are worth mentioning in this regard. The poets' desperation to save Mother Earth by extending our cosmic consciousness, is writ all over in these poems. The anthology further incorporates certain poems like "Bossa Nova," "Insanity," "The Twilight" and Fallen Angel" that portray sensitive minds' suffering caused by pervasion of disintegrating and negative spirits on Earth. Yet what is visibly prominent here is the poets' abiding faith in humanity and existing value system, another aspect for which the anthology attains its distinctiveness. Besides, "Silent Images" and "Swan Song,"

though a bit melancholic in tone, poignantly invoke the images of declining and fading life. The glimpses of hope and faith in human bonding that help one to sail through difficult times and challenging phases of life, are skilfully woven in the texture of poems and reflect the predominant spirit of the anthology – hope, love, peace and justice.

Contextuality is the unique feature of *Cosmic Poetry.* Irrespective of their questionings and doubts, the poets' persistent faith in Almighty, justice, hope, love, light, peace and the spirit of goodness, is what brings great peace and solace to all, the warriors and survivors of the present terror stricken world. While darkness prevails and the entire world is in the grip of terror unleashed by the imperceptible viruses, threatening earthly existence, the poetic voices jointly and blissfully remind us that what we need most at this hour is to strengthen our inner bases that we can do only through spiritual enlightenment. The poems as "Starlit Childhood," "Wanted Prayers, Not Postulates," "God's Presence," "The Beauty of Eternity," "Enlighten Them Lord Buddha," "It Ain't Me," "You and Me," and "Dream Pedlar" remind us that to bear the present suffering gracefully, perhaps what we need most is to repose firm conviction in God, understand the real meaning of life and realize the connection of the 'self' with the cosmic self. The symphony of harmonies offers soothing balm to the feverish and traumatised souls during the turbulent times of pandemic, and sprinkles holy water to enliven the spiritually arid zones of human minds. The colossal loss of human lives has awakened humanity from the slumber of its avarice, selfishness and apathy towards what lies fairly spread in the lap of Nature and the verses in *Cosmic Poetry* delightfully teach us the ideal way of living through the path of 'cosmic consciousness' as wonderfully defined in the "Introduction" to the volume. The relevance of the anthology to the contemporary times, marked by the simplicity and innocence with which the poets go on unveiling the mystery of soul and its spiritual quests, remind one of Tagore's *Gitanjali* and its marvellous influence on the readers of that era. The central message embedded in *Cosmic Poetry* reminds one of the revelation of 'cosmic consciousness' in the poetry Sri Aurobindo in promoting love, mutual understanding and world peace and approximates to *Songs of Peace: The World's Biggest Anthology of Contemporary Poetry 2020*. However, what brings a flavour of occasional change to the prevailing spirit of mysticism and spirituality, is the incorporation of the poems - "Abode of the Masthan," "Delayed Mother's Day Wish," "The Weekend Outing" "The Evening in Vizag," "Kathmandu Nights" – which capture the intensity of personal encounters and personal experiences. Apart from their cathartic and therapeutic value, the compositions delight and solidify our faith in humanity and the extant value systems.

Exuding 'beauty' and 'truth' *Cosmic Poetry* negotiates with the dilemmas of the contemporary world and champions the cause of universal brotherhood, sans conflicts. The universal dimensions of the verses deftly intertwined with their logic, flow over to embrace what humanity desperately needs in the times of moral and spiritual crisis. The poems embody a wide horizon of experience expressed in an exquisite manner, a style and technique that seems to be unique to each poem and anchored in reality. Herein lies its appeal to the contemporary times and prospects for the future. Free from dogmas, linguistic and stylistic jargons, the anthologised verses plead for space to spiritual yearnings, a world sans the scourge of planet earth, drugs, gender and racism – all these reflected in the poetic utterances of world's best thoughtful and perceptive minds. With so much of cerebral stuff going into its composition, the *Cosmic Poetry: An Anthology of Liberating Verses* is all set for a perfect take off.

Kavita Kane. *Ahalya's Awakening*.
Westland Publications Ltd. 2019
pp. 349, ISBN: 9388754298

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I

Kavita Kane, the author of *Ahalya's Awakening* (2019), is a powerful revolutionary voice in contemporary Indian English Literature. The book under review is her sixth one and like her earlier works, foregrounds the lesser-known women characters of Indian mythology and depicts the struggle of the marginalized entities. The challenges encountered by women characters presented by Kane are relevant even in contemporary times. Kane provides a renewed perception through which contemporary readers can reconsider the epic and look afresh at the female protagonist. In the Epic *Ramayana*, Ahalya is portrayed as a silent victimized character; Kane presents the narrative from Ahalya's perspective. The author does not portray the protagonist as a victim or a mute spectator of her trials and tribulations; instead she gives voice to her to justify her thoughts and actions. Ahalya's contemporary rendition remains the focal point of this book.

II

The book cover engages the readers' attention, much before reading it. It presents a fascinating picture of the protagonist standing amidst the greenery of eye-energizing colour combination- the grey and the green which implies the ups and downs in human life. The big red-dark *bindi* (a small coloured mark worn between the eyebrows by a married Hindu woman) also appeals to the readers, inviting them to unfold the mystery behind it. The interesting part is that Indian women, particularly those who have been neglected and struggled to voice their feelings, can relate to the story, for the novel depicts their plight and struggle in a patriarchal society. Ahalya, too, like many Indian women, struggles a lot to convince her parents, particularly her mother, to permit her to pursue higher studies instead of marriage. The story keeps the readers spellbound till the very end, and it is only after reading the entire story, particularly the Epilogue, one realizes the appropriateness of the title: 'Ahalya's Awakening.' It refers to her spiritual upliftment which is the real purpose of human existence in this world. Ahalya has achieved her salvation through deep meditation, a process through which she turns her curse into a blessing. She realizes through deep penance that the greatest teacher is life and that one should aspire to seek that inner peace, rather than searching it in the mundane outside world or another person or society. Salvation comes from within.

III

Ahalya, one of the *Panchakanyas* of Indian mythology, an archetype of female chastity, is

believed to be the creation of Lord Brahma himself. She is the princess of Panchal, daughter of King Mudgal and Queen Nalayini. Ahalya is an enigmatic character, revered for her chastity and purity, yet censured and doubted on account of her infidelity. She is a "deemed promiscuous" character. The story is written from Ahalya's point of view; it presents her birth, childhood experiences, desire and will to study, her thoughts and beliefs on love and marriage, acquaintance with Indra, post-marital life and complications, and her search for the truth. It is needless to say that Ahalya's character is well-developed. She aspires for more knowledge and desires to become a *Rishika* one day. However, her focus shifts due to the constant pressure of getting married. It is then that she chooses to marry Rishi Goutam, her teacher and mentor in the *gurukul*, over Indra. Like any brave warrior, Ahalya was ready to accept the consequences of her decisions. Her struggle symbolizes strength and resilience, a much-needed quality to counter the patriarchal society. She succumbs to Rishi Gautam's curse for her act of infidelity, silently suffers her pain, and accepts the scornful remarks of society. It is during those 'cursed years' Ahalya gains the supreme knowledge about human life by penetrating deep inside her soul through meditation.

IV

The other minor characters explored at length are those that influence Ahalya's life. King Mudgal and Queen Nalayini, Ahalya's parents, are quite different in nature: Mudgal was more inclined towards Vedic knowledge, leading to spiritual enlightenment, which was unexpected of a king. On the other hand, Nalayini was preoccupied with earthly possessions and her status as queen. Both of them represented two different world views. King Mudgal supports and promotes Ahalya's pursuit of higher education, while Queen Nalayini is keen to get her daughter married to Indra, the Lord of the Devas. Their son and Ahalya's twin brother, Divodas, became an able administrator, a great warrior, and a renowned King. He believed in war and expansion, unlike his father. Great revered Rishi Goutam, a celibate succumbs to Ahalya's ethereal beauty, fulfilled the conditions of the *swayamvara* and marries Ahalya and lives a contented life during the formative years. The relation between Indra, Ahalya and Goutam is neatly sketched, and it offers diverse perspectives about life, war, marriage, and responsibility. Another important character who is pivotal to the story is Indra, the King of the Devas. His character manifests itself as any ordinary ruler who possesses many flaws like any other human being. Indra is a villain who succumbs to carnal pleasures that lead to his downfall and destruction of his marital bliss. Indra's wife, Sachi, appears to be a doting wife who loves her husband unconditionally despite all his faults. All the characters are portrayed as down-to-earth human beings possessing their faults and weaknesses.

V

The book also accentuates how societal belief systems affect discretionary power and hinder free thinking. Ahalya's choices and beliefs are unconventional in a patriarchal society. She has the farsightedness to understand Indra's advances and could distinguish between love and physical obsession. She dares to underscore the futility of war, voice her thoughts and feelings regarding love and marriage, which, undoubtedly, contradict the notions of the patriarchal society. The patriarchal society perceives both men and women differently and assigns specific roles to each of them. The marital bliss of Ahalya and Goutam loses its sheen after some time. A clear drifting away and silence is visible: Gautam resumed his works on the

dharma-shastras, imparting lessons to his pupils in the *gurukul*, and performing prolonged meditation. Ahalya could not do so, for she gets caught in the material world performing her roles and responsibilities towards her family and the *gurukul*-students. Her dream of becoming a *Rishika* is shattered consequently. Both of them failed each other miserably, and this creates a void in their relationship.

VI

The Epilogue is a discussion between Ahalya and Sita, the wife of Rama. It focuses on the life and the teachings touching the inner conscience. Ahalya comments that one can be happier if one has less expectation from oneself and also from society. Social setups have confined women to play the stereotypical roles of mother, daughter, and wife. But, according to Ahalya, women belong to the 'bigger world' of 'freedom...knowledge...passion...ambition....' She also spoke about how she has done *prayaschitta* (atonement) through meditation and turned her curse into a blessing. Ahalya advises that salvation can be attained through deep penance, searching inside one's soul. In this final section, she justifies the questions of 'infidelity' and argues that she has not committed any crime but responded to 'the call for life'. She admits that she was not an 'innocent victim'. She was not 'ashamed' about what she did, but she felt 'sorrow' for giving in to the 'temporary pleasure' with Indra. This incident made her miserable, and she falls short of the yardstick she has set for herself. The Epilogue depicts Ahalya's emergence as an independent, confident and matured character who understood the essence of human life and regained her lost glory. Inner peace is the most important thing, and this is the actual truth that one fails to realize in a lifetime. Thus, the Epilogue imparts wisdom about life.

VII

The book articulates the author's deep research about Ahalya, one of the lesser-known characters of Indian mythology. Kavita Kane ventures to depict the minute yet significant incidents that were overlooked or ignored in the earlier versions. It was indeed a challenging task for the author to explore such a topic with very little material and also do justice to the epic, *Ramayana.* The author had an intention to present Ahalya in a way that she has never been portrayed before: Ahalya is an enigma who cannot be judged with the 'seduction- curse-liberation' episodes as mentioned in the *Brahma Purana*. The story of Ahalya encompasses a larger picture of life: She is portrayed as a human being who is bold enough to admit her flaws, suffer the consequences and emerge victorious gaining her lost ground continuing her life dream. Ahalya strikes the inner conscience with her follies and foibles, compelling the reader to observe the events and incidents from an alternative perspective.

POEMS

Mahima Raj*

From the Chasms of My Skin…

From the chasms of my skin
came the lords of the dead
when the cracks could give birth to a thousand lords
the same is the epithalamion of the non-existent.

It was strangely a common ceremony,
being wedded on the streets.
a thousand of them gathered
and none knew each other
although they all looked the same
like mirrors mirroring the mirrors
they all made the same noises
made the same moves
was fond of the same food
be it legs, kidneys, intestine or eyes.

All seemed extremely satisfied
and none stole a thing from the hall.
they didn't seem to miss the music
amidst the chewing, biting, gulping and salivating.
whether the platter was delicious or not,
their tummy had it all.

Their manners that way uniform.
when the feast was over,
the guests were quietly gone,
without any qualms.

They left a few things behind,
a stray here and a dot there.
some things to remember them by
although the invitation clearly mentioned-
"Please bring only your company and your appetite."

Of Tomorrows I Promise None…

Of tomorrows I promise none
of yesterdays I was left anon
only of today, of now, I know

I can scribble a song
I have metaphors branching out in streams
wordy rivets questioning syntax
I have senses out of the dictionary-
of comparisons meeting with disaster
I have rhymes sitting next to each other
without a word
I have images flaunting the feet of ambiguity
mirrors reflecting the matrix of synergy
for I have this and much more
often stringing, tingling, rooting for and against;
the mysterious 'between the lines'
is yet to be masked
like a chameleon-
Is it there or not
Is a question I won't be asked
what is read is no more my concern.
as of tomorrow I shall be gone
of yesterdays I am still anon
of now I promise a poem
for I think I am a petty poet today.

Catch me through the Leaves…

Catch me through the leaves
or let me be
once in a while
I like to wiggle in the breeze
of the sunny rains
in the thundery plains
of creativity.

My veins run upstream
into the passion of my dreams
until there's a presence of you
somewhere down the brook
with archival notes of sundry mind
tilting to the tunes
of feelings of gentry fishes
swarming under my skin,
hinting at the roadmaps
in the darkness of my thoughts
towards a glory of words
that's been waiting to be found
right inside me, deep inside me,
burning on its own

for you to see better.

Bend the rays of the light
into the horizon of the sounds
of your coagulated bones
arching towards eternity
your existence in this and beyond.

Living is an Art, So is Dying…

Living is an art, so is dying,
the former colours only,
the latter a picture,
the blends of which come
from not dying moment after moment.

Portrays render only the half
of all that I combine
as a man, woman, bird, animal,
good, bad, worse and beyond.

Things mine and not
come together to form
fragments of my hazy essence,
needy of a crafty hand
in the act of shuffling
the pieces of actions and motifs
into a bigger puzzle
that had neither edges nor corners.

The beginning and the end
of my essence lie outside of me,
I can hold nothing in this life stream,
when-
living is an art, so is dying,
with only the colour I hurl,
elusive of the final picture.

I am an artist
denied the pleasure
of appreciating my own art.

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Dr. K. Suneetha*

Shadows Playing on my Self

Lurking
in the inner recess of my mind
oft snarls at me,
when deeply engaged with you
an untimely wicked thought,
through the valley of guilt
into the dark abyss of sorrow,
plunging me.

"I could be the best one",
thought of pride hints,
delinking the bond with you
laboriously built.
I dare not think so
even in a dream,
stunning me
by its magnitude.

Doubting thoughts
oft rebuke and ridicule me,
hissing in my ears,
“you cannot achieve”
“you are a failure”
“none loves you”.
Building a ladder
sliding down
the deepest gorges of earth,
however high a place
I alighted onto,
worst possible enemies.

I realize is not me.
Renouncing outer world,
delinking inner thoughts;
two-fold path
To traverse and reach
my true Self!

Shine through me!

Oh! Mighty Sun!
Shine through me,
long night passed
your arrival
heralding.
In my garden
benign buds
awaiting to awaken,
as your soothing
mighty rays touch them with
Divine Splendor!

Oh! Mighty Sun!
Shine through my home
gates mine all open.
Seep through
every door, window
nook and corner
shattering darkness,
annihilating melancholy.
Stopping nowhere
and by none,
flooding me with
Light Supreme!

Oh! Mighty Sun!
Shine through me
dead within without you.
Just a mass of bones
pound of flesh
set of straight teeth
frozen heart
staggering cold.
But lo! The slightest touch
of your encompassing rays
set ablaze
infinite currents
of magnetic radiances
that glow core of my being,
birth anew!

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Anju Sosan George*

Those Tiny Terrible Reminders

If I am to come with you where you are
and see love strewn around like uncared-for furniture,
your memories together bound and stashed away,
If you agree to let me rummage your closets
And pull out your every other day,
Then I could show you what was wasted
in pride, anger or self pity.

Instead, let me take you through death
Climb through hanging pillars of loneliness
Walk farther down the ravines of loss.
If you will and when you will,
Learn to shake off the filigree of despair
wrench your tear-stained eyes open
You will see the trail of reminders
You had brushed away as cobwebs.

I will then ask you why
you wouldn't settle for
A graceful point made without gloating
Why you didn't laugh together at a foolish loss
Or why touch, hug, kiss was sparsely doled
What arrogance reminded you of the promise of time?
When did I ever say I was yours?

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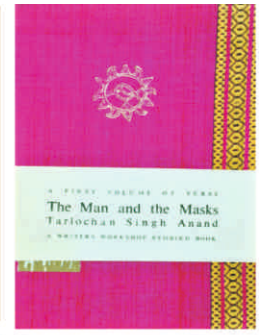

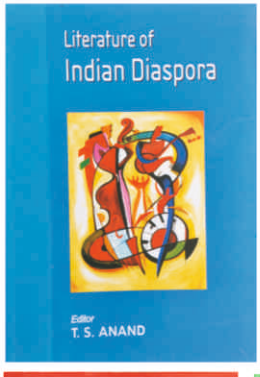

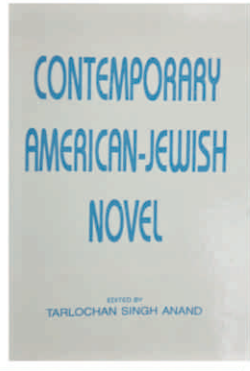

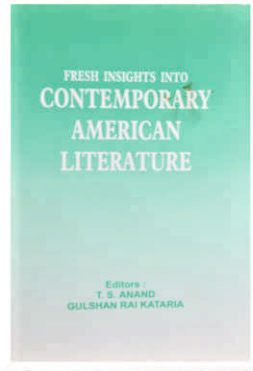

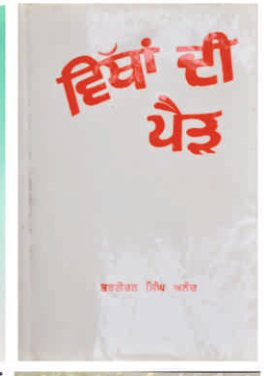

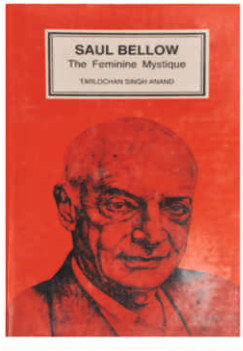

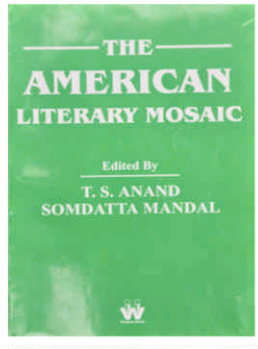

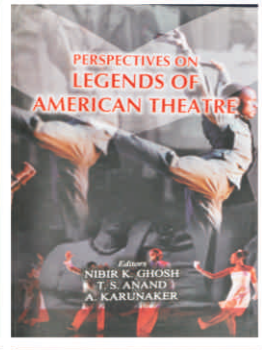

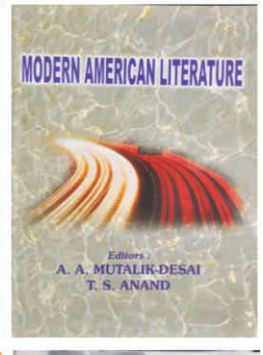

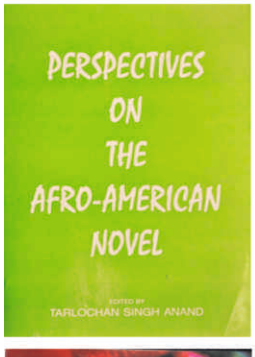

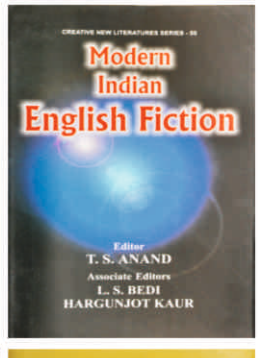

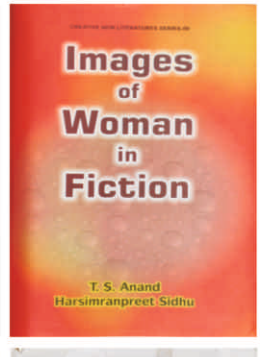

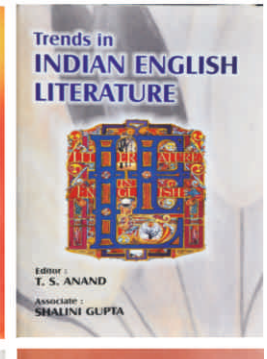

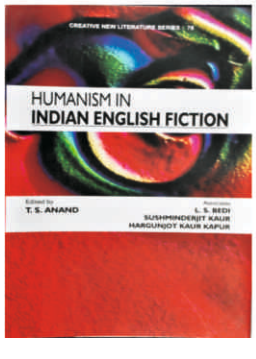

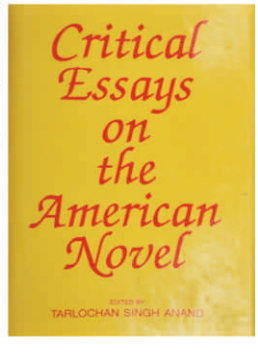

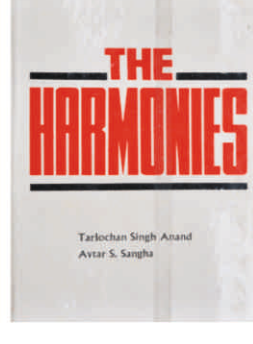

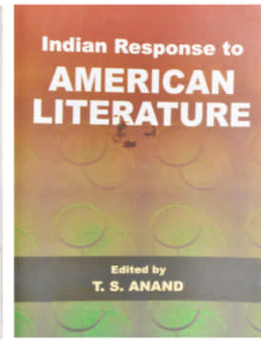

LITERARY VOICE
A Peer Reviewed Journal of English Studies
ISSN 2277-4521
U.G.C. Care Group II Journal
Indexed with Web of Science ESCI, Cosmos, ESJI. I20R, CiteFactor, InfoBase

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Literary Voice
A Peer Reviewer Journal of English Studies
Number 17 Volume 1 March 2022
Title Design: Swarnjit Savi
Photograph: Jas Preet

Indexed with

artCave Printers, Ludhiana. Phone: 0161-2774236, Mobile: 9876668999