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Literary Voice

A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal



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Editorial Note

Literary Voice March 2016 offers a rich feast of articles focussing on the celebrated Indian writers from pre-colonial to the post-colonial eras in which the narratives assume new hues, dimensions and complexities. The researchers have forayed into the complexities of marital relationships and the pathetic condition of women in the fictional world of Rabindranath Tagore, and the psychic torture that afflicts the “queer” relationships in Mahesh Dattani's plays) and how “going native” embodies the horrifying complex sense of vulnerability in the novels of Kamala Markandaya.

On an individual plane M.G. Vassanji lays bare the panorama of love, betrayal of heart and insecurity in the turbulent Kenya of 1950s and how it turns the life of the protagonist, Vikram, into disturbing series of nightmares. Rohinton Mistry brings into sharp focus the precarious predicament of the marginalized Parsis in the wake of the hostile postures of the numerically stronger and intimidating majority.

Juxtaposed with Mistry's portrayal of post-colonial India (*Family Matters*), is another manifestation of the post-colonial writing (Adiga's *The White Tiger*) where the marginalised has to resort to violence and counter attack to secure his voice, space and identity. No doubt, cultural heritage and identity are the important tenets of the post-colonial writings but the definitions of identity and nationalism change for Yangzom Brauen, the contemporary Tibetan writer.

Bhabani Bhattacharya (*So Many Hungers!*) focuses his lenses on how human beings become the prisoners of blinding sense of greed. Utpal Dutt's political allegory, delves deep into the history of ancient Gupta Age in which the ruling class lords over the hapless slaves and common people. The undercurrents in the

volatile India of 1970s have parallels with the situation in ancient India, and the metaphor of "hunting" gains urgency and relevance. Amita Kanekar's 2005 novel looks critically at the system of Devdasis as it cripples women psychologically and turns them into subdued creatures who have to wriggle out of their creaturely existence through the assertion of their rights.

Prof. Puran Singh's significant contribution to the Indian English Poetry has been analysed in an elaborate essay on his *magnum opus*, *The Sisters of the Spinning Wheel* wherein the poet celebrates the land and life of Punjab, and vibrant, rich culture and unique religion of the Sikhs.

With the present issue *Literary Voice* is online, and we can be reached at www.literaryvoice.in.

T. S. Anand
Editor

"Going Native" in Kamala Markandaya's Novels

Debarati Ghosh

Kandra RKK Mahavidalaya
Kandra (Burdwan)

Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies describes the term 'going native' as encompassing "lapses from European behavior, the participation in 'native' ceremonies, or the adoption and even enjoyment of local customs in terms of dress, food, recreation and entertainment" (Ashcroft 115). There are also numerous instances of the "colonizer's fear of contamination by absorption into native life and customs" (Ashcroft *Key Concepts* 115) in contemporary Indian English writing. However, most 19th century Indian English novels represented the white man as having a positive presence or performing a "stabilizing function" (Mukherjee *Perishable Empire* 37). Kamala Markandaya explores the concept of "going native" in her novels *Some Inner Fury*, *The Coffer Dams* and *Pleasure City*. In each of the novels, Markandaya examines the process and the outcome of "going native" through British individuals who come in intimate contact with India and Indians.

In Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury*, Richard is a representative of this term. He accepts the culture of the colonized with quiet composure and even approval. Whether it is an act driven by his love for Mira or whether the novelist contrives to present a British character in a humane light remains a point to be explored. *Some Inner Fury* begins with the awkward entry of Richard, an Englishman, into Mira's Hindu Brahmin household. Mira's father absorbs the initial shock but her mother feels unsure of accommodating him in her orthodox household. Mira, sharing her brother, Kit's displeasure, was furious with the "intruder" looking upon their "religious ceremony with the shameless inquisitive gaze of the tourist" (Markandaya *Some Inner Fury* 4).

Richard, in a bid to be comfortable, swiftly resorts to shirtsleeves and a dhoti and chappal borrowed from a servant. His

desire to adapt is “refreshing” to Mira's mother but her father is wary of his unconventional behaviour. Kit's craving for cold beer is rejected by Richard: “What is beer amid so much beauty?” (Markandaya *Some Inner Fury* 8). He is rather captivated by the sight of the flowering gold mohur trees. Govind mocks Richard: “Not only foreigners- they affect the natives also” (Markandaya *Some Inner Fury* 9). Govind's remark is replete with irony and patriotic fervor and asserts that Indians are not members of an inferior race. The native ritual of midday slumber is also new to Richard. He protests against sleeping at the unusual hour but soon dozes off. Richard also preferred to eat like the other family members.

The English community sent Richard numerous invitations but Richard was content to stay at home. However, he proved to be an avid tourist. He enjoyed the Indian festivals and fairs. He “wandered through the bazaar...went to see the birth of the new year...spent long hours sitting on the steps of the tank...” (Markandaya *Some Inner Fury* 26). Occasionally Richard bought useless items from the bazaar only to enjoy haggling over prices with the few Indian words he knew. The ancient carvings inside an old cave overwhelm Richard and he solemnly wonders why it was visited by so few people. In a Brahmin restaurant, Richard took off his shoes and sat on the floor. Mira learns of Richard's knowledge of stories from the Mahabharata when they go to see a stage performance and Richard easily follows it. Further, he shows a deep respect for the Indian traditions when he expresses his wish to meet Mira's parents, for it was the “usual thing...before one marries” (Markandaya *Some Inner Fury* 124).

Richard embarks with Mira on a long aimless tour across India with only one change of clothes like an Indian ascetic. They often walked deep into the interior villages and relished local food. Richard chose to stay in the thatched hut of local communities. During the monsoons, they visited the hills where Richard enjoyed the experience of travelling on the open bus.

Mira's father's comments regarding Richard's unconventional behaviour suggest his awareness of the “colonizer's fear of contamination by absorption into native life and customs” (Ashcroft *Key Concepts* 115). This fear is particularly

associated with romantic liaisons with “'native' peoples” (Ashcroft *Key Concepts* 115) since it may lead to the contamination of the colonizer's pure blood. However, Richard's romantic relationship with Mira is an instance of romance blended with History which has been a dominant strand of Indian narrative fiction. If Mira merely represents the exotic for Richard, how can one explain Richard's indifference to the blazing afternoon sun or to the malarial mosquitoes? It then seems not to be a “gaze” but a real attempt to interact on the part of the coloniser.

In Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffey Dams* too, the concept of “going native” holds true for Helen who champions the displaced tribals. Rather than the dam her husband, Clinton, is building, she is interested in the well being of the local tribesmen. For Clinton the native is a racial stereotype and there could be “simply no communication” (Markandaya *Coffey Dams* 6) between them. Ngugi Thiong'O' says in this context that “Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication” (267). Thus, in the absence of communication never can the twain, the East and the West, meet.

Helen's intimacy with the “uncivilized” tribals amazes Clinton as he often saw her accompanied by them on her late night walks or surrounded by them in their own compound. She clears Clinton's puzzlement: “I just think of them as human beings, that's all” (Markandaya *Coffey Dams* 6) and advises him “to go beyond their skins” (Markandaya *Coffey Dams* 6). Helen is visibly upset when she finds broken pottery pieces in their compound and realizes that they belonged to a tribal settlement which had encamped on the site. That the pebble-smooth pieces belonged to some woman who had now been displaced along with her entire community despairs her. Helen comes upon the uprooted tribal group during a solitary walk. The new settlement welcomed her with warmth and every time she visited them henceforth, “natural springs of intercourse opened up” (Markandaya *Coffey Dams* 39). She marvelled at their “full and rounded- out living” (Markandaya *Coffey Dams* 39). She realized that England had “starved her” whereas India had fulfilled her. She enjoyed and responded to the “colour and confusion” (Markandaya *Coffey Dams* 39) that emanated from the undemanding life of the

community.

Millie, wife of one of Clinton's colleagues, hated "living in the tropics" (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 34) and often drove down to parties and upmarket clubs. Helen's rejection of her invitations compels Millie to accuse Helen of "going native" (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 36). Helen's preference for the primitive tribal settlements to that of Millie's "civilized" outings confounds her.

Helen befriends Bashiam, a local tribesman for "the information she sought of a country and a people who intrigued her" (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 41). She believed that the tribals "aren't different clay" (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 45). She eagerly becomes a champion of the cause of the native workers when she refuses to go to a party at a time when the workers' pay had been temporarily stopped as a punitive measure. She calls them "poor devils", an expression of affection and frustration and carries cartons of food to them. The indifferent attitude of the tribe in the face of starvation fascinates Helen. Surprised at Clinton's cold indifference to the plight of the tribals, she appeals to him "Don't human beings matter anything to you?" (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 107).

Helen's involvement with the natives finds its culmination in a physical union with Bashiam. He reminds her of her instinctive senses by encouraging her to "smell" the rain in the mountains. Unable to do so, Helen blames the materialistic society of England but she feels happy when she is able to sense "an enlarged awareness, of oils and essences that the season distributed..." (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 213). In fact, the forest with its "density, the rampant furious growth, affected Helen in a way that the ordered charm of a restrained civilization would never do" (Markandaya *Coffer Dams* 25). She picked up the local dialect in a short time. Her seeking of the native culture is also exemplified in her interest in bird trapping, a local skill. Bill Ashcroft opines that "access is gained ... through a process by which the speaker absorbs, unavoidably, the culture from which the language emerges" (*Key Concepts* 278).

In *Pleasure City* we find yet another instance of "going native" in the Englishman, Tully. Tully's great uncle, Arthur Copeland calls India a "strange country" which "wraps itself

round you" (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 34). Here we find a strange deep rooted fear of the Orient in the European mind. Literary texts have often reiterated the irresistible temptation of the exotic East. It is basically the fear of "going native".

Tully is amazed by Rikki speaking fluent English. Full of tenderness for the young Indian boy, Tully asks him to build him a boat, which later becomes the vehicle of numerous voyages for the two. Rikki takes Tully to a wrestling match, a popular entertainment of the native masses. Here, the excitement of the people is too palpable for Tully to ignore: "In less time than is believable he has abandoned his country's colours, and with it his restraint, and is bouncing with the rest" (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 70). Copying his Indian colleague, Tully bundles up notes into a handkerchief and thrusts it into the winner's hands.

On learning that Tully would stay in Avalon after some renovations, Rikki remarks that it was quite livable for "walls, after all, are standing" (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 82). Tully, amused, remarks that indiscipline and disorder are repulsive to the British psyche, and perhaps that was "one reason, perhaps the only respectable one, why we took over your country" (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 83). He generously invites Rikki to visit Avalon, declaring that he abhorred keeping Rikki a stranger in his own land.

On learning Rikki's skill in laying mosaics, Tully asks him to design one round the swimming pool at Avalon. When they decide to plant an orchard Rikki tells Tully of the indigenous trick of discovering water with a special forked twig. Though unbelieving, Tully goes along with it and when Rikki does find water bubbling underground, the mundane world seems to fall away from him in amazement. Rikki teaches Tully another native superstition of the fish's wishbone.

On the gala day at Shalimar, the chief guest feels a "gross, but irrepressible" (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 105) pleasure to see Tully stand to attention as the Indian flag unfurled and the national anthem was played. Tully is instinctively aware of the old patriot's "ancient bruises" (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 106) and describes it as "Advancing beyond the language of contemplation" which, for him is a pleasant "voyage of discovery"

(Markandaya *Pleasure City* 85). Perhaps this is why, unlike the other Europeans, Tully was “flourishing”.

Realizing the distance between himself and Tully, Rikki remarks: “There is an ocean between us” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 158). But Tully finds it hard to admit. It was only on their tranquil journeys on the boat that Tully opened his heart to Rikki. Clearly Rikki had taken Tully under his care and *vice versa*. This is exemplified by yet another instance. One evening, while Tully and Boyle relaxed on the beach, Boyle objects to Rikki's surfing. Tully asserts that Rikki was free to while away his free time like other employed persons. To prove his point, he suddenly stands up and asks Boyle to accompany him to the malfunctioning purification plant. Boyle asks Tully to relax but he is disgruntled. He remembers another occasion when he had proudly reminded Tully that the sun never set on the British Empire, but Tully had only joked about it. Boyle is confounded by such odd behaviour by someone of Tully's colonial ancestry. This faith in the fair-mindedness of the white master is a recurring trend in post colonial Indian fiction.

When Rikki asks Tully about his plans of returning home, Tully merely answers, “I feel at home here” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 193). However, Boyle did not approve of Tully's reluctance to “stand by his colours” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 195). He opined that “No empire had been built by the builders going native” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 195). Boyle did not understand that if Tully “sporting a codpiece, it was not a symptom of going native as Boyle feared, but a gesture of support to a local industry” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 195). In fact, Tully was often seen in “unbuttoned shirts or none at all” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 102).

In spite of their friendship, Tully and Rikki are at odds regarding their reactions to the episode of the white woman who thought she had been violated by an Indian man. The two are reconciled after recollecting many other ambiguities in their respective cultures, such as the Virgin Mary and her son, and the ravishment of the Indian emperor's grandmother by a moonbeam. Thus, differences may appear but wisdom lies in integrating the human connection with the personal consciousness.

Tully realizes that at times Rikki became the face of the

entire native community “pressed against a window, looking in” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 257). Nobody could be sure of them or what they may be roused to. Even Tully's grandfather had lived in Avalon with an 8-pounder gun close at hand. The sweet mangoes lovingly brought by Rikki for Tully, could not take away this bitter taste of distrust that had existed between the colonizer and the colonized. Tully ate the “awkward fruit” without knife and spoon on Rikki's insistence that implements spoiled its flavour. He also learnt to sit on the ground without a log or chair in between.

The swimming pool, the cherub and the surrounding mosaic suggest the special bond that may be forged between two individuals belonging to two races, cultures and countries. In fact, Tully had not thought it possible to “feel such pain” (Markandaya *Pleasure City* 374) during leave taking. That the East and West may meet under certain circumstances, seems to be the optimistic message of the novelist. However, neither Richard, nor Helen, nor Tully, like Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (perhaps the most commonly known example of an outsider going native), is shown as embodying the “complex sense of vulnerability, primitivism and horror of the process” (Ashcroft *Key Concepts* 115).

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Amita Kanekar's *A Spoke in the Wheel*: A Study of Materialisation of Devadasi Tradition and Cultural Objects

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Devadasi is an ancient Hindu tradition whose seeds seem to sprout with the myth of beheading Renuka, the wife of sage Jamadagni. Being dedicated to 'Yellama goddess,' Devadasis need to remain unmarried throughout their lives and see Parsuram in every man coming to them for sexual satisfaction, without asking him anything in return. As a religious institution, Devadasi tradition is still prevalent in many parts of India like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka where parents offer their girls in temples to become a Devadasi. Amita Kanekar's *A Spoke in the Wheel* is a novel where the glimpses of the deteriorating functioning of Devadasi tradition find sufficient space that was once known to be a cultural heritage of India. During the colonial period of India, the British commercialised the traditional practices of Devadasis. As a result of this, it became difficult to differentiate Devadasi from prostitutes in the contemporary depiction. It is the storming approach of people towards the materialistic things that has mainly objectified cultural and traditional values. This reduction in status and honour of the Devadasi finds expression in Kanekar's novel, *A Spoke in the Wheel*, when Upali confronts the dance performance of Sutanuka, a Devadasi, in Ujjayani temple.

Reminding the earlier prestige of Devadasis, Upali says, ". . . in earlier times a priestess would have been akin to a ruler, an incarnation of the goddess- nobody could have dared to ask for an encore. But now she was the slave of the god" (Kanekar 147).

Cultural objects have continually been treated as a matter of study for understanding past and present occasions. Their practice, construction and distinctive features recount alternate stories depending on their usage. But, in the extant setup, its usage takes hold of materialistic approach, incorporating extensive entities that divulge standards of different communities or cultures at a given time. Individuals enduring fixation with these artifacts turn it into a medium of entertainment. This materialisation of culture becomes one of the chief elements that draw the focus of a number of scholars to study the diverse fields relating to Arts and Cultures. The book, *Asian Material Culture*, mentions that, ". . . materiality of culture, unique to the self and shared, is a phenomenon that clearly manifests personal and collective identity through objects, their construction processes and their usage" (12). Thus, cultural objects and their usage communicate peculiar as well as mutual identity of a community, group, organisation and people at a given time. It is all about identity, constructing out of an object that at the end offers an individual a sense of belonging and acquaintance with the surrounding and in relationship to themselves. Thus, economy can be comprehended as having a very essential association with culture on the whole.

In the contemporary picture, the commercialisation of cultural entities by individuals, for practical and mystical loyalties, directly relate it to the globalised production network. In this globalised network they are produced, circulated and marketed, considering the interest of people. This political economy of cultural objects generally articulates the stories or arguments that withstand the disparity of social associations.

a political economy of culture challenges the notion that popular culture is foisted upon an unsuspecting public who then has no choice but to consume it. Second, it also challenges the idea that all popular culture is created

equal, and that consumers cannot tell the difference between cultural objects. Third, . . . a political economy of popular culture challenges the long-held view of some that popular culture cannot possibly contain anything of real value (Bell 34-35).

Thus, it is the acceptance and claim of culture which has left a person in confusion, having no other alternative other than to adopt it. Its materialised usage distorts the line of alterations amongst other cultures and puts all cultural objects in the same line, where culture loses its tangible spirit which it holds since many centuries. Taking the illustrations from the functioning of Sanchi monastery, Kanekar in *A Spoke in the Wheel*, symbolises the fluctuating sensibilities of a culture which is assured to alter with time. The monastery that has once operated under the guideline of monks now came under the power of King Ashoka. She writes, “. . . Sanchi was a different kind of monastery. The first set up not by monks, but by a king. . .”(79). Similar kind of materiality in the culture or religion is represented by Kanekar as:

The essence of Dhamma is in fact indispensable. But it is still important to understand the society at the time of the Buddha, so that we understand how Dhamma was born and also the changes that have taken place since. After all, the Dhamma that we- any of us- follow today is not the exact one the Buddha preached. (88).

In the same way, the clash between past and present becomes visible in the novel when debating over the significance of Dhamma, Upali says to Mogalliputta that Dhamma is still relevant but it has changed its form to manifest. It is the changing requirements of people that compel religion or culture to change its form.

According to Karl Marx, the laws of economic life are bound to transform with time, because of its relation with social conditions, development of productive power and the laws which govern them. When society is moving towards the period of development, it tends to be the subject of other laws. For Marx, no precise theory of economy ever existed. It is the accessibility of dissimilar social structure that makes economic theory abstract

(Marx 24-26). Generally, it is the social pressure on an individual that compels him to go out for work. But in the time of high unemployment people are forced to do jobs at a lower pay rate. This pressure of economy on an individual has been reflected by Kanekar in *A Spoke in the Wheel*. The economic stress, which compels a number of parents to sell their daughters in the market of pimps for becoming a Devadasi as represented in the novel.

By depicting the very plight of economic stress, Amita Kanekar in *A Spoke in the Wheel*, throws light on the way in which peasants or working class has been victimised by the elite members of society in the name of religion. In the name of yagna, these people collect money forcefully from the powerless class of society and profess that this money is their contribution. “Everytime a yagna comes around, the peasants have to be threatened, their so-called contribution taken away by force, and punishments meted out” (Kanekar 258). At the same time, Kanekar portrays the character of Sutanuka, a Devadasi, who is exploited by the elite members of society in the veil of religion. A Devadasi, who within this tradition is supposed to offer her services to God, is represented by Kanekar enrolled to entertain men in temple premises.

Sutanuka began to dance, slow at first, then faster, stamping the ground furiously, ignoring the crowd which had raised its heads, which was entranced even when she whirled too close and forced them backwards. Jasmine darted off her heavily garlanded plait as it whipped about her; one flew into Ananda's mouth before he realized it was open (147).

The similar kind of social and economic pressure is evident in the institution like prostitution, where girls are admitted violently. In order to survive and serve their family members, women are generally forced into the professions like prostitution and other illicit practices. According to Tucker, these women are housewives, widows, single women with children, and young girls, who are in this profession for one or the other reason. It is mainly the lack of education, skill, awareness and opportunity among this class of women, which forces them to

indulge into such inhumane circumstances where they have to sell themselves so as to continue their livelihood. Tucker in *Rural Women's Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and illiteracy*, mentions that both registered and clandestine group of sex workers indulge in this activity for the sake of cash, goods or favors. Actually, it is the economic stress and extreme poverty which pushes them into the profession of prostitution. On the other hand, the stigma associated with this profession circles sex worker with much insecurity which pertains to the social ostracisation and legal action against them. Along with economic pressure, sex workers have to face extreme social pressure to hide their identity.

The tradition of Devadasi is one of the institutions that promote sexual exploitation of women for religion and tradition. The institutions, operating in the name of tradition since centuries materialise the tradition of Devadasi where sexual services are offered in exchange for money and other worldly favours. The glimpse of women's exploitation for religion, tradition and culture is well expressed by Kanekar through the characterisation of Sutanuka (a Devadasi) in *A Spoke in the Wheel*. While portraying the sexual exploitation of Sutanuka, Kanekar writes, "A few men converged upon the priests, clearly negotiating for private blessings" (147). It means that Devadasis are not only offering their services to God but as well as other male members of society. It is for the sake of religion and tradition that these girls are admitted to temple in order to serve God, offering their daily prayers. But the truth is far from it. In the shroud of religion these girls are expected to serve men sexually.

Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work, mentions that practices like *Mooi-jai* (practiced in Chinese society), *restavek* (practiced in Haiti), *trokosi* (practiced in southeastern Ghana), Devadasi (in India) and Geisha (in Japan) involves children who are nurtured in the care of people and institutions rather than their families, where traces of prostitution can be easily found (101). In these and other such societies, girl child is taken to be a burden sold out to higher earning members of the society. These higher institutions are working as a form of trafficking in women and children, where women are moved to new locations for sexual

services. The main reason behind this is the economic pressure on some societies which create opportunities for the rich to take advantage of their low position.

A similar sort of exploitation finds expression in Kanekar's novel where girls are sexually sacrificed by the predators in the name of tradition as well as culture. The tradition, which has been once known to be the cultural heritage of one's country, now has been used as a medium to earn money. In India, the tradition of the Devadasis existed as a ritualised prostitution which can be traced back to the early 3rd century. And its evidences can be found in the 10th century texts and inscriptions where they are depicted as temple girls/dancers who are supported by income from temple authorities and accepted endowments from temple patrons. But, this tradition has flourished up until British colonisation. During colonial times, the tradition of Devadasi first became commercialised. Right then, the downfall in Devadasi tradition began, because Britishers took control of the temple functioning as well as treasure which compelled Devadasis to work outside temple premises to fulfill their regular needs.

Comparing Devadasis with prostitutes, Arun Kumbhare in *Women of India: Their Status Since the Vedic Times*, mentions that former is purely perpetuated in the name of Yellamma (Goddess), whereas latter is purely commercialised. Although both of them have the same motivation of survival. He mentions that, "Among Banjaras of Ratlam and Mandso districts, prostitution of the eldest daughter is compulsory" (94). It is this blind faith, superstition and illiteracy among people which compels a number of parents to send their daughters into prostitution. Today, it seems that the differentiation line between prostitutes and Devadasi-turned prostitute has intermingled. Kumbhare argues that in Devadasi system, one is born to be a Devadasi, whereas this is not the case with prostitutes. In prostitution, one enters into it by choice as well as by circumstances but not to follow any tradition. On the other side, prostitution does not have any religious ground as the Devadasi system does (94).

This blurring of the functioning of Devadasi and prostitutes finds expression in Kanekar's novel, where she writes,

“Ananda turned and asked, 'Is there any difference between a devadasi and a courtesan, except that one is in a temple?’” (152). Here, the confusion regarding the actual working of Devadasi in temple is questioned by the character of Ananda, a monk. He considers Devadasi equal to prostitute, the only difference is that one is serves in temple and the other, in the red light areas. Thus, Kanekar represents artfully the materialisation of Devadasi tradition. By showing, how the women who are once devoted to temple deities are now used to perform publicly, to entertain men.

Mentioning the conducting results by the Indian Health Organization, Kumbhare, writes that 15 to 20 percent Devadasi girls are identified in Mumbai's red-light areas. In which ninety percent of the Devadasis are belong to Harijans community, as Yellamma is the Goddess of Harijians (94). As mentioned earlier, the myth of beheading Renuka, the head placed on the body of Renuka happened to be that of a Harijan woman. So, most of the girls in the Devadasi tradition hail from the low caste communities. It is their devotion towards Yellamma, which forces a number of girls into this tradition. According to Dr. Gilada,

the devadasis constitute about 25% of the total population of prostitutes in India. Even today about 1,000 young girls are dedicated to the goddess Yellamma on Megha Purnima day at Saundatti. . . the biggest festival of the year in the areas where the temple of goddess Yellamma stands. . . girls are dedicated on every purnima day of every month to goddess Yellamma to become devadasi, alias, a prostitute (Kumbhare 94).

Karen Kirst-Ashman in *Understanding Generalist Practice*, argues that it is difficult to attain social and economic justice in real life. As it is distributed following the status of an individual in society (17). The interaction of an individual with society is based upon two levels. First, is the Micro level, and, second one is the Macro level. In the Micro level, individual is generally indulged in interactions with peer group or other immediate work groups. While in the Macro level, individual is supposed to communicate with larger organisations and systems. These systems actually engage an individual with the social, economic, and political

forces which affect his way of life. And in the mid of these two levels lie familial events, where individual is expecting high treatment and special attention from their family members. It is mainly in the Macro level, where individual confronts poverty, discrimination and social pressure. These forces are one of the root causes of many problems confronted by an individual.

In *A Spoke in the Wheel*, Kanekar through the character of Tara, the nurse of Siddhartha, brings forth the role of economy that determines individual's position in personal as well as social arenas. The tribal men and women of those times have been treated like animals. Men from such communities are generally tortured or kept as slaves supposed to have been offered to gods like wild animals. In his conversation with Siddhartha, Tara asks him, “Do you know how many slaves were offered every year in your grandfather's time?” (128). In the same way, tribal women are raped, made to be the royal concubines or are kept as servants in the royal households. The exploitation and victimisation of the lowborn women in that time is represented by the character of Mala in the novel, is an eleven year-old girl who is raped by a young drunken aristocrat and his friends. The lowborn women are bought and sold like cattle by the aristocrats. As evident in the novel, “ . . . the death of eleven-year-old Mala, slave in the house of one of the rajas. She died after being raped by the son of the house and his drunken friends” (131). At the same time, through the character of Nagamunda, Kanekar sets an example of how women are used as an object of bribe for the political interests of aristocrats. The double standards and hypocrisy of the ruling class is evidently represented by Kanekar. Their elevated status in society prompts them to possess the body of any woman they want.

Generally, it is the lack of economic resources, illiteracy, male gender preference, poverty, and lack of dowry for girls that leave parents with no choice other than selling their girls. According to Gisele Maynard Tucker, in the rural communities of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the profession of prostitution is considered as to release themselves from economic stress (86). The women belonging to non- Devadasi community seem to dedicate their daughters to temple as a means of earning income. On the

other hand, older Devadasis usually become beggars at the market places or other crowded areas to feed themselves. This reflects the pitiable condition of women who have been used as an object and later when they lose their utility they are made outcasts.

In this way, the tradition of Devadasi has lost its real essence which has earlier been imparted to them. These traditions have been materialised and connote a completely altered meaning in the present time, where they no longer seem to hold their religious or aesthetic essence. As a result of this, Devadasis are looked upon in the present as mere prostitutes who sell their bodies to earn money. In the present scenario, it has become quite difficult to distinguish Devadasi from that of the prostitutes as the thin line of differentiation marked by the cultural heritage has been blurred by the materialisation of this tradition. As presented in the novel, when Devadina, confesses his love toward a Devadasi named Sutanuka to Upali. In his reply, Upali says, "In what world was this lad living? A devadasi- a temple prostitute!" (83). Here, one can see the way people consider Devadasi, a living whore, who offers sexual services in the guise of serving God.

Prostitution is one of the foremost bases of women's exploitation, where women have no right over their body and sexuality. She is merely taken to be an object of sexual desire of men and likewise is sold, bought and exchanged as a commodity having no identity of her own. Margaret A. Baldwin locates prostitution as the chief cause of women's exploitation, where she is subjected to unwanted sex with thousands of men every year (Baldwin 296).

It is primarily because of the lack of education and awareness among women which traps them under the patriarchal structure. It is the ignorance from the side of woman that gives man an opportunity to control her life on his own terms. And gradually, the patriarchal holders get success to mould her life according to their will, where she finds no space to speak. Ramkrishna Mandal in *Women in North East India*, states that,

In spite of all the legislations Women are still victimized mercilessly at alter of greed, customs, traditions and religion. The diabolic discrimination

against women which is derived from religion, customary traditions, etc. still continues. It paves a path for the modern men to exploit women (121).

Hence, one can see that in spite of having law against women exploitation, women are still not aware about them. It is precisely the absence of awareness among women that make them victims of these predominant desecrations. At the same time, it is the upshot of societal structure that does not permit women to raise her voice against discrimination. Even law seems stranded to regulate the violating acts against women. The instances of women having no right over their body is apparent in Kanekar's *A Spoke in the Wheel*, when Sutanuka, a Devadasi, rejects the marriage proposal of her lover Devadina because of her being a Devadasi. She says, "It is not a matter of what I want! This temple is holy, devotees flock here for my blessings, my advice, my body. . . . I know no other world" (151).

Feminists are of the view that women are equal to men in every aspect. It is indeed the dearth of accessibility of resources and inferior education of women that makes them rational slaves to men. It may be the fright of losing their presiding position in society that coerces men to limit women socially, culturally, sexually and economically. Now, a women needs to struggle for her own rights and work in the direction so as to gain liberation from the rulers of patriarchy. The only way to avert the curbed position of women in society is by providing education to women. It is only through education that women are supposed to raise their voice against irrational practices which have altered women's condition mercilessly since centuries.

This succumbing and subdued side of women has been portrayed by Kanekar in *A Spoke in the Wheel*, when Sutanuka, a Devadasi, rejects the offer of Devadina, for fear of the Viceroy. If she had tried to resist the blind faith of Devadasi tradition, life would have been different for her. It is the submissive nature of Sutanuka like women that gives air to the materialisation of tradition. One cannot completely blame the owners of patriarchy to subjugate women and limit their role in every sphere of society. Women are equally responsible for their condition, the way; they

tolerate all discrimination against them. As depicted in the novel, it is the tradition of tolerance that gives men an opportunity to materialise tradition like Devadasi, which is considered as the cultural heritage of the country. So, women must assert their right to live on their own terms. It is only a woman who can get herself out from this subjugating position of hers by asserting herself and her rights.

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THE WHITE TIGER: THE SUBALTERN'S JOURNEY FROM PERIPHERY TO CENTRE

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Post colonialism is not only a historical tag, rather it is a kind of emancipating concept which gives us the freedom to re/read and re/interpret even the canonical literary texts on our own terms and Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*, can be read at various levels unfolding multiple layers of meanings and interpretation. Within the gamut of post colonial subaltern studies, this novel is a mile stone to bring into notice of the global readers the issue of the subalterns, their plight and their endeavors to come to the mainstreams. My aim in this article is to aver how a subaltern, Balram Halwai, the son of a rickshaw puller, moves from periphery to centre, from rags-to-riches removing all the barriers and adopting a wicked method, like Macbeth, compelled by circumstances and allured by ambition.

It was Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist critic who used the term 'subaltern' for the first time with reference to any person or group of inferior rank in respect of race, religion, caste, creed, ethnicity and gender. Subalternity is a condition of subordination brought about by economic, social, cultural or linguistic dominance. To quote Gramsci's words: " Subaltern classes refer fundamentally to any low rank person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation" (23). Therefore, subaltern studies are a study of dominance and power. It studies who is powerful and who is powerless. It is a matter of hegemony or dominance and how power can be transferred by the subalterns subverting the authority who have hegemony and power.

Aravind Adiga in his Booker Prize winning novel, *The*

White Tiger gives a satirical picture of the Indian society. His paramount motive in the novel is to highlight how a large number of people are leading a miserable and poverty-ridden life, living in slums and sleeping on pavements whereas a select few with money and power are living lavish, extravagant and showy life styles enjoying all facilities and techno-comforts. So there are two contradictory pictures of India: the India of the subalterns and the India of the elites, the India of Darkness and the India of the Light (Adiga: 10). In postcolonial subaltern discourse, the concept of class is construed as a binary division which is conspicuously visible in rural as well as in urban India. It is a fact that 1.8 percent of the Indian society is holding 80 percent of India's wealth and the rich-poor gap is widening day by day, embittering the rich-poor relation. This ever widening divide reaches a saturation point where the subaltern, the have not, the down-trodden, the exploited, the marginalized, the poor whatever we may call him-- revolts, becomes violent, adopts foul means and reverses his position with the rich and powerful. Thus the rich-poor relationship is deconstructed.

Adiga uses epistolary technique which has a long history in English Literature beginning with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. The protagonist, Balram Halwai, writes a series of seven letters in seven nights to the Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, who is about to visit Bangalore to hold a meeting with successful entrepreneurs. The narrative moves forward with each letter:

I offer to tell you, free of charge, the truth about Bangalore by telling you my life's story... And our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs. Thousands and thousands of them. Especially in the field of technology. And these entrepreneurs – we entrepreneurs – have set up all these outsourcing companies that virtually run America now (4).

Letters are addressed to the Chinese Premier because the narrator thinks: “the future of the world lies with the yellow man

and the brown man now that our erstwhile master, the White skinned man has wasted himself through buggery, mobile phone usage and drug abuse” (4). According to him “The Chinese authority deserves better treatment as the English did not succeed in their mission to rule over them”. “Only three nations have never let themselves be ruled by foreigners: China, Afghanistan and Abyssinia. These are the three nations I admire” (4).

Balram's life is a long and difficult odyssey from a poor origin in the village of Laxmangarh towards establishing himself as a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore. He hails from an impoverished family of a low caste, so consequently he has to bear shame and humiliation as his lot which is explicit in the pertinent questions he asks: “If we were Halwais, then why was my father not making sweets but pulling rickshaw? Why did I grow up breaking coal and wiping tables, instead of eating *gulabjamuns* and sweet pastries when and where I chose to? Why was I lean and dark and cunning, and not fat and creamy-skinned and smiling, like a boy raised on sweets would be?” (38). He is so unfortunate that he is not given an official name by his parents. He is simply called Munna which means a boy. Another interpretation reveals satire inherent in his name Munna because a blue eyed boy of the rich parents deserves such a name, not a neglected boy like him whose father is a rickshaw puller and an ailing mother who will leave this world unnoticed, untreated and unlamented. He himself comments about his parents: “She is very ill. He lies in bed and spews blood. She's got no time to name me. He is a rickshaw puller. He has got no time to name me” (9). So it was left to his school teacher to name him who wanted to name him Ram, but it was ruled out as there was another student with the same name. Then Balram was suggested who according to the teacher, is “sidekick of god Krishna” (10). Balram's father who himself has been living like a donkey wants one of his sons to live like a man (19) and sends him to school to uplift himself through education. Balram performs well in school and the school inspector calls him the White Tiger, of the jungle because of his performance during one of the school inspections.

It is the dowry system which compels Balram to leave his

school. His family has to borrow money from Stork for the dowry of his cousin-sister Reena and Stork makes all the family members work as bonded laborers in lieu of the money. "The family had taken a big loan from the Stork so that they could have a lavish dowry for my cousin-sister. Now the Stork had called in his loan. He wanted all the members of the family working for him and he had me in school, or his collector had. So they had to hand me over too. I was taken to the tea shop" (23). He is pulled out of school to work at the tea shop to clean utensils, crush coal and wipe dirty tables of tea where he gets better education than he could have got at any school. Dowry system is a source of exploitation of the poor by the poor too, which is illustrated through the marriage of Balram's brother Kishan:

It was one of the *good* marriages. We had the boy, and we screwed the girl's family hard. I remember exactly what we got in dowry from the girl's side, and thinking about it even now makes my mouth fill up with water: five thousand rupees cash, all crisp new unsoiled notes fresh from the bank, plus a Hero bicycle, plus a thick gold necklace for Kishan (30).

The zamindari system is another means of exploitation in rural India. Adiga gives a graphic description how the underprivileged are exploited by the zamindars. Stork, Buffalo, Wild Boar and Raven as they are named by Balram out of contempt, exploit the poor to the last dregs. These zamindars are hand and glove with regional political parties for their vested interests. The net result of this nexus between the landlords and the local politicians is that the subaltern is reduced mere to a skeleton system due to poverty and starvation which is evident through the description of his father's lean body:

My father's spine was a knotted rope, the kind that women use in village to pull water from wells; the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog's collar; cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh, ran down his chest and waist, reaching down below his hipbones into his buttocks. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen (17).

In the fictional world of Adiga the feeling of castism and communalism is rife everywhere. A man of low caste and religious minority has to hide his caste or religion to get a good job. Ram Persad, who is driver no. one in Stork's house in Dhanbad and whom Balram exploits latter on, is actually a Muslim, but he has to hide his religion and change his name to save his family from starvation. Balram too wants to become a driver as driving is better than cleaning tables at the tea shop. Moreover he is ambitious by nature and through driving he hopes to find a foothold to climb the ladder of progress. When Balram goes to Stork to get the job as a driver, the latter asks him: "Halwai.....What caste is that, top or bottom?" (37). The landlords make all the inquiries about the person and his family background whom they hire as servant since they have the fear of being kidnapped by the Naxals. Balram reveals:

He must have phoned his man in Laxmangarh. And then that man must have gone and spoken to Kusum, and asked the neighbors about us, and phoned back: "He's got a good family. They've never made any trouble. Father died some years ago of TB. He was a rickshaw-puller. Brother is in Dhanbad too, a worker in the tea shops. No history of supporting Naxals or other terrorists. And they don't move about: we know *exactly* where they are". That last piece of information was *very* important. They had to know where my family was, at all times. I have not told you yet, have I, about what the Buffalo did to his domestic servant. The one who was supposed to guard his infant son, who got kidnapped by the Naxals and then tortured and killed. The servant was one of our caste, sir. A Halwai. I had seen him once or twice when I was a boy. (39-40).

He succeeds in becoming a driver breaking the rules of his caste. Being a subaltern he is humiliated everywhere. Even as a driver, at Stork's household he is insulted by family members as well as the servants. A Nepali servant scolds him when he handles roughly two Pomeranians in chains: "Don't pull the chain so hard! They are worth than you are!" (47). Mukesh and Pinky Madam humiliate him. Pinky Madam rebukes him: "You're so filthy! Look

at you, look at your teeth, look at your clothes! There's paan all over your teeth, and there are red spots on your shirt. It is disgusting! Get out -- clean up the mess you've made in the kitchen and get out!" (85). Out of mortification, he asks himself: "Why had my father never told me not to scratch my groin? Why had my father never taught me to brush in milky foam? Why had he raised me to live like an animal? Why do all the poor live amid such filth, such ugliness?" (88).

Balam feels exploited and marginalized in all spheres of life in the hands of the rich and powerful. He is humiliated equally by the servants and the masters. He is made a scapegoat in a hit-and-run case, when Pinky Madam kills a poor and hapless boy with Honda City car. He understands that it is not possible to shine in life as long as he is in the powerless position of a subaltern and at the receiving end. He takes a hard, risky and wicked decision to attain power and establish his voice coming out of the darkness of poverty and powerlessness. His metamorphosis from a poor and powerless Munna, Balam Halwai, Balam driver to Ashok Sharma, a successful entrepreneur, is a subaltern's struggle to find a foothold first and then reach the mainstream.

The novelist makes the use of the Rooster Coop which is an effective metaphor to describe the position of the underdogs. In India millions of people are occupied in various jobs delivering furniture, carrying back the cash payment, driving cars for their masters with bags full of money and diamonds. These people never run away with the money or merchandise, even though the money or merchandise may be worth of their one years' or two years' salary or it may put an end to their poverty or they can start a new life with it. "It's because 99.9 percent of us are caught in the Rooster Coop just like those poor guys in the poultry market". (103) It is such a strong Rooster Coop that they cannot break it out, in spite of being conscious of their vulnerability and exploitation. The novelist explains:

Go to Old Delhi, behind the Jama Masjid, and look at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly colored roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a

belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench—the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of a recently chopped-up chicken, still oleaginous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country.

The Rooster Coop is a symbol of the pathetic condition and helplessness of the subaltern against the hegemony of the ruthless rich. The poor are conditioned by the rich in such a way that they cease to resist to whatever atrocities are perpetrated against them and one who resists, has the courage to see his family, hunted, beaten, raped and burned alive, is –the White Tiger like Balam Halwai who breaks the shackles of poverty and subalternity replacing his rich master, Mr. Ashok the subaltern's resistance, defiance and violent counter attack has been vouchsafed in the post colonial theory as H.S. Randhawa puts it: "Since the marginalized have known only the language which has been handed down to them by their exploiters, they should if need be, as Fanon would have probably suggested, use the language of violence at their disposal to give it back and at the same time to deconstruct it from within" (33).

The political system of the country is also rotten to the core. The country boasts of a glorious democracy, but the reality is quite opposite. Elections are manipulated, power transfers from one hand to another, but the condition of the common man remains the same as he gets nothing and only his exploiters change through power transfer, his exploitation remains unchanged. Proxy voting is the order of the day. Balam has never gone for voting, yet his vote is cast in all elections. Balam sarcastically comments: "They will find me dutifully voting on Election Day at the voting booth in the school compound in Laxmangarh in Gaya District, as I have done in every general, state, and local election since I turned

eighteen. I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth" (60). It is not that the Indian political system is corrupt at present only, but it was the same in the past also as Balram's father told him: "I've seen twelve elections—five general, five state, two local—and someone else has voted for me twelve times. I've heard that people in the other India get to vote for themselves— isn't that something?" (59). The poor people talk about election enthusiastically, but a sense of fruitlessness and hopelessness is evident in their discussion as they know that the political change cannot bring any change in their future which is black like a black-board. The novelist too endorses it: "Like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra, the voters discuss the elections in Laxmangarh" (58).

The novelist asserts that money and power corrupt the people. The political, social, and economic set up of Indian is such a corrupt one that it corrupts the honest and naïve people. Mr. Ashok was innocuous, simple, compassionate and straightforward man when he came from America. But the dishonest and complex practices of our society corrupted him. To settle the income tax problem, he has to bribe politicians in Delhi. This degradation in the character of Mr. Ashok degrades the driver, Balram also. As he puts it:

The rest of today's narrative will deal mainly with the sorrowful tale of how I was corrupted from a sweet, innocent village fool into a citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness. All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him—and once the master of the Honda City becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent? (116).

The corruption and social, political, and economic disparity that Balram Halwai, faces at every step of his life, makes him rebellious, vindictive, hard hearted, mean, treacherous, bitter and wicked shunning the sense of patience, righteousness, duty, justice and humanity. He understands that political, social, economic, administrative system, bureaucracy law and order- all

are controlled and manipulated by money. He draws the conclusion: "To sum up—in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat—or get eaten up" (38). His ambitious nature spurs him to remove the obstacle from his way to the world of power and money by slitting the throat of his master Mr. Ashok, who trusts him a lot and has been compassionate to him. He leaves Delhi for Bangalore with a bag full of money which he looted from his master to settle down as an entrepreneur and be able to feel "just for a day, just for an hour, just for a *minute*, what it means not to be a servant" (193). Prerana Sinha remarks:

The psychological makeup of Balram is made explicit through the method of plunging deeply into the motives and desires. There is cringing of this peripheral character to come to the centre. Adiga has applied the methodology of confession for Balram. The feeling of suspense keeps on mounting till the final moment when the victim is none other than his own beloved master Ashok. It comes as a thrash to one's idea of probability or necessity. The narrator has been giving a quite favorable image of the victim. But his cruel murder makes the narrator appear as a cold blooded one (103).

Munna alias Balram Halwai becomes Ashok Sharma, a North India entrepreneur in Bangalore, the most technologically advanced city of India. He becomes part of corrupt elite and learns all the tactics how to manoeuvre things. He recklessly indulges in all unethical practices. He is an established entrepreneur and well connected with rich, powerful and affluent people, but with a loss—the loss of family members and relatives whose last rites he has performed in advance. So Balram has to pay a heavy price to become rich and powerful. He tries to justify his struggle to gain domination and the murder of his master with a sense of contrition echoing the remorseful words of Lady Macbeth: "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little" (5.1.55).

Haven't I succeeded in the struggle that every poor man here should be making—the struggle not to take the lashes

your father took, not to end up in a mound of indistinguishable bodies that will rot in the black mud of Mother Ganga? True, there was the matter of murder – which is a wrong thing to do, no question about it. It has darkened my soul. All the skin-whitening creams sold in the markets of India won't clean my hands again. But isn't it likely that everyone who counts in this world, including our prime minister (including *you*, Mr. Jiabao), has killed someone or other on their way to the top? Kill enough people and they will put up bronze statues to you near Parliament House in Delhi – but that is glory, and not what I am after. All I wanted was the chance to be a man – and for that, one murder was enough (192).

The journey of Balram from Laxmangarh to Bangalore through all the trials and tribulation is the endeavour of a subaltern to move from darkness to light, from rags to riches, from periphery to centre. Adiga appears to give a clear cut message that in the postcolonial set up the marginalized has to resort to violence and counter attack to reverse his place with the dominant, thus securing his voice, space and identity. Balram chooses to be a predator rather than becoming a prey.

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Cultural Reality in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*

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As a post-colonialist writer, cultural heritage and identity are the important tenets of Amitav Ghosh's novels. Being the scholar of social anthropology, he brings together the social, cultural and political events of the past, the far-past, the present and the future. New novelists as Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri have ventured to highlight that the Indian 'tang' is not pure essence but the mix of culture has always been able to appropriate the non-Indian influence. He questions the obsessive assertion of difference because of geographical boundaries and celebrate the union by empathy and attachment. The purport of the present investigation is to explore the nuances of cultural reality in *The Calcutta Chromosome*.

The Calcutta Chromosome is a medical thriller, a Victorian ghost story, a scientific quest. This astonishing novel ranges back and forth in time from an unspecified period in the future to the late nineteenth century in search of the elusive Calcutta chromosome. It dramatizes the adventures of the enigmatic L. Murugan, an authority on Sir Ronald Ross –the Nobel Prize winning scientist who solved the malaria puzzle in Calcutta in 1898. From cultural perspective Ghosh's attempt is to unearth layer by layer, as is done by any anthropologist, the beliefs prevailing among the Indians as a contrast to the fast developing mind of man leading towards the 21st century.

His novel is able to take the reader through the multiwired world of computer technology, archaeology, and tropical medicine that simultaneously traverses an unusually variegated landscape: that of New York, Egypt, and Calcutta. The novel is

about an accidental discovery of an identity card of an old colleague, Murugan, by Antar, an Egyptian working as a computer operator in New York. This curiously leads him to the world of Sir Ronald Ross, who in 1898 solved the malaria puzzle in Calcutta. Ross primarily worked in Secunderabad and Calcutta, a white man in a nonwhite country.

The promotional blurb says that the book is a medical thriller, a Victorian ghost story and a scientific quest, but it would be more inclined to say that it is in fact a literary thriller that contains within its folds advanced science, intellectual exploration, and fertile imagination.

L. Murugan is in search of the enigmatic Calcutta chromosome. It is unusual because it cannot be isolated and detected by standard techniques. Unlike our regular chromosomes, it is not present in every cell. It is not even symmetrically paired. It does not run from one generation to other. Ghosh fantasizes that this chromosome develops out of a process of recombination, which is unique to every individual. It is found only in the non-regenerating tissue, the brain. It can be transmitted through malaria. It is this stray DNA carrier that Murugan calls The Calcutta chromosome –a unique 'biological expression of human traits that is neither inherited from the immediate gene-pool, nor transmitted into it.¹

The major part of the story takes place in Calcutta in 1995. The novel follows Murugan and his adventures closely. The laboratory of the P.G. Hospital of Calcutta is the place where Ronald Ross made the final breaking through in his research. Ghosh in fact, uncovers the whole power politics of the West. Manson and Ross thought that Malaria parasite was transmitted from mosquitoes to human beings orally, probably through drinking water. But almost overnight Ross changed his track and on August 20th, 1897 he found the connection between Plasmodium Zygotes and Anopheles, Stephensil.

Ghosh moves on to suggest that Ronald Ross had two assistants, Mangala a sweeper woman and Laakhan (Lutchman), who is a 'Dhooley-bearer'. In one strand of the story-line we have Antar, an Egyptian computer clerk. Antar works day and night all

alone on his super intelligent computer named Ava. He tries to relocate the adventures of an India born American scientist L. Murugan. The second level of the story-line is historically true and it revolves around the British Scientist Ronald Ross, who discovered the manner in which malaria is conveyed by the mosquito. The third level describes the super human powers of Mangala and Laakhan. Ghosh believes that the purpose of science is not only to reveal but also to create. At the other end of the scientific knowledge lies the unknown, unarticulated truth. That truth may be unknown but the point is that it is very much there.

Murugan also guesses that Mangala was using a variation of Wagner process. She had perhaps noticed that malaria works on paresis through a different route, the brain. Like syphilis, malaria can cause irreparable damage to the brain, it can even cause hallucination. Perhaps that is why primitive people thought of malaria as spirit possession. India has a very deep and long tradition of the occult. People are highly superstitious. In fact spirits (*bhuta-pret*) are considered to be as real as the human beings by the uneducated, rural masses of India. The *bhuta-pret* are said to exit in a half way house between the human world and the world of ancestral spirits (*pitri-lok*). Until they have been judged, have paid their 'karmic' debts and are allowed into the world of ancestral spirits, the '*bhut-pret*' continue to yearn for a human body which they can enter and contrive to make sick through their nefarious activity. They seem to populate a mental region that is contiguous and has open borders with the land of ordinary consciousness in which normal everyday life takes place. The Indian philosophy of the *kalchakra* is highlighted and re-established. Ghosh deconstructs and dismantles Western sense of superiority by Indian irrationality.

Mangala had developed a particular kind of malaria that could be induced in pigeons. Mangala is the other name of the great mother Kali who comes in various forms in Indian mythology. She is the archetypal nurturer as well as the terrible mother figure. She is the life giver as well as the annihilator. Murugan is the other name of Kartik, son of the goddess who is reputed for swift movements in Indian mythology. The mythological references of

names at times make the characters archetypes. The other path is that of 'Tarka' or logic and science. Ross follows this path. The two paths may seem contradictory but in reality are not so. Logic without intuition is incomplete. Coming back to Mangala and Laakhan, we cannot ignore the fact that both of them are from the very lowest rung of Hindu caste system. Ghosh deciphers that the repositories of truth, science and higher knowledge can be a 'dhooley bearer' Laakhan and a sweeper woman Mangala. He demolishes the false concept that class superiority and right to knowledge go hand in hand.

In cultural studies, post-colonial does not apply to the time when officially colonialism ended because a colonized society permanently and continuously absorbs a psychology that is concurrently pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial in experience. Ghosh has not only employed an indigenous theme of the Great Mother Goddess Kali but has also projected the awareness, nuances and ambiguities of the post-colonial consciousness. In the novel, the two contrasting societies are clearly etched: the society of the colonizer led by Ross and the 'other' culture represented by Mangala. The irony of the situation is that the so-called masters are mere puppets in the hands of this powerful woman. The colonizers were in search of temporal truths and the colonized natives were motivated by the higher goal of 'eternity' the tussle between the Western and Eastern civilization is highlighted and victory is granted to the extensively oppressed and exploited.

The novel opens in the early years of twenty-first century when Antar, an Egyptian computer programmer and system analyst in New York suddenly finds the ID card of one Murugan, an old colleague and researcher, flashed on his computer screen. He discovers that Murugan had mysteriously disappeared on 21st August 1995, better known as the World Mosquito Day, from Calcutta. Murugan himself deeply interested in malaria research was very curious about Ronald Ross, a British scientist posted in the Indian army in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

He had uncovered that there was Mangala who with her handy-man Laakhan was carrying out the experiment through an indigenous method. Ghosh through the story-line subverts the

superiority of the Western scientific investigation and proves that not only were they far behind the scientific progress made by India but here, it had been spear-headed by a woman. The novelist attempts to explore the oriental belief of life, birth and rebirth. Herein we find the echoes of the *Bhagavad Gita* about the body being a sort of garment to be discarded when it turns old and torn to acquire a new, fresh garment for the soul. The novel is not especially science fiction exploring the mysterious ways of the supposed influences in the fact-finding journey. Ross is a learned scientist, busy in tracing out the possibility of malaria germs through a very convincing process, whereas Mangala projects a typical Indian concept of witchcraft and supernatural association with a disease, as one can trace out similar primitive beliefs even today in many isolated interior parts of the country. Mangala's religious medical practice is related to the transfer of the human soul affected through the transmission of malaria-infected blood via the bodies with primitive rite of intuitive insights. She transposes the thoughts of one human being into another by bending the walls of the mind through the fever. Mangala projects the Indian supernatural approach to the infection. Mangala's authority and her elevated position is constantly highlighted by the novelist. She represents the archetypal *Matri Shakti* or the Great Goddess archetype projected in Greek, African, Sumerian and Oriental cultures. She is a prototype of the *Ady Shakti* in the cult of the Great Mother that evolved with the expansion of the goddess pantheon- the Destroyer and the Creator.

The Calcutta Chromosome as science fiction depends on the fictional creation of a 'technology for interpersonal transference'. By this Ghosh means the development of a system to bring about immortality: when your body fails you, you leave it, you migrate, you begin all over again, another body, another beginning. (p-108). The 'science' of the mysterious Indian cult incorporates religious ritual, sacrifice and reincarnation into more straightforward scientific practices. The writer uses Mangala, Lutchman and the counter-science group to suggest that a radical alternative to the hegemony of Western scientific knowledge is possible. The implication is that this challenge will only be made if the

knowledge and beliefs of third-world countries, such as India, are fused with scientific concepts from the West. Ghosh has brought together the two worlds of science and counter-science and European rationales and the Indian myth-making faculty in order to reveal the Indian mysticism and philosophic idealism.

The Calcutta Chromosome grapples with colonialist notions of science and the 'native' East without reducing them to an essentialized binary opposition that the postcolonial writer must reverse. It re-considers Eurocentric dualism set up between science and magic/mysticism. Discovery as we soon grasp, is in the novel an abstract personification of agency, and as Tabish Khair points out:

The failure of, say, Ronald Ross or D.D. Cunningham to discover the Calcutta Chromosome and the ability of Mangala-Laakhan to do so stems from the failure of the colonizer's concept of rationality in comprehending the colonial subaltern... this ... is a discursive failure and an index of alienation.²

The three important native strands in the novel, Mangala-Ross, Antar-Tara, and Murugan-Urmila all elaborate symbiotic connections between the human and the scientific/technological in such ways as to render the colonialist understanding of native 'irrationality', 'incomprehensibility' and historical 'divisibility'. It also dismisses arbitrary and essentialist dichotomies between the west and India. To an extent, it marks the restoring of history to the subaltern. It is the narration of Indian encounter with Western science depicting the story of colonial authority and racism but it is ultimately the story of 'transference' almost as remarkable as Ghosh's chromosomal method. Sudeep Sen cautions Ronald Ross a white man in a non-white country.³

The main thrust is Ronald Ross's discovery of the life cycle of the malaria parasite in Calcutta; on the other hand, there is a practice of counter-science by Mangalabibi and her group by means of decapitated pigeons, obscure Goddesses and psychic breakthroughs that is transmigration of personalities without

biological reproduction.

Madhumita Adhikari averred that Ghosh believes in the view that the continuity of life exists in the patterns of fission and fusion.⁴ Ross and Mangala reveal this through the co-mingling of science and counter science. L. Murugan had once explained to Antar in the restaurant:

You know all about matter and anti-matter, right? And rooms and anterooms and Christ and anti-Christ and so on? Now, let's say there was something like science and counter-science? Thinking of it in the abstract, wouldn't you say that the first principal of a functioning counter-science would have to be secrecy? (88).

Ghosh reveals a parallel history of counter-science as practiced by Laakhan and Mangalabibi, the members of the secret religious society. They work with *Plasmodium falciparum* in a different way. They were after "the ultimate transcendence of nature" through a technology for interpersonal transference in which all information could be transmitted chromosomally, from body to body. The novel reported to be the first science-fiction abiding interest in exploring the identity of the displaced Indian diaspora. This exploration involves straddling between two cultures- a ubiquitous phenomenon these dispossessed, the subaltern voice the fractured identities of the displaced Indian diaspora.

The Calcutta Chromosome works with the miracle of human history pursued in Microbiology. Ghosh produces an account of the subaltern history in the first, while the second provides an alternative subaltern history, parallel to the colonial history. Ghosh employs conventional devices of the mystery, the high-tech thriller, science fiction and the old-fashioned ghost story with such boldness and panache that it can be hard to tell if he is parodying the genres or 'doing' them in earnest

The Calcutta Chromosome is a quest of L. Murugan's identity and the diasporic identity. It dismisses arbitrary and essentialist dichotomies between the West and India; marks the restoring of history to the subaltern. As an anthropologist, Ghosh studies Asian, African, Indian, Egyptian, Christian, Jewish and Islamic

cultures. Ghosh points at the Indian cultural identity and projects Indian cultural heritage.

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Inner and Outer Conflicts: A Study of Mahesh Dattani's *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*

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On a Muggy Night in Mumbai, by Mahesh Dattani, handles gay themes of love, partnership, trust and betrayal. It also deals with society's expectations of all its inhabitants and how individuals fall victim to these expectations. It brings to fore the psychic tortures that befall each one of us as we are expected to conform to set paradigms and gender typecasts. Sexuality and gender issue is the central theme of the present text. Dattani also brings in the dynamics of personal and moral choices while focussing on human relationships. The story centres around Kamlesh, a successful fashion designer in Mumbai, his relationship with his sister Kiran and her fiancé, Ed, who incidentally is also his ex-lover, Prakash (Edwin Prakash) and their group of like-minded friends belonging to the gay and lesbian community.

Compelled by a growing sense of isolation and clinical depression in a city that is teeming with life and vitality, he decides to gather his friends at his home to seek their support. As the evening progresses, inner and outer conflicts collide as multiple truths finally emerge on a muggy night full of confrontations and accusations. The inner self is at variance with the socially acceptable selves. Dattani takes a compassionate look at the life and tensions of a homosexual community tucked away in Mumbai. His play explores what lies below the facades and masks of characters which they keep to face the world. His characters search for security and acceptance and if at all they do not find it, they opt for ways and means that would allow them to live their

true being (albeit in a low profile) and being socially acceptable at the same time.

Dealing with an unconventional theme, it celebrates the idea of freedom, but at the same time, also highlights how threatened our freedom is as soon as we step out of the safe haven of our homes where we can be comfortably ourselves, unmindful of the exterior world. We can be anyone behind closed doors, but, the world outside would be ready with its judgement the moment we expose ourselves. In a way, it is becoming increasingly important to be what we are not so as to avoid the stares, the uncomfortable questions and the unsolicited advices, especially when one does not conform to the socially acceptable modes and patterns of behaviour.

Kamlesh, the protagonist of the play is shown to have an unsuccessful gay relationship with Ed. While Kamlesh pines for his lover, missing his re-assuring company all the time; Ed is led to believe that he is somehow wrong in the schema of things. Societal pressures are too great and weigh so heavily on Ed that he compels himself to enter into a heterosexual relationship to be able to prove that he is man enough. The entreaties of Kamlesh fall on deaf ears, "Prakash, I beg of you. Please! Don't turn your back on yourself. You are wrenching your soul from your body!" (Dattani 92) Unnerved, Ed remarks, "Look at that wedding crowd! There are real men and women out there. You don't want to look at the world outside this den of yours. All of you want to live in your own little bubble (Dattani 99).

Kamlesh enters another relationship with Sharad, a lively, witty, intelligent and confident person. Though both begin to live together, there seems to be a lack of warmth and complete surrender on the part of Kamlesh, who finds it hard to get over his previous love, Ed. Sharad feels the pinch and steps out silently from Kamlesh's life. It's a difficult love triangle when all three involved are pained and hurt and none is happy and contented. Kamlesh and Sharad feel the pangs of unrequited love, while Ed is the victim of his own psychic tortures which will not allow him a moment of peace.

The drama takes a high turn when Ed enters into another relationship—a heterosexual one and that too with Kiran, who happens to be Kamlesh's sister. Kiran is aware of the friendship between Kamlesh and Ed, but has no idea that there was a relationship between the two. While Ed chooses to keep Kiran in the dark about the alleged involvement, Kamlesh is concerned about his sister's welfare and happiness. Kiran had already had an unhappy marriage and had pinned all hopes on her new relationship with Ed (Prakash), unaware of the inevitable pain that she would come across on account of Ed's double face. As their marriage draws near, Kamlesh feels more and more unsettled about the dilemma of whether to let Kiran know of his and Ed's past relationship. Finally he seeks the advice of all his queer friends on one muggy night in his flat in Mumbai. The situation is typical of any relationship—be it queer or straight, where it is essential to lay the foundations of a new bond on a '*tabula rasa*'—a clean slate.

The set of queer friends—Sharad, Deepali, Bunny, Ranjit and Kamlesh are different people with different perspectives, sensibilities and thought processes. Sharad is frank and jovial and completely at ease with his sexuality; Deepali is equally comfortable with her sexuality and at the same time is a mature, sensible and level-headed person. She is into a lesbian relationship with Tina and has an adopted daughter, who is her niece and seems to be content with her small and complete family. Both Sharad and Deepali are extremely loyal and committed towards their respective partners. Bunny Singh is a TV actor who clandestinely enjoys a gay relationship and at the same time projects himself as a happily married man, macho and manly. He has a heterosexual exterior, while being truly a homosexual/gay. Further, there is Ranjit, who again is a gay, but feels that India with its closed and tunnel-visioned society is not open to the idea of accepting queer relationships; hence has migrated abroad for good. His view raises serious questions regarding the safe future of queer people in the Indian society. While the west has seemingly accepted queer sensibilities comfortably into its fold, the Oriental set-up still remains, by and large, opposed to the idea.

If Mumbai, one of the most advanced and progressive metropolitan of the country, remains averse to queer relationships, where people desire that those with queer sensibilities should just disappear, where such people are still the 'others' and are being targeted and mocked openly, where they are not allowed to live freely in 'respectable' societies; then little remains to be said about the rest of the country. In a way, Ranjit's decision to move abroad, where he can be just himself, is a better option than Bunny, the traditional Indian gay man, who leads a dual life in India. Somewhere, he too realises that it's not easy to keep up pretences, but then, he has no choice- now being a husband and a father too. The entire lot of friends have worked out their own solutions in their given circumstances. In other words, they all have adopted their individual survival tactics. Bunny hides behind the veil of marriage and the social acceptability that comes along; Ranjit escapes to another land, another society, another culture; Sharad and Deepali choose to remain honest about their identities; while Kamlesh is the most insecure of the lot, a victim of his own unhappy relationships, who finds it hard to emerge from the shadows of despair and allow himself to love and be loved again.

The play foregrounds the subjectivity of queer people in a country like India and shows a significant aspect of contemporary Indian subjectivity in terms of its metropolitan gay society. Gay subjectivity is relatively unacknowledged but is very much a fact as became evident in a media debate following a 2009 Delhi High Court decision reversing a colonial era law banning homosexual acts and the subsequent agitation demanding amendments in the Constitution to legalise gay relationships and marriages. However, the Delhi Supreme Court reinstated the colonial law and many who had felt comfortable openly admitting their sexual sensibilities, became threatened. "With the Supreme Court taking a massive step backwards, the people who came out of the closet feel all the more scared because they can't go back in" (NBC News).

While Kamlesh is anguished and feels insecure, yet, he is not dishonest about his sexuality. Ed is the most dishonest and equally ashamed of his gay identity, which becomes the reason for

suffering of so many people involved with him. The prevailing tension is so unpalatable that Kamlesh decides to see a psychiatrist, who shockingly encourages him to adopt heterosexuality as only that will cure him. "He pretended to understand. Until he began to tell me about the aversion therapy ... until he said I would never be happy as a gay man. It is impossible to change society, he said, but it may be possible for you to reorient yourself" (Dattani 69). The writer criticises the mainstream psychoanalysis which is so primitive that it allows no space for allowing people with alternate sexualities to be what they choose to be. Kamlesh tries explaining to the psychiatrist that "I needed his help to overcome my anxiety and fears, not to be something I am not. Could he help me cope with my loneliness and fear the same way he would help a heterosexual cope with his?" (Dattani 69). The saga of his meeting with the doctor ends, however, the turmoil prevails. A disparate Kamlesh echoes to his queer friends, "Please help me! Who do we turn to except one another?" (Dattani 70).

Ed begins to see Kiran, while Kamlesh passively allows things to take their course, until at last he sees light and decides to intervene, since it concerns his own sister. However, he lacks the nerve to reveal his own relationship with Ed (Prakash). He wonders how Kiran would react on learning about her brother's sexual sensibilities. Kamlesh is concerned about her disapproval. There is a nagging fear that even one's family would disapprove of such atrocious behaviour! That muggy night in a suburban retreat, all queer friends opine that Kiran should discover the truth herself through a photograph of Ed and Kamlesh together, which left nothing to imagination. Kamlesh had saved one picture as a memento of their loving bond, while returning all the rest to Ed. He hadn't the heart to tear them as Ed had asked him to do. This single picture, a remnant of the love that was, was kept in hiding in the bathroom closet by Kamlesh. Sharad, who pines for the love of Kamlesh accidentally chances upon this picture, which now becomes the sole evidence of a past relationship, which threatened to ruin the future of a marriage almost on the cards.

While the bunch of queer friends wants the picture to be

shown to Kiran, high drama ensues as a highly disturbed Sharad is ready to jump out of the window along with the coveted evidence. In the hullabaloo, the photo blows out and lands in the compound below, where marriage celebrations are going on amidst much fanfare and noise. The festivities, which are a matter of much joy and fuss, are a reminder that this institution is allowed to the heterosexual community alone. Gay marriages are still a wishful thinking and their actuality dangles in mid-space. The situation is so grim for the people who are in same-sex love relationships that, as Ed reveals, he is getting married to Kiran to keep up a pretence, but that his real motive is to remain close to Kamlesh. Nobody would doubt or question their proximity if Ed married into their family.

The readers/viewers are stunned at his wily ways and deceptive manners. Ed is not a recipient of our sympathy or love; rather he appears repulsive in his conniving avatar. Deception thus becomes a tool to help oneself by exploiting others. Kamlesh, too, cannot be vindicated on this count as he too exploits the building guard for his sexual gratification. Ed's reasons for getting married, therefore, show the matrimonial institution in a poor light where marriage merely serves the purpose of sexual fulfilment for him and his purpose is at variance with the sanctimonious status this institution is associated with.

With his dark secret out, Ed is humiliated and he hits himself and Kamlesh in the process of attempting to annihilate himself. Kamlesh, on the other hand, rediscovers love for Sharad, after the illusion of Ed and his love fades away, thus freeing Kamlesh from an unwanted bondage. Ed's position is now reflected as the most precarious, since his mask has come off, but he still hasn't come to accept his gay identity comfortably. The veil of a heterosexual appearance has also been lifted since the 'condemned' picture has let out his secret to the entire society. Terribly scared of what the society would say or react, he no longer wishes to live. Kiran comes to his rescue, "Step out through that door and walk out, look them in the eye" (Dattani 109).

Dattani attempts to bring to the fore reasons why queer

people seem to be such hypocrites, escapists and introverts. It appears they adopt this strategy to survive in a hostile environment. The dominant discourse of heterosexuality is so incriminating that it constraints the free development of queer subjectivity and pushes such people to the margins. Society, with its set paradigms, gender typecasts and accepted patterns of behaviour makes it mandatory for all to belong to their essential category. And when one fails, one is compelled to opt for deceptive forms; thus, not only the concerned individual, but the entire society and its defining parameters are at fault. Society itself seems to encourage hypocrisy and disallows freedom of self-expression. Thus a life of dignity is only for those who fit into the set paradigms!

In such a situation then, people with alternate sexualities face disastrous consequences and often impose self-alienation upon themselves. Thus, subjectivity is colonised and suppressed by the dominant discourse of heterosexuality. Typically, Bunny and Ed are examples of such confused people who get married to prove their 'normalcy' to the society, while secretly keeping their gay relationships too. Bunny argues with Sharad that there is no harm in pretending to be straight:

Bunny: Do you think I'll be accepted by the millions if I screamed from the rooftops that I am gay?

Sharad: But you do scream from the rooftops that you are straight.

Bunny: Camouflage! Even animals do it. Blend with the surroundings. They can't find you (Dattani 70).

Bunny Singh performs like an ideal male, an ideal family man. Though he defends his decision vehemently, yet chinks in his character appear and the readers/viewers can discern that he is tired of this hypocrisy. "Just as the man whom my wife loves does not exist. The only people who know me- the real me- are present here in this room. And you hate me for being such a hypocrite ... I have tried to survive in both worlds. And it seems I do not exist in either" (Dattani 102).

Ranjit, again, has moved to Europe, but unwillingly. "I am sometimes regretful of being an Indian, because I can't seem to be both Indian and gay" (Dattani 88). Only Sharad and Deepali are

honest. Maybe that's the reason why they are inherently happy. Kiran, who had already suffered a turbulent marriage earlier, also endorses the 'being invisible', 'blending' and 'camouflaging' advice of Bunny. "Don't let people know about you. You will spend your whole life defending yourself. If I had the choice, I would stay invisible too" (Dattani 91).

The heterosexual world too peeps in time and again, making its presence felt. The neighbouring couple making love and again the comment about the woman of the house getting into the act with the 'doodhwala' is described in the most disgusting tones. Sharad's comment about the woman "gritting her teeth" and looking as "she might throw up any moment" (Dattani 53) is a sad comment on our relationships even within the accepted institution of marriage. It goes without saying then, that any relationship sans love is claustrophobic and unnatural and that people would seek love elsewhere- beyond the fold of marriage, adopting ways and means of deception. The writer seems to strike home the point that all is not well always in a normal marriage too. In fact, we keep up too many pretences in our relationships to make them appear socially viable and acceptable and of course, respectable.

Again, the outside world makes too many pressures on the inside world- the heat, the sound, the noise, the pestering, the loud fanfare of the marriage festivities that become claustrophobic for the inmates of the flat above, the blaring music in the compound leading to heightened tension and an almost imminent death on the floor above, the poky kids making a furore over the 'condemned' picture of Ed and Kamlesh, the intrusive residents of the residential society who would not have 'abnormal' gays living in the same society as theirs... It is essential to resolve these pressures and conflicts which tatter the soul and rend the psyche. As Bunny remarks, "We should all forget about categorizing people as gay or straight or bi or whatever, and let them do what they want to do" (Dattani 88).

As masks fall, emotions unravel and lives disintegrate, it is evident that not only the characters in the play but each one of us is at fault in a society that not only condones but encourages

hypocrisy, which demands deceit and negation, rather than allowing self-expression, responsibility and dignity. If two men want to love each another, what's the harm? The harm now is in the oppression, symbolized throughout by the muggy heat and the failing air conditioner. "I really wish they would allow gay people to marry," says the naïve Kiran, only to get a cynical reply from Ranjit, "They do. Only not to the same sex," is perhaps the wittiest barb and the sharpest humour beneath which lies all the truth of a very clever, moving and hugely dramatic tragicomedy.

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Probing Human Greed in *So Many Hungers!*

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Greed has been a key theme of the novel *So Many Hungers*. Human greed is responsible for keeping their own brethren poor. The novel is an attempt to map out human greed which is responsible for the pathetic condition of millions of Indians. It narrates a pathetic account of the poor of Bengal who has to face double whammy of hunger and displacement from their roots. The world war that takes the whole globe in its tight grip makes the life of the poor villagers of Baurni of Bengal very tough. The story of this novel can be studied on two different planes and it is replete with multiple heart touching messages. The first plane of the story is about Samandra Bose a lawyer turned businessman who is driven by the sole desire to make windfall profit out of the war. War is an opportunity for him to maximize his profit. He has invested hugely in the stocks of silver, cotton and jute to reap a good harvest. He is aware of the fact that the stocks of commodities in which he has invested money will go up. He backs his estimation/ profit making theory by a set of logics. First, he is of the view that all the governments need silver to manufacture bullets; cotton for shrouds and jute for bags to send provisions to their soldiers who are fighting for their respective nations. He remains busy in calculations all the time. And, when a grand daughter is born in his family, his reaction to the arrival of a new guest in their family is very cold. He is a very big supporter of the British and supports their war against the allied forces. He feels that British are doing a great service to weak nations by fighting their war to establish democracy in these nations. For him, it is war to establish democracy and to uproot dictatorial regimes. He supports the idea that Indians should assist the British in this war to dislodge

dictatorial regimes and to spread democracy in every nook and cranny of this globe. He, therefore, does not allow his elder son Rahoul to take part in the freedom struggle of the country and very cleverly managed to send Rahoul to Cambridge to pursue a degree in astro-physics. He also wishes that his son *Rahoul* invents a powerful bomb for the British to make the latter wipe out their enemies. Samandra *Bose* is an all out of supporters of the British. Samandra Bose is a foil to his elder son Rahoul. Rahoul is very sensitive boy. He is anti-British. He is anti-war. Unlike his father, he does not support the participation of Indian soldiers in the war. For him, the so called war against dictatorial regimes is a sham. It is driven by imperialist designs. It has sprung from the expansionist designs of the British. The British should first quit India and then start talking about democracy, opines Rahoul. Rahoul is basically under the influence of his grandfather Devta who after retirement from the post of a school teacher lives in a village and commits himself to the freedom struggle of India. He leads a very simple life and gives a message to lead life in a simple way. He is anti-British and pro-farmers. He is totally against the idea of India's soldiers fighting along with the British. He fights for the independence of India. A Gandhian every inch, Devta believes in frugal life style. He has given up the comforts of his son's house and lives in a tiny village. He is also against Rahoul's joining Cambridge to pursue a career in astro-physics but when his son Samandra *Bose* tricks his son to join Cambridge university, he leaves his home and settles down in a small village. When the British agents force the poor village folk either by coercion or allurements to sell off their yield and boats to the British by raising the fake bogey of imminent Japanese invasion, Devta strongly opposes it and urges the poor village folk not to sell off their yield and boats to the British. Since he enjoys a good reputation in the village, his words are honoured by the villagers. He is imprisoned for instigating the poor against the empire.

Rahoul draws inspiration from his grandfather. Though he holds a D.Sc. degree in astro-physics and teaches in a university, yet he longs for the freedom of his motherland. He feigns to conduct Death Ray experiment to hoodwink the spy that is planted

by the British in the guise of a research scholar to keep tab on Rahoul's activities. Actually, he does work for the freedom of his country. Rahoul is a very sensitive soul. He wants that war should come to an end at the earliest as it makes the life of the poor people very tough and miserable. Unlike his father who wishes the war to prolong to reap windfall profits, Rahoul is against it. Rahoul is a modern looking young man who believes in gender equality; and when a baby girl is born to him, he unlike his other members of the family does not feel upset over the birth of a baby girl to him.

The second plane of the novel is about Devta and the poor village folk. Devta leads a simple life and is not driven by greed. He is a great patriot whose fights to make India free from the chains of slavery. The hunger that hit Baurni village and its subsequent ramifications is the second plain on which the narrative of this heart touching novel is built. The war makes the life of poor villagers a hell. Famine hits the village. The prices of the essential commodities go up. The agents of the British buy grains and boats from the villagers, leaving them to their fate. The situation comes to such a pass that villages after villages start migrating towards big cities to avoid starvation. Kajoli a brave but poor girl of Baurni village too set off for Kolkata in search of food. She faces a tough time. On the way, she gets attacked. Finally, when she fails to find a job, she decides to jump in the dirty business of prostitution to eke out a living for her family. But, when she comes to know that *Devta* has planned a fast unto death to make the British quit India, she gives up her idea to join the dirty profession and decides to lead a honourable life.

The title of the novel is apt and is a pointer to different kinds of hungers that trouble a man. The title carries a sign of exclamation at the end of the title. It has a big meaning. It obliquely refers to multiple dimensions of hunger. Samandra *Bose* has an insatiable hunger for power and pelf. His sole aim in life is to inflate this money bag. The greed for money has demeaned him to an extent that he wishes the war to prolong so that he can reap a rich harvest. He invests in the stocks of those commodities which are either used to make bullets or cover the corpses of soldiers. To make his son get a hon'ble slot in British set up, he unabashedly

encourages Rahoul to invent a powerful weapon that can help British defeat their enemies easily. The British too suffer from hunger. To spread the wings of the Britain in other parts of the globe is what forces them to wage a war against allied forces. They are colonizers every inch and wants to establish their colonies. They have been fighting the war under the garb of establishing democracy in weaker nations by uprooting dictatorial regimes. It sounds ironical because India is still under their unlawful subjugation. To serve their purpose, they play with the lives of the poor villagers. They are forced to sell off their products to the agents of the British. This renders the villagers unemployed. Famine further precipitates their crisis. Starvation takes them into its vise like grip. Many human beings and animals fall an easy prey to the greed of the British. Women are forced to sell their bodies to feed their families. Devta and Rahoul too suffer from pangs of hunger. But, it is a different kind of hunger. Both are fired by the zeal to make their motherland free from the yoke of the mighty British. Both contribute their mite to free India. Devta educates the poor village folk against selling off their yield and boats to the agents of the British. He passionately takes part in the quit India movement launched by Gandhi and observes fast unto death to force the British to leave his motherland. He is a great symbol of strength for villagers, especially for Kajoli who decides to enter the dirty business of prostitution to save her family from being starved when she comes to know that Devta has planned a sit-in against the British. Devta inspires Rahoul also. Motivated by great ideals of Devta, Rahoul kicks his bright career and takes a plunge in the freedom struggle of India. Another hunger has too been highlighted in the novel. It is physical hunger. War and famine push women of the villages to flesh trade. Kajoli too decides to adopt this dirty profession but Devta's decision to protest against the British forces Kajoli to drop her decision to sell off her body and satisfy the hunger of her family.

Samandra *Bose* gets a title of honour for his being loyal to his masters. His younger son gets killed in war. Rahoul gets arrested. This frustrates Samandra *Bose*. It is a great novel and it narrates the miserable tale of poor villagers who are forced to leave

their roots as famine hits their village. It tries to attack multiple hungers that take human beings in to its grip. It takes in to account Devta and Rahoul's burning desire / hunger to free India from the chains of slavery.

Greed keeps a man prisoner. This is what exactly happens in the case of Samandra Bose. He remains a prisoner to avarice and this finally led to his downfall .

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Religion and Secularism in Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters*

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Indo-Canadian writer, Rohinton Mistry was born in the year 1952 in Bombay. He began his literary career after migrating to Canada in 1975. He adopted writing as a full time vocation in 1985 with publication of the story collection, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) that was followed by the publication of three novels namely, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002). Apart from these major works, he has two works, *Searching for Stevenson* (1994) and *The Scream* (2006) to his credit.

The works of Mistry, especially the short stories, abound in vignettes of Parsi culture and rituals, in which he lends voice to the problems faced by the Parsis in day to day life. In the final stories of the collection, he exhibits his own diasporic experiences. The novels of Mistry have political backdrop wherein he uses the impact of political events on the minorities like the Parsis and the non-Parsi common man. Mistry deals with political history of post-colonial era. *Such a Long Journey* uses the background of Indo-Pak war of 1975 in describing the saga of conflict between two generations. The second novel, *A Fine Balance* discusses the issues of the minorities; the impact of emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India and the effects of forced sterilizations to control population growth. The novel covers a period from 1975 to 1984, that is, from the period of emergency to

the year of the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Similarly, the novel *Family Matters* alludes to the Babri Masjid communal riots of 1992. Regarding the choice of themes, Ramesh, K. Srivastav observes,

Mistry re-narrates the history of society and country as it has been in the post-independence era. This re-narration of history in a way depicts perception of anxieties and aspirations, perils and problems of existence of individual, shared and national issues. Mistry has, in this sense, effectively exploited some historical points of post-independence era and endeavoured to re-think them and re-narrate about his community and country through the various narratives woven in the novel. Politics forms an important undertone to the main action of all three novels of Rohinton Mistry (415).

Well enlightened about Indian politics and society of three decades-1970s to 1990s, he expresses discontentment with the prevalent socio-political restlessness in his works. He is open about the religious fundamentalism, communalism, corruption and meanness prevalent in Indian socio-political scene. His love for Bombay, a city with all its darkness and warmth is also apparent in his works.

Mondal quotes Schaefer and Lamm's definition of fundamentalism, "The term 'fundamentalism' refers to adherence to earlier accepted religious doctrines and is often accompanied by a literal application of historical beliefs and scriptures to today's world." She further continues, "It is commonly associated with the attempt to revive archaic modes of conduct and belief from the past" (1). Fundamentalism in religion is worldwide phenomenon affecting almost every nook and corner of the world. Talibanis (Afghanistan) who interpret the laws of Islam according to their own strict rules; Al Qaeda (Afghanistan), a Sunni Islamic organization; the Protestants and the Catholics among the Christians; militant religious Zionism among the Jews; the Shias and the Sunnis among the Muslims; RSS, Shiv Sena and Vishwa Hindu Parishad among the Hindus; Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana among the Buddhists and the supporters of Khalistan among the Sikhs are certain examples of fundamentalism. The fundamentalism results in terrorism, violence and communalism.

It also poses threat to the Government, especially the democratic type of Government. The attack on a Pakistani girl Malala; demolition of Babri Masjid; riots between Malays and Chinese in Singapore; Sambas, Sampit and Tarakans riots in Indonesia; Hindu Sikh riots of 1984 in India and Hindu Muslim Godhra riots are a few examples of communal riots resulting from fundamentalism.

Most of the countries have laws and provisions to combat fundamentalism and get rid of the same. Recommendation of Secular form of government is one of such provisions to overcome fundamentalism. The constitution of India asserts that India is a secular nation. Wikipedia defines the term secularism as, "Secularism is the principle of the separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institutions and religious dignitaries. One manifestation of secularism is asserting the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, or, in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people." India, being a secular nation, does not trace a relationship between the state and religion. The government of India does not follow any specific religion. It openly accepts the beliefs of all the religions and every Indian citizen can preach and practice any religion of his or her choice. About Secularism in India, Wikipedia states, "Secularism in India means equal treatment of all religions by the state. Unlike the Western concept of secularism which envisions a separation of religion and state, the concept of secularism in India envisions acceptance of religious laws as binding on the state, and equal participation of state in different religions." These issues on fundamentalism and secularism will be dealt with in this paper.

The plot of the novel, *Family Matters* deals with the family of Nariman Vakeel, a seventy nine years old Parsi widower, who lives with his middle aged step children, Jal and Coomy, who are both single and sharp tongued. Nariman is stricken with osteoporosis and Parkinson's disease that worsen due to an accident in which he breaks his ankle. Fed up with the heavy chores concerning Nariman's bed-ridden state, Coomy decides to shift Nariman to Roxana's house. Roxana is the biological daughter of

Nariman who is married to Yezad and lives in a small house gifted to her by her father. Roxana like a devoted daughter accepts him in his bed-ridden condition. She dutifully performs the errands of bed-pans, urinals and sponge baths and emerges out as Lear's Cordellia. Through the character of Yezad the readers meet Mr. Kapur, his employer, who is the epitome of secular ideals. Unlike Shiv Sena, Mr. Kapur, presents an altogether different view of Hinduism. He says, "Hinduism has an all accepting nature...I'm not talking about the fundamentalist, mosque destroying, but the real Hinduism that has nurtured this country for thousands of years, welcoming allcreeds and beliefs and dogmas and theologies, making them feel at home...Even false gods are accommodated, and turned into true ones, adding a few more deities to its existing millions" (Mistry 313-314). He is basically from Punjab and has settled in Bombay. Bombay is more than his home. He personifies Bombay into a girl with whom he shares intimate relationship. To him Bombay seems to be "raped" by the atrocities of Shiv Sena. He has become a part and parcel of Bombay's cosmopolitan outlook. For having spoken against the party, Mr. Kapur is killed by them. His death signifies the death of secular and cosmopolitan ideals. Mr. Kapur is the medium through which Mistry voices his beliefs. The pangs of alienation in Hindu fundamentalist party, Shiv Sena's 'Mumbai' torture him and force him into the realms of nostalgia regarding the cosmopolitan 'Bombay' of his dreams. Mistry's views about Bombay seem to be convergent with those of Bhabha, "a mixture of cultures, a cosmopolitanism: an ability to cite and quote and relocate, repeat and revise cultural styles, traditions and identities, which is quite remarkable" (187) but there seems to be a point of divergence in thinking of both the writers as McNamara points out, "Both recognize the alternative perspective, but whereas Bhabha believes that the diversity of cosmopolitan Bombay (and by extension, the Parsi community) will overcome the desire for authenticity, Mistry is afraid the former will be suppressed by the latter" (233).

The journey from cosmopolitan and secular Bombay to Hindu fundamentalist Mumbai has its roots in the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1992. The riots broke out as a result of the demolition of

Babri Masjid in Ayodhya that was attacked by Hindu fundamentalists on December 6, 1992 to reclaim the land from Muslims as *Ram Janam Bhoomi* (the birth place of the Hindu Lord Rama). The riots spread from the north to other parts of the country in which Shiv Sena and BJP were allegedly involved. Yezad affirms, "Those two parties encouraged the Hindutva extremists to destroy the Babri Mosque" (Mistry 29). Shiv Sena had a massive victory in the elections as a result of the tension between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindu fundamentalist party then decided to convert Maharashtra into a Hindu state dominated by only Maharashtrian people. It started to change the anglicized names of the places and the roads into the Hindu names. As a consequence, Bombay was renamed Mumbai. Campu traces the motive of the renaming and says, "One of these initiatives was the renaming of Bombay as Mumbai which was considered one of the significant attempts to remove all non-Hindu place names from the so called purified Hindu land" (69). Regarding the issue, Mr. Rangarajan, the assistant of Nariman's doctor comments, "These days you never tell who might be a Shiv Sena fanatic, or a member of their Name Police. It is my understanding that some Shiv Sainiks have infiltrated the GPO, subjecting innocent letters and postcards to incineration if the address reads Bombay instead of Mumbai." (Mistry 46) It was a setback to much anglicized Parsi community that prospered under the British and were quick to learn and adopt the English way of life. They were rendered marginalized as minority amidst such milieu. Mistry aptly displays his concern for his community in the novel. Although the approach of Mistry is secular, yet, his concern for his community is equally evident in the novel.

In such a socio-political milieu, when secularism is at stake, the novelist presents an amalgam of the political and social threats interwoven through the family drama including family feuds of the Vakeels, the Chenoy and the Contractors. Coomy Contractor is symbolic of the religious extremism of Shiv Sena that wants to eradicate the 'others'. She is analogous to the party's belief of having revenge from the 'other'. Whereas Shiv Sena wants to wipe out the Muslims who had once claimed their *Ram Janm Bhoomi* and built

Babri Masjid there, Coomy wants to do away with Nariman who had once married her widowed mother, Yasmin and made her mother's life miserable. Here, Nariman, the patriarch of the family emerges out as the victim of hatred just like the Muslims and other minorities of the country. His Parkinson's disease represents the tremors that the violence of Shiv Sena sends through the spine of common man. Yezad while pondering over the future of the Parsis compares Shiv Sena with bandits and smugglers like Veerappan who are robbing the country of precious sandalwood trees. He feels that Shiv Sena is robbing the nation of the rich culture of the Parsis and other minorities. It is also worth mentioning that the real culprits were the Muslim ancestors of the contemporary Muslims who had built a mosque on the land that belonged to the Hindus and in the case of Nariman, the actual wrongdoers were his parents who forced her to marry Yasmin against his wishes. In the former case, it was the religious fanaticism that had led to the bloodshed, but in the latter case it was the question of preserving the purity of the race. No doubt, it also springs from the religious extremism. The tie up of Coomy and Jal is like the coalition of Shiv Sena and BJP. Both the step children are involved in disposing off Nariman as both Shiv Sena and BJP made an attempt to eradicate the Muslims. Nariman's excreta and stench symbolically represent unbridled corruption and filth in socio-political system that need to be disposed off. Roxana is an exception who always plays the role of savior or redeemer since her birth. She is instrumental in bringing peace and settling the feuds. One of the minor characters, Edul Munshi, who is helpful in destroying the ceiling of Chateau Felicity, represents the fickle minded psyche of the mob that had destroyed the mosque and actively participated in riots. Like mob he is confident of himself, although, his activities prove fatal for him. Similarly, the annihilation of the mosque is represented here by the destruction of the house. All the individuals symbolically present various facets of the contemporary socio-political milieu. It is relevant to quote Rebecca, "As he (Mistry) did in *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*, in *Family Matters* too, he places the microcosm of individual's lives within macrocosmic events" (Rebecca 20).

Secular ideals of the author are represented by Mr. Kapur, the employer of Yezad; Daisy Ichhaporia, the violent player and Vilas Rane, the scribe. The secular and cosmopolitan outlook of Mr. Kapur emanates the idea of live and let live. These characters represent the religious tolerance of modern people and emerge out as a true representative of Bombay that shelters all and sundry. Mr. Kapur nurses his love for Bombay (he personifies it into a female), in spite of his immigrant status. His secular ideals are evident as he recruits Hussain, a Muslim after the riots and helps him overcome the emotional and mental trauma consequent of his first hand experience with riots. Moreover, Mr. Kapur celebrates festivals like Christmas, his attempt towards secularism. He declares that he celebrates "all festivals: Divali, Christmas, Id...Navroze, Baisakhi, Buddha Jayanti, Ganesh Chaturthi, everything" (Mistry 137). The melodious music played by Daisy Ichhaporia that soothes and comforts the agitating Nariman is symbolic of the harmonious conditions that once prevailed in cosmopolitan Bombay; Vilas Rane reads and writes letters for human beings rather than for specific religion or community. In his conversation with Yezad, he affirms that he cannot be a loyal Maharashtrian, a patriotic Indian, and a faithful Hindu. He denies a specific fundamentalist attitude as he transcends these barriers and has a secular approach. He performs the task as social work as he believes that in the absence of his services, people might approach "Shiv Sena Shakha where they would be exposed to vicious communal propaganda, might even get recruited in their stick and stones method of political persuasion..." (Mistry 122). Hussain, the attendant at the book store is representative of the common man, especially the Muslims, who had to suffer atrocities at the hands of Shiv Sena or the Hindu fundamentalists. Hussain and his family act as the microcosm of the entire Muslim community of Bombay who were victimized by the Hindu fundamentalist ideals of the party. He reported, "...the police were behaving like gangsters. In Muslim mohallas they were shooting their guns at innocent people...firing bullets like target practice. The guardians of the law were murdering everybody!" (Mistry 133). The police was backed by Shiv Sena as, "...police was helping the rioters withholding assistance in Muslim localities,"

(Mistry 133) thereby confirming the involvement of Shiv Sena in riots. Another allusion towards a secular attempt by Mistry is depicted by the harmonious relationship between the characters from different faiths. The characters co-exist, help each other and lend patient ear to one another. The faith or community instead of acting as hindrance proves to be soothing for each other. Dodiya says, "In *Family Matters* Mistry portrays characters from various communities like Parsis, Muslims, Hindus. By showing unity between Yezad (Parsi), Hussain (Muslim) and Vilas (Hindu), Mistry indicates that smooth relationship can exist among different communities" (119).

Shiv Sena's atrocities are made reminiscent by Yezad as he enlists the target and prioritizes, "Top of the list were Muslims, their favourite scapegoat as usual...Then the Sena had destroyed the famous Indian artists, deeming it disrespectful towards Hindu gods and goddesses. Men's magazines, endangering Indian morals with nudity and sex and vulgarity, had their offices set on fire. And women weren't allowed to work in bars and discos after eight o'clock..." (Mistry 237). The attack on Padma Vibhushna recipient, M. F. Hussain's exhibition at "Doshi-Hussain ni Gufa" and the consequent sabotage of the paintings is an example of Shiv Sena's fundamentalism. It was reported by *The Times of India* as, "Two Sainiks entered the hall in the guise of visitors to watch the 'India in the Era of Mughals' exhibition at around 4 pm. They shouted slogans against the artist and damaged the frames of two paintings...The activists shouted slogans like 'Balasaheb (Bal Thackeray) Zindabad', 'Shiv Sena Zindabad' and 'M F Husain Murdabad' besides distributing pamphlets, which threatened to disrupt any exhibition of Husain in the country."

Apart from the political turmoil, Bombay is also replete with corruption at social level with a backing from the prevalent political system. Yezad, in order to meet the growing domestic expenses with advent of Nariman, tries his hands at *matka* (gambling in Bombay). The author alludes to the role of Shiv Sena in this *matka*. In depth investigation by Gautam, a journalist, the name of Shiv Sena is mentioned in an article on *Matka*. He was attacked by some *goondas* as a consequence. Bhaskar calls Shiv

Sena, "our greatest urban menace." The corruption at political level surfaces itself at social level as Yezad plans to embezzle a large sum of money from his employer's office by misusing the notoriety of the Shiv Sena *goondas*. Not only Yezad, but, his son, Jehangir also gets involved in corruption. Appointed as the homework monitor of the class by Ms. Alvarez, his teacher, he starts overlooking the mistakes of his friends who offer him money. Although his motive behind the corrupt manners is good but the means to achieve the same are unethical. He epitomizes the social corruption at micro level. The socio-political milieu is such that the children automatically adapt themselves to corruption. Yezad affirms, "Corruption is in the air we breathe. This nation specializes in turning honest people into crooks" (Mistry 28). Jehangir reminds the reader of Jehangir, the Bulsara bookworm from "The Collectors" (*Tales from Firozsha Baag*) who also gets involved in same kind of corruption in order to collect stamps for his collection. For Mistry morality is of utmost importance, thus, he points out the widespread corruption in socio-political milieu. There is need for morality that is hinted at by the author. Regarding Mistry Morey asserts, "Mistry is a writer for whom morality is politics and politics is morality. Dogma of any kind will not do" (151).

While representing the family feuds as microcosm and the socio-political scene as macrocosm, the inevitable intrusion of Mistry's triple identity surfaces itself in the novel frequently. B. Vinodhini rightly comments, "Mistry attempts at giving details about the lifestyles and culture of Parsis wherever he gets an opportunity in his fiction." Being from a Parsi background, Mistry is eloquent about the cultural and religious rituals of his community. He refers to the Parsi prayers, *loban*, fire temple, *kusti*, *sudra*, *agyari*, *atash*, *ahirman*, *navjote*, *khordad sal*, *aiwisruthrem geh*, *yatha ahu varyu*, *uthamna*, *cahsam*, *doongerwadi*, *atash bahram*, *kem na mazda*, *ahura mazda*, *manashni*, *gavashni*, *kunashnikhordeh avesta*, *zend avesta*, *ahirman*, *Ormuzd*, *aachhu-michhu* and other Parsi customs. Here is an attempt by the author to preserve his culture. He even shows his concern for the dwindling number of the Parsis and defiling of the race by inter-religion marriages. Mr. Vakeel, Nariman's father is like Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thakrey who is

intolerant of any other community. Mr. Vakeel strictly opposes Nariman's marriage with Lucy, a Goan Christian. Having spent almost two and a half decades in India, Mistry's works also abound in Indianness. The communalism, inherent patriarchy, parents' consent for matrimony, different religions and so on, hints towards the Indianness of Mistry and the rampant whiff of Indianness in his works. Similarly, he refers to migration towards the West, though very subtly in this novel.

Along with the representation of the Parsi rituals, the author eulogizes art and its forms that are instrumental in bringing revolution in the society for the positive transformation. He talks of Gautam and Bhaskar, two journalists and artists of the theatre; the violin of Daisy Ichhaporia; letter reading and writing of Vilas Rane and the moving Santa of Mr. Kapur are employed as media that can bring a positive transformation in the society. Not only that these media provide a relief to the tormented souls who are disturbed by the socio-political scene created by Shiv Sena and the allied parties. Shiv Sena possesses the notoriety of being so cruel that Vilas believes that Shiv Sena terrorizes people and renders them trembling like Nariman does with Parkinson's disease. The constructive transformation is a must to build a healthy environment where one can prosper and move beyond mere survival. Usha Mandhan rightly comments, "A serious perusal of the novel projects the profound idea that no community prospers in isolation and that the entire globe must be accepted as a large family; and hence, it necessitates a sense of belonging" (200).

Mistry is not only critical of the Hindu fundamentalism, he is also critical of the fundamentalism raging among the Parsi community. The novel puts forward the issue of the inter religion marriage among the Parsis. Mr. Vakeel, Nariman's father opposed his marriage to a Goan Christian, Lucy. Nariman had to lose precious years of his life struggling to get permission for the marriage with Lucy. Ultimately, he had to submit himself to the wishes of his parents and marry a Parsi widow, Yasmin with two children from the previous marriage. The obvious reason was preservation of the purity of the race, a prestige issue for the Parsis. Later in the novel Yezad calls the practice, "the law of bigotry."

Ironically, Yezad himself turns into a religious bigot at the end of the novel and repeats the history by denying Murad's marriage, his son with a non-Parsi girl. No doubt, Mistry engages Jal in showing the secular side of the Parsis as he shows the portraits of Sai Baba, Virgin Mary, a Crucifixion, Haji Malang, Zarathustra, Lady Fatima and Lord Buddha, preserved by his ancestors. Religious bigotry entered much later in the Parsi religion.

Mistry in an honest attempt displays the ubiquitous religious fundamentalism present among Indians. He is critical of the same in his works and asserts a need for a practically secular nation instead of a nation where the best Constitution exists, but, not followed in an objective manner- unhindered by the intruding subjectivity. It is the need of the hour to eradicate all the malpractices in politics, religion and society to minimize the misuse of power and resources thereby making the country a safer place to live in where all the communities share healthy relationship. Instead of trying to annihilate the other community all must develop healthy relationships and co-exist peacefully. Thus, the focus on social and ethical values is a must to successfully attain a state of healthy inter-dependency, as no society can survive in seclusion.

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***The Sisters of the Spinning Wheel:* Puran Singh's First Voyage in Indian English Poetry**

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Puran Singh, a poet primarily of thought, emotion and sensation, deserves a significant mention in any discussion of Indian Poetry in English. He is a poet *par excellence* in the tradition of Walt Whitman, Emerson and Okakura Kakuzo, the great Japanese thinker and artist. *The Sisters of the Spinning Wheel* is Puran Singh's first collection of poetry. Puran Singh started on his poetic voyage with this book. The poems in it were composed, as is revealed by the poet's son, in 1915 when the poet was residing at Dehradun. It was first published in 1921 in England by Messrs J.M. Dent and Sons, a prestigious publishing house. The book was a great success and was very well received both by the reading public and the literary scholars. That it was reprinted only after half a century, in 1977, is in itself a sad commentary on the state of literary culture in India. When the book was first published, major newspapers of the day carried its laudatory reviews complimenting the author for his brilliant poetry introducing to the western reader India's, especially Punjab's, rich religious and cultural heritage. The editor of *The Hibbet Journal* called it a strange and wonderful book. *Birmingham Post*, *The Scotsman*, *The Methodist Recorder*, *The Christian World*, *The Education*, *The Theosophist* reviewed and praised the contents of the book. *The Saturday Review* declared that "The writing of Puran Singh, no less than *Guru Granth* which are his perpetual inspiration, display remarkable resemblances to the Spirit and sometimes to the letter of the Gospels."

Never has the first book of any poet, howsoever great or celebrated he may be, been praised so lavishly. The glowing commendation this book received from critics is a testimony to the fact that the publication of this book created ripples in the contemporary poetic scene. Yet the literary historians of Indian poetry in English have hardly taken note of this splendid book of English verse or its author. Puran Singh definitely does not deserve such neglect.

The Sisters of the Spinning Wheel, as its subtitle suggests, contains poems celebrating the land and life of Punjab and religion and culture of the Sikhs. In Puran Singh's scheme of things Punjab and Sikhism are inseparable. They sustain each other. In one of his Punjabi poems he says that Punjabi lives in the name of Sikh Gurus. The waters flowing in its rivers sing the song of *Japuji*, Guru Nanak's *magnum opus*.

The attractive name of the book recalls a vanishing custom of Punjab wherein old wives and young maidens of village, after finishing with their morning chores, gathered together thinking in a courtyard or under some tree for a session spinning yarn on their wooden wheels. Here they would engage in joyous gossip sharing dreams of future and exchanging their innocent secrets while at the same time chanting old popular songs. It is these songs which really reflect the cultural moorings and ethos of Punjab : its customs, beliefs and superstitions; its fables, myths and its spiritual lore; its love legends and legendary heroes; its men of God – the Sikh Gurus, the Sufis, the Bhaktas and of course, the local god men and these are actually the themes of the poems of this volume.

The inspiration for these poems has come, as the poet himself tells us in his Preface, from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* which Puran Singh calls a Mystic Person. "Whenever His Lotus-Foot come nigh," says the poet, "I bow before Him, I cry aloud in joy." These poems, he informs, were written in a moment of joy and under the cool shade of *Guru Granth*, a portion of the sweetness with which His Grace filled him at times. Puran Singh presents these outpourings of his heart as songs of joy uttered in the name of the 'Prophet of the Glory of the Lord of All.' The poems may, therefore, be called canticles to the Supreme Being.

The book has four sections, each devoted to a variant of the same theme: man's quest for the Infinite, a disciple's craving for the union with the Master or the individual soul's journey to the Divine Self. The first part, as its title suggests, contains poems of Punjab, the land of Puran Singh's dreams. It celebrates the *Land of Five Rivers* by singing its birds, by singing the beauty of its land, the music of its birds' chirpings and by depicting the romantic gatherings of women around a spinning-wheel where they spin not only cotton but romantic visions of their future. This section also extols the love-legends of Punjab--the romantic tales of *Sassi Punnu*, *Sohni* and *Mahiwal*, a Punjab wedding scene and such other narratives as are indispensable parts of Punjab's folk life. The tragedy of *Sassi* as described by Puran Singh is so moving that a reader cannot but empathize with her :

"One single night of joy they had together, and before the morn had opened her eyes, the camel drivers from *Punnu*'s home came and stole the sleeping *Punnu* from *Sassi*'s arms and drove the camels across the sands of *Sassi*'s lands."

O! why did the lovers drink the draughts of sleep? *Sassi*'s Prince of men was gone!!

Sassi comes seeking still her Prince of Love and there searching the sands, she dies still love – athirst!"

Similar is the fate of *Sohni*, the daughter of a Gujarat potter who had fallen in love with a merchant prince of Bukhara, Puran Singh describes her life's last moments in a heart - rending account: "It was pitch dark, the night was stormy and the *Chenab* was in flood; the sky thundered high as she plied her hands and swam amidst the blood thirsty death-mouthed waves!"

Love, according to Puran Singh, is indivisible. He does not make a distinction between love for God and love between men and women. If it is sincere and self-sacrificing devotion, whatever its hue, it leads to *Nirvana*.

This section of the book ends with a telling dialogue which sums up Puran Singh's philosophy of love: "God is great. On all His creatures He bestows these moments of the loftiest Love of man to man! How sublime this surrender of the Bride to the Bridegroom in Love! Would I could die, like her, to this House of my

childhood, and wake in that House of Love. Would I could bid, like her, that silent deep Farewell! But my soul! Is this all that they call Death?" For Puran Singh, God exists only in the hearts of men who are engaged in true love. This is in accordance with the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh: Only those people can have the pleasure of Divine Vision who love Him truly and sincerely.

"Koel," the first composition in this section is a poetic elaboration in typical Puran Singh style of two lines from one of the longer poems of Sheikh Farid in which a black cuckoo expresses her anguish over her being separated from Her Lover. This separation has, to express metaphorically, singed her body and she has turned black. It is a two stanza lyric. In the first, the poet asks the cuckoo the reason why she is black. And in the second stanza, the bird explains and in this explanation lies the central theme of the poet which is that Fire of Separation from the great Lord of Love burns the body and the body loses the shine:

"The Fire of Love has charred my wings,
And made me anew,
I am restless! Where is my beloved?"

The theme is continued in the next poem *Chatrik* where the bird is shown to be longing for a drop of nectar in the absence of which he is weeping. This is symptomatic of a Bhakta yearning for the grant of Nam by his Object of Love. Puran Singh himself explains in a footnote to the poem that "Chatrik or Sarang is the Indian name of a bird who in Panjabi poetry, like a Bulbul in Persian poetry, is the chief companion of the poet of love. It is said to be the chief lover of the clouds that gather in the Indian sky in the month of rain or *Sawan*. It is said to remain thirsty so long as it cannot have the rain-drop from the clouds. The season of rain after fierce beating of the sun for several months in the tropics is regarded as a blessing."

The poet compares the mind and soul of, Chatrik to a disciple who craves for *Hari Nam*, it is in search of the rain drops or pearl as we call it flying from wood to wood. Painfully it waits for the drop, the sky is full of clouds, but for *Chatrik* every lake or river is dry. Its thirst can't be satiated with any other lake, river or ocean. All mankind, all animated creatures can be benefitted by the clouds

and rain except it. The Heart which longs for *Hari Nam* can only be the heart of a saint and can only be at its happiest by the nectar drop. The poet concludes on a note of optimism that this *Chatrik*, at last, gets that desired drop, and is filled with the Infinite. He is satisfied with only one drop from Heaven, i.e. with the blessing of *Hari Nam*. *Chatrik* has been used metaphorically, for a lover of the Divine who is pining for meeting his beloved, as a *Chatrik* is believed to do.

"O *Chatrik*! Lover of the cloud-clad skies, a thirst, a longing
for the nectar drop!

Thou hast the soul of a disciple that pants for *Hari Nam*
!the season of clouds.

The second section of the book carries what Puran Singh called **Poems of a Sikh**. These are mostly canticles giving voice to a devotee's desire for the Holy Union. These poems speak both of the agony of separation and the pleasure of being at His Court. In some of the poems, Puran Singh expresses joy at the bounties and blessings of the Almighty, annihilation of the physical self into the spiritual, the invocation of the Almighty and the praise of the Guru.

Sant Singh Sekhon's observation in his editorial foreword, that to the Sikh, God is first of all a turbaned man like himself, is based on a subjective interpretation of the first poem. *The Unknown God-The Turbaned man* which may or may not be true for Puran Singh, does not conceive God as a human being though he sees Him in every human being- in fact, in every object of nature. *The Turbaned Man* is not necessarily a hymn in praise of God: the poem can easily be interpreted as Puran Singh's tribute to *Guru Gobind Singh*, the tenth master, and as is his wont, mixing his devotion to the Guru with his wonderment at the glory of God and thus creating a mystical vision where the real and unreal so mingle that a new amalgamated spectacle overpowers the poet's consciousness. Puran Singh hardly even differentiates between the Guru and the Supreme Being.

In the succeeding poems, Puran Singh emphasizes that his concept of the Almighty is an impersonal power. The Lord is *The Man In Me and Not In Me* for the great Lord resides in human beings at His Own Will and when one is bereft of His Will, one feels like "a vacant house with silent walls and dust!"

Puran Singh describes the ecstasy of spiritual union in a style which uplifts the reader's mind to higher spiritual regions:

Ah! The moment when he strains me in his embrace!
 What am I but a poet of bells, a song!
 Each hair of mine grows a tongue and
 Enchanted bathes in holy bliss and grateful wonder!
 Each pore of mine is nectar-laced, my very
 flesh cries: Hail Holy One!!"

When I Know Not is a short poem of eleven lines describing the agony of separation.

Glory! Glory! Everywhere is another lyric like poem which celebrates the exhilarating experience and rapture of the Divine Union. A moment of super-consciousness when a drop falls into an ocean and becomes a part of it.

"My steps are unsteady with joy
 I fall, I rise, I sink and soar in Him.
 The rain of Nectar floods my heart
 And melts my wind away in holiness of God,
 Enraptured this and with His sight
 I see all things are Divine and fair.
 Glory! Glory! Everywhere!"

When All the Doors Are Closed emphasizes the benevolent and merciful nature of the Supreme Divine. In this poem Puran Singh opines that the sacred *Nam* is the refuge of all those who have lost all hope in life.

"When my deeds condemn me to the death of
 Forgetfulness of Thee
 My Lord! Even then Thy will bless, the door will
 Be open for me!"
 Such is Thy Love and Compassion that reckons
 Not, nor weighs, nor sits in judgment, but like a
 Mother forgives!"

His Miracles Are Great is an expression of poet's gratefulness to the Eternal Formless One who made man's existence possible. The poem's inspiration has come from Guru Nanak Dev's long poem *Asa di Var*. Can one measure the greatness of God? Certainly not, says Puran Singh, in this poem.

'Innumerable are His blessings, 'His bounties and, His gifts and His favours'.

Another important poem which is typical of Puran Singh's style is *Nam: The Name of The Infinite*. *Nam* is a very important concept in Sikhism. On the surface, it means a continuous chanting of God's name by the disciple. But in Gurbani it stands for the Eternal Voice, The word of God or the *Anhad Nad* in Sikh parlance.

The poem describes *Nam* as the "Spell of Love that never dies." Chanting of *Satnam*, he says, opens the door of life that no thinking can unbar.

"The Nam fresh-dyed from red lips of Love
 Kindles a perpetual song in me!
 And in its glow, me seems, all things are good.
 This world is Heaven, the wind and waters
 Speak, and every blade of grass whisper its joy."

In the course of the poem, Puran Singh widens the concept of *Nam* and describes it as the Divine Spirit which pervades the whole universe. Ernest and Grace Rhys have correctly observed that *Nam* here stands both for the name of God and for the union with God to be attained by the devout repetition of His *Nam*. The poem culminates with the description of *Nam* as a panacea of all ills, all troubles, all miseries and all sufferings:

"*Nam* alone is Love, *Nam* is truth and light,
Nam is the beginning, *Nam* the end,
Nam is the way and the lamp,
Nam is the end-all and be-all,
 No one phase of life can define *Nam*,
 All life is contained in it, this is all."

In the third and fourth sections of the book Puran Singh has recreated the spiritual magic of certain hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the living Guru of Sikhs. In his Preface to the book, Puran Singh tells us: "These pieces can at best, be said to convey a small portion of the Divine Idea that floods every page of *Guru Grantha*, it requires the whole of Divine Humanity to interpret for the life of man the meaning and music of *Guru Grantha* that transcends life on this earth and is heard beyond death. So do we believe."

Ernest and Grace Rhys have pertinently observed that

most of the songs in the book are in some way derived from the sacred Sikh *Granth* but here it must be noted that Puran Singh has not translated the text word by word as M.A. Macauliffe or later other translators like Gopal Singh Dardi, Gurbachan Singh Talib and Manmohan Singh have done. He has rather expanded the theme of the sacred text and explained it in his own inimitable style using his own individual imagination and his own expression to make his compositions almost original. Actually these are transcreations of various hymns written by Sikh Gurus. Such extension of theme and expansion of subject-matter endows Puran Singh's poems with a feel of being original inspired poetry. However, as Ernest Grace Rhys have said in the Introduction to the book, "Whether the rendering be close or free, the religious emotion is always in essence the same, and it is always authentic. It runs right through the songs from beginning to end, and no reader can fail to be touched by its sincerity, grace and fervour." Even Puran Singh's rendering of Japuji and other sacred texts is more of a dissertation on Guru Nanak Dev's *magnum opus* rather than an English rendering of the sacred text.

By *Simran*, Puran Singh does not mean any religious ritual like chanting a text or counting the Beads. Meditation, according to him, is loving deeply, sincerely and with humility as well as complete surrender to the Object of Love. Meditation means leading the life in Divine Shadow, always bowing to His Command. In *Of What Use To Turn the Beads*, Puran Singh rejects the ritual worship like that of a professional priest. Rather he chooses a path of deep meditation and acceptance with joy the sacred Will of the Almighty. *Simran*, he says, in *All The March of Things Is Divine*, another poem, is the planetary march of our life round the higher life of Heaven:

"Of what use to turn the beads in my hands,
If my heart, turns not like the earth, around its
Sun, in its eternal journey unbroken by a step!"
"Not to be priest with beads but to be a rosary
Ourselves made of heart-beats,
Moving as he may move, obedient to His Will;
We live as the Children of Song!"

"*Simran* is the soul of man in earnest march to
Heaven; long is his journey and far, far off is
His home. But the Unseen pulls at his heart,
The ends of the strings that pull are in the
Hands of the Guru. He propels all motion."

In *Touch My Heart* Puran Singh craves for the holy touch of the Almighty. *As A Woman Loves A Man* is a lyric which describes the spiritual longing through the metaphor of worldly love. *I Do Not Know Why* sings of the power and glory of *Simran* which leads to the amalgamation of human soul with the Divine Spirit.

Describing humility of a devotee in *I Am the Gardener's Daughter*, a beautiful allegorical poem, the poet narrates the story of an innocent young maiden, the daughter of a gardener, who has nothing but some flowers to offer at the lotus feet of her Divine Lover.

"I daily pass through the mart, the throng, the lanes,
The staying hands!
"Every day I lay my basket of flowers at his feet!
"Every day He takes the humble offerings, the offerings of
a poor daughter of a gardener!
Every day He says, "My daughter!"
And every day I say, "My Father!"

The theme continues in *An Offering*, the last poem of the section. The only offering a disciple can make to his Lord is his love, devotion and self-surrender. The only offering a humble seeker can make is his own self, his devotion, his love and his complete submission:

"I am thy servant lying in one of thy out-houses!
My Lord! An old, unserviceable servant of Thine!
My Lord! I have nothing to offer Thee!
Only a pair of blind, old, shivering hands groping in!
The dark for Thee!"

This poem highlights the humility of a disciple and helplessness to find something worthy of the Lord to present as an offering. The Lord has created the world and everything in it. Though *The Sisters of the Spinning Wheel* is Puran Singh's first collection of poetry, the book is an important milestone in his

literary career and is of perennial import, for its content as well as for its form and especially for its flights of fancy, for its fast-forward flow of passion, its rich tapestry of metaphors-both ethereal and earthy, and for its highly charged diction. The spiritually inclined will read this book with undiminished interest.

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The nebulous identity of Vikram in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*

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M.G.Vassanji's novel, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, is a work about the dilemma of an individual caught up in a turbulent time fraught with sweeping political changes, and gives an insight into the ravages affected by those very changes. The Kenyan political scene, during its independence and after, is interwoven intricately in the description of the life of Vikram Lall, the narrator, and is instrumental in making him what he has become. The debilitating effects of politics are inescapable but the degree to which politics can distort an existence is shocking in its revelation.

A close examination of Kenya's murky political present cannot be effectively conducted without a microscopic look at its past, particularly to the emergency of 1952-60 which is famously known as the Mau Mau uprising. This is the world in which Vikram Lall grows up with his sister Deepa and their friends-the African, Njoroge and the British, Bill and Annie. It is in this politically charged environment that they experience a panorama of love, betrayal, hurt and insecurity, all of which contribute in delineating the course of their lives. The novel-a Giller prize winner-weaves a fabric out of the nostalgic threads of Vikram's memories and is a compelling portrait of a man who always finds himself on the periphery of things, on the outside, detached, yet looking in and unconsciously assessing.

A telling question stares the reader in the eye as Vassanji, through the narrator, compellingly focuses on the psyche of the people who have migrated to lands away from 'home' and traversed a variety of 'routes' after being pulled apart from their 'roots':

What makes a man leave the land of his birth, the home of his childhood memories? (Vassanji 17).

Safely ensconced in the Canadian wilds, where he is hiding from the Kenyan government, Vikram goes over the story of his life, from his humble beginnings in Nakuru to his glamorous post-independence role of a money launderer in Nairobi for the government of Jomo Kenyatta. Moving down memory lane, he recalls his 'history' with which he has been acquainted by his grandfather who along with other indentured labourers had been recruited from north-west India and brought to an alien, beautiful and wild country at the dawn of the twentieth century. For Vikram and his sister, Kenya has always been 'home' and it is this land that he carries within his soul, to which he wants to return after his exile. It is here that Vikram gets his first political education, experiences the joys of friendship, the pangs of loss of his closest relations and becomes a "monster". And it is here that he is plunged into an eternal sadness and a dilemma about his sandwiched identity of being neither a 'White' nor an 'African'.

Vikram's father, Ashok, is a typical product of the colonial period, loyal to the Queen, a member of the Asian Home Guard troops used by the British to suppress the Africans and a man who openly shows his disgust towards India, though, ironically enough takes recourse to that very country and its traditions to dissuade Deepa from committing herself to an African. Vikram's mother, Sheila, on the other hand, is a racist Punjabi housewife who just can't understand why her only daughter would fall in love with Njoroge, a Kikuyu. She continues to carry the baggage of memories that are all Indian in essence though she has lost her 'home' back there due to the country's partition.

Vikram's innocent childhood does not remain unscathed from the effects of the political turmoil and the heart-wrenching murders of the Bruces bring about a complete metamorphosis in his persona. From the playful, vibrant, chirpy Vic, he turns to the quiet, resilient, deceitfully tranquil Vikram, who develops a stutter as his emotions choke him for words. The numbness that became second skin to him takes him across the rough bruising patch of life where the loss of Annie – not only his playmate, but also the earliest

love of his life – catapults him into a disturbing series of nightmares. This irreparable loss continues to haunt him for the best part of his life, never allowing him to be free of "that shadow" that continues to follow him.

Mwangi - the gentle gardener and Njoroge's grandfather, who turns out to be the Mau Mau oath giver and is killed by the British later in the novel, had been an important pillar of Vikram's existential edifice. His implication in the heinous act of helping the murderers of the Bruce family tears Vikram apart and shakes the foundation on which his trust had been supported. As we behold the mature Vikram, we cannot but help noticing how wary he has become of relationships and commitment. Close on the heels of this revelation, comes the shocking realization that his charming uncle, Mahesh is a covert Mau Mau supporter and had been the one to steal his father's gun, instrumental in the gruesome murders. He is later deported to India by the new African leaders.

Njoroge's going away to a boarding school and his reappearance in Vikram and Deepa's life is again fraught with serious repercussions. His idealism in the newly independent Kenya finally brings in its wake his assassination. It seems that only Vikram is an able judge of the fickleness of the changing times and understands the greatest post-colonial regret of the inability of the new nations to protect them from corruption. He makes no effort to change anyone's mind or viewpoint and seems to flow with the tide. His stance asserts itself in the following words:

It was not for me to change this world. Moral judgements, therefore, I shied away from, and this became the secret of my success...I therefore prefer my place in the middle, watch events run their course. This is easy, being an Asian, it is my natural place (Vassanji 306).

At a very early stage in his life, readers see, most clearly, Vikram's separation from both cultures. He can't help thinking that both Bill and Njoroge "were genuine, in their very different ways; only I, who stood in the middle, Vikram Lall, cherished son of an Indian grocer, sounded false to myself, rang hollow like a bad penny" (Vassanji 49). This nebulous identity unfolds itself through Vikram's recollections of his in-between life, as he looks back on his

years in East Africa from the safe distance of Southern Ontario. Alienated from his family in India and also from the majority of Kenyans, Vikram does what he thinks is essential to merge within the corrupt status-quo and the morally ambiguous new Kenya where the Mau Mau fighters, who gave up everything to fight the colonialists, are hounded on the streets and arrested for petty reasons. The new African elite suddenly begin to ape their British predecessors. The same colonial policemen and their African collaborators who tortured the Mau Mau and the other Blacks during the emergency are still in office as security advisors for the new ruling class and the 'free' Kenya is rife with deep-rooted corruption where reservations about co-existence of variously different cultures take on mammoth proportions.

The Kenya that Vassanji writes about, changes as the story progresses. He explores the subtle distinctions which exist between different racial, ethnic and tribal groups during that period of rapid change. Vikram and Deepa inhabit a murky 'middle' ground which made them suspect to both the white and black communities.

We lived in a compartmentalised society; every evening from the melting pot of city life each person went his long way home to his family, his church, his folk (Vassanji 286-287).

When the Kenyans eventually gain their independence, the Indian community finds itself caught in the middle, as Africans try to take over, not just the property and functions of the British, but also of non-Africans including Vikram's family. Having lost their land, family and traditions in India, when their village became part of Pakistan, they fear similar losses in Kenya. Vikram moves up the political ladder-working for ministries and powerful individuals but he finds himself powerless to resist orders of his superiors, even though he knows that his primary responsibility is to launder cash which comes into his office as bribes. Increasing corruption taints the country. His life's reigns seem to be not in his hands anymore but with those in power and who are hell-bent upon using him the way his father had been used by the British against the natives. Thus is reinforced the fact that his loyalty also takes on an ambiguous "in-between" position where he does not

realise when the tide of times sweeps him out of his beloved Kenya. He is reduced to a seemingly cold and calculating facilitator who lies and swindles to help others get what they want and becomes "one of Africa's most corrupt men, a cheat of reptilian cunning" (Vassanji 1) though the character who surfaces over the pages of the novel doesn't really seem to live up to that description. He seems to occupy that shade of grey within his personality that defies any categorisation other than the obvious 'in-between'.

A myriad of volatile events shape this dubious personality. He comes from the ultimate in-between social group-an Indian in Africa. Though his grandfather helped build the railway, that cuts through Kenya, his family's status remains enigmatic and unsettled. Indians are viewed as the 'other' by both the whites and blacks and the idyllic childhood around him soon begins to collapse. The times turn traitor, the political scene turns morbid and those who were once trusting, unquestioning servants have secretly taken the vow of the Mau Mau. But even in this increasingly perilous time, Vikram remains enthralled with his country which only hints at the innocence of childhood that remains unperturbed in the face of all odds. It is only after the brutal snapping of all important ties in his life that Vikram turns inwards and retreats into a shell of his own creation. Later in a liberated Kenya, under the rule of Kenyatta, Vikram's friend Njoroge re-enters his life and falls passionately in love with Deepa. For a while it seems as though their cross-cultural love might pave the way for a ground-breaking discrimination-free Kenya, but it was always doomed in the face of the stark racial differences that even the seemingly new age could not overcome. The in-between identities of Vikram and Deepa assert themselves in the failure of this relationship. It is because of their mother's inability to forget her innate 'Indianness' that an acceptance of a Black son-in-law becomes unbearable. Her allegiance to her 'Indian' past shadows her 'Kenyan' identity.

As Vikram grows older, his career seems to be shaping up attractively and he becomes a man who would happily choose to stay on the side of lawfulness and obedience. But Kenya in the 1970s is not a place for any of these qualities. Politics is an area of life

that never appealed to Vikram, but it is politics that ultimately envelopes him and gradually pulls him into the 'in-between'. His heart, as the saying goes, is in the right place, but when he begins to work for the corrupt Kenyan politicians, his hands are often in the right place too. He accepts his role of a middleman unquestioningly even when his father advises him to resign from his job. In his own words, he "was simply an intermediary between the donors and the beneficiaries" (Vassanji 290).

Vikram Lall might not be an evil man, but the temptation of questionable money certainly proves irresistible to him and he is pulled into the abyss of reckless time and his crimes are the crimes of circumstance, at least that's what he would like the reader to believe.

I have no explanations for myself either. My life simply happened, without deep designs on my part (Vassanji 291).

His becoming the perfect scapegoat—a money-changing middleman—impassively and without too much reflection reinforces his in-betweenness. Vikram Lall's existential status becomes one of a middleman, a crucial cog in the embezzlement schemes and often devoid of thought or action. He fits into the mould of a man of no sides and is caught between ethics and politics. The truth lies somewhere in the well-wrought portrait of his troubled self who belongs in the in-between category of a great hero and a 'reptilian monster'.

Also caught in-between the crushing memory of Annie and the turbulent racist present engulfing his suspended relationship with Yasmin, Lall becomes emotionally crippled. He can neither overcome the youngest love of his life, nor can he move on to a new journey of commitment to Yasmin. It was as if he was frozen in time, in that in-between no-man's-land where he could not stake claim to either his memories or his feelings for Yasmin, thereby ending up in the non-committal existence of "rice and daal and chappati forever" (Vassanji 286). The warring worlds of his childhood innocence and the colonial world of repressive innocence suck him into a liminal position that will dog him for the rest of his life. Left to his own means in the frozen black eternity of

Southern Ontario as opposed to the landscape filled with sunshine and the innocent fluttering hope of youth, he takes to self-introspection to delve into the depths of the real Vikram Lall. Canada becomes the in-between, a perfect void, a place to slowly work over his memories, smoothing out the troubled and regretful crumples in the fabric of his life.

Through his character, Vassanji seems to be attempting to discuss the ambiguous situation of Asians of Kenya who are neither indigenous nor European colonizers. The novel captures significant characteristics of diaspora and of an immigrant's search for his place in the world. In spite of the fact that Kenya is the country of his birth and he has never been to India even if his roots are buried there, none of these countries own him up completely. The lessons in Indianness that his mother ensures he and his sister receive from her in the daily mundaneness are not enough to ingrain an Indian heart inside him. He is a man of the world but ironically belonging nowhere.

Throughout the novel Vikram agonises over the question of whether or not to return to Kenya and deal with the consequences of his past actions. But when he does return to Kenya, he finds that to the Africans he would always be the Asian – the Shylock—who would never escape the suspicion and the enigma associated with them. Caught between the many worlds that he inhabits—Nakuru, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and finally Canada—he is rendered homeless. Having been removed from a place of supposed origin, he, like the people who reverberate with the ramifications of an 'exodus', moves on, like a tortoise within its shell.

There is a lingering, poignant melancholy in this etching of the nuanced portrait of Vikram Lall with chaotic violence simmering around him. Beautifully sketching Vikram's childhood relationships, Vassanji succeeds in bringing home the fact that an innocent mixing of bloods in the childhood was not enough to rid a nation of the perils of suffocating power equations in the impassioned youth. Also vividly describing Vikram's ties with the Indian community, both in Kenya and with the family back home – established in abstraction with anecdotes from his mother,

incorporating memories of her father – he shows how the Lall's are doubly alienated, first from their family in India, thanks to the British partition of India, and from the majority of the population of Kenya.

A fully developed saga that overwhelms the emotions of the readers and reflects the relentlessly cruel history is unveiled with the accompaniment of the painful scathing of innocent lives. This grand narrative rises above the merely personal to become a subtle account of the political scene of Kenya where from a successful civil service career, Lall is sucked into the vortex of corruption of post-colonial Kenya. Vassanji delineates the ambiguity of his identity that morally and emotionally cripples him and forever changes him into a middleman, an “in-between” in more ways than one. He is a man who, in spite of his perilous journey through time, survives.

I don't have a choice. But this is Vikram Lall, remember-I am the least political person you know. I survive (Vassanji 268).

The jury awarding Vassanji's novel with the prestigious Giller prize declared the novel as the powerful and haunting story of an Indian family living in the turbulence of an emergent Kenya. The novel chronicles the main character's own evolution against a mesmerising literary landscape replete with luminous memoirs, fascinating characters and inspiring prose. The novel also seems to be reminiscent for Vassanji himself in the sense that it carries a streak of an autobiographical note in it. Vassanji trails the same path from Kenya to Canada for the protagonist and seems to be representing his own journey along the same path in an attempt to come to terms with his own identity.

The hauntingly poignant epigraphs to the novel hint right away to the ambiguous note that remains deeply enmeshed in the narration and the reader is perplexed at finding himself becoming 'that third' who walks along with the narrator and his shadow, a partner in his 'crime'. This 'third' seems to be the omnipresent Annie's ghost at other times which heightens the dilemma in Vikram's life who on the surface seems to be resilient and complacent and moves with the flow without too much thought.

Vikram could never shake off her memory and never moved ahead in time emotionally, caught up in a kind of a time warp. This existence 'in-between' the past and the present overthrows his feeble attempts to move ahead with Yasmin, almost deadening his soul to what is corrupt in and around him. The resounding echoes of the past render him frozen like a drop of rainfall solidified before finding ground beneath it – neither here nor there; not this, not that – like the ill-fated Trishanku. Also seen in the light of his true self that remains an enigma to even the closest of his friends to whom he never opened his 'real self' to, it can be said that the picture he tries to portray and the one he really presents to the outer world lies in a parenthetical relation to his 'in-between' true self.

India had always been a fantasyland for Vikram since his childhood with tales drawing upon mythology and religion seeming to echo the music of a faraway, almost non-existent land. Africa had always been home to him with the knowledge of his grandfather having laid down rails authenticating his existence. But in the ultimate showdown of time and its many vagaries, he is left debating the question of 'home' where both these lands slip through his fingers with only memories to fall back upon. Vikram seems to become, in the ultimate analysis, a living, breathing manifestation of his own childhood pastime of eavesdropping on the threshold, the lurking presence in the 'in-between'. Throughout his life he stands on the periphery of all that happens in his life, not intruding, quietly ruminating and mentally filing away truths which ultimately become too much for his solitary being to handle, thereby paralysing him into an emotional invalid who remains unperturbed by most things and their consequences. A man of no sides is what he is doomed to be; an irredeemable “in-between”.

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Feministic Undertones in Rabindranath Tagore's *Punishment, Vision and Garibala*

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As a writer of short stories, Rabindranath Tagore ranks among the great short story writers of the world like Guy De Maupassant, Edgar Allan Poe, Leo Tolstoy and Anton Chekov. He raised the Bengali short stories to the status of an independent literary form. Credited with introducing colloquial speech into Bengali literature, his short stories are fine works of art immensely valuable due to realistic depiction of rural and urban Bengal. However, these stories are by no means confined to the limits of time and space of Bengal at a particular period and have a universal appeal.

The themes of Tagore's short stories mostly revolve around the problems of joint family system, family clashes, social criticism in a wider sense, love; passionate or placid, outside marriage ties born out of conjugal bond and love in its waywardness and eccentricities. Moreover his stories often focus on the struggles of women in a traditional Indian society and many of them are concerned with marital relationships and the various forms and issues of conflict between husband and wife.

Tagore is not a mere photographer of contemporary social life as he has focussed the attention of his readers on the sorepoints. With his superb artistic power he has brought before the public view numerous cases of social injustice especially to women. He also exposes the pitiable condition of women in the Bengali society against the odds of feudal system and even points

out how women wants and rights are suppressed. At the same time, he also talks about the strength, courage, and determination of these women, who in spite of being the victims of patriarchal society, with their moral courage and spiritual wealth have become an inspiration for many others.

In many of Tagore's short stories, women are the central characters and the figures and he treats their problems in different situations and creates examples of womanhood which stand out as individuals and which are remembered long after one has finished reading a story. Tagore has shown an unparalleled understanding of woman as lover, wife, mother and the practical worker. While reading these stories the reader can easily identify himself with the characters whose problems, worries and sorrows are no less a part of the reader's life also. One can feel oneself in the company of these immortal women and in many of the stories the threads are left hanging at the end and one keeps wondering as to what will happen to the life of the protagonist as in the story *Vision* and *Giribala*.

In the women characters portrayed by Tagore few deserve special mention. In *Punishment*¹ Chandra, the young wife of Chiddam who is uneducated and a bit difficult accepts death, suffering the extreme punishment for the murder she has not committed, in order to save her husband's brother. In *vision*² the carelessness of her husband, Abinash, makes the wife, Kumo lose her powers of vision and causes physical blindness. When Kumo gets blind, her husband falls in love with a young girl, Hemangini, and starts thinking of remarrying without considering as to what his wife will have to go through both mentally and emotionally. The traditional loyalty towards the husband rules the whole story and the woman suffers through the failings of a man.

*Giribala*³ is a story about a young lady who is married into a wealthy household and has all her requirements met, except for the attention and love of her husband she desires the most. Her husband deserts her because of his fascination for a theatre actress, Lavanga. When her husband is accused of molesting a stage artist, he runs away taking Lavanga with himself thus attempting to spoil a show in which she has to play a lead role. Despite all this, after the

show's huge success he comes back to inquire about the performer and gets shocked to see Giribala on the stage. Giribala defies all social conventions by leaving her husband's house thus challenging his authority.

In *Punishment* the peasant brothers Dukhiram and Chiddam are dragged away to slave all day in the landlord's field without any food or pay, neglecting their own crops. The story takes a sudden twist when Dukhiram's mounting anger and exhaustion finds expression in his mortal attack on his wife. This is something very shocking for both the brothers and when devastated by the situation, they cannot not think of anything to say, when moneylender comes to see them, Chiddam on the spur of the moment pins the murder on Chandra. It is done not because Chiddam does not love Chandra, but because he comes from a society where the social structure is such, that it implanted in him the notion that a wife is the most insignificant "thing" in a man's life.

The story further suggests that it is really easy for a man to remarry and Chiddam's ideas support this when he argues, "If I lose my wife I'll get another, but if my brother is hanged I'll never get another." Kumo in *Vision* might have met the same fate when her husband was about to remarry and Giribala stands close to these two because for her husband, her importance as a wife is negligible and he finds his pleasure outside marriage.

The story of *Punishment* is unique in its plot and treatment. On the one hand it talks about the complex audacities of human behaviour and on the other it also reveals the unjust social structure of those times, where a woman was victimized to all kinds of insults, indignities, physical assault, injustice and inhumanity. Although towards the end, Chiddam tries very hard to save Chandra but when she finds false allegation against herself, she makes no attempt of self-defence. Chandra has an essential sense of self-respect, her integrity is badly hurt and she could not stand the absolute betrayal of her husband. Though she has suffered throughout but she has emerged very strongly towards the end. The ending of *Punishment* is as unfathomable as it is celebrated. Dammed by her own husband, sentenced for the murder she did

not commit, Chandra's last wish is to see her mother. Her utterance in the last line consists of a single Bengali word, "Maran!" (Death). It conveys bitter rage at her husband's perfidy. Her one word utterance at the end is the briefest close to a short story by Rabindranath and his penetration into the life of Bengal is the deepest in this story.⁴

Chandra do not want to see her husband even when she has acknowledged and confirmed his undeterred love for her, because then, she might have not been able to keep her calm, and though she loves him profoundly, she has been unable to forgive him. Her trust in him has completely shattered and now she does not want to exist in the world where a woman's existence is that of a subdued animal.

In *Vision* Tagore has dealt with some very basic yet very significant feminist issues. The very first sentence of the story, "When I was a very young wife, I gave birth to a dead child, and came near to death myself. I recovered strength very slowly, and my eyesight became weaker and weaker", suggests the pitiable condition of the women who are endowed with the responsibility of motherhood at a very young age and due to their physical weakness suffer throughout.

The story further suggests how a woman after getting married is unable to balance between her parents and in-laws. The same is with Kumo, who is torn between her loyalty towards her brother and her husband. When there is a straining relationship between the two she is the one actually suffering which gets clear when she says that "While they were quarrelling, I was saying to myself that it was always the poor grass that suffered most when two kings went to war. Here was a dispute going on between these two, and I had to bear the brunt of it". The way she has identified herself with the "poor grass", which is trampled down by the feet of the people and who are not bothered about such a trivial "object," portrays her emotional plight.

Kumo also suffers the complete disregard of Abinash who fails to understand her. He never tries to understand her feelings and anxiety. After she loses her eyesight and that too because of his carelessness, she is no longer considered a woman by him and he

says that he needs an ordinary woman to spend his life with. One cannot even imagine the pain which Kumo might have gone through when her husband says:

I will tell you the truth. I am afraid of you. Your blindness has enclosed you in its fortress, and I have now no entrance. To me you are no longer a woman. You are awful as my God. I cannot live my everyday life with you. I want a woman--just an ordinary woman--whom I can be free to chide and coax and pet and scold.

Although Kumo suffers because of the negligence of her husband but somewhere even she lacked the concern for herself. She herself considered the matter of her eyes as something very trivial. In the society in which Kumo lives, a woman is thought to be a liability for her husband rather than his counterpart. Even she considers herself a burden on her husband and do not want to trouble him because of her blindness, which might even suggest some kind of self-reliance and dignity. Even after knowing and understanding everything she used to deceive herself by false consolations. In the end, she has emerged quite strongly, although not exactly like Chandra and Giribala, but she at least gathers the courage to question her husband, contrary to her always enduring attitude. She does not want him to remarry at any cost and says that "If I be a true wife, then, may God be my witness, you shall never do this wicked deed, you shall never break your *oath*⁵. Before you commit such sacrilege, either I shall become a widow, or Hemangini shall die."

Of all the maidens described by Tagore, Hemangini is one of the few highly spirited girls. She remains unmarried till the age of fifteen because she is a Kulin⁶ girl. Her aunt plans out to marry her to Abinash and soon she becomes very fond of Kumo, however her native wit enables her to do away with the nefarious plan of her aunt. When her aunt gives her a beautiful ring on behalf of Abinash she quickly says "Look, Aunt, just see how splendidly I aim" and flung the ring through the window in to the tank outside. Marriage was such a big problem for the grown up Kulin girls in 1899 when the story was written that none but an exceptionally spirited girl could take such a step.⁷ Her love and sympathy towards blind

Kumo alone must have inspired her to spurn the extended hand of Abinash.

Tagore also reveals the emptiness and boredom in the life of the ladies of the richer and upper middle classes. The husband is busy with the management of estates, looking after trade and industry or engaged in music, dance and drama. If the wife has got no children to look after, nor household work to perform, she finds time hanging over her. She was not at all satisfied with her life and "Her world seemed to her distasteful and mean, like a rotten fruit swept into the dustbin."

Giribala has not been allowed by her husband to move out of her house. She lacks the freedom she deeply craves for, and so "she knew she had the power in her hand which could make the world of men her captive, only that world itself is missing." Once she goes to the theatre on her own and there she felt, as if it was the real, or rather a world of dreams for her and "the theatre seemed to her like a world where society gets suddenly freed from its law of gravitation."

In the theatre, when she saw the play of Radha and Krishna being staged, she relates herself to the offended Radha, who refused to recognise Krishna because of her wounded pride. After the show got over "She waited for the curtain to rise again and the eternal theme of Krishna's humiliation at the feet of Radha to continue". This shows that, she now becomes aware of the power she has in herself and she somehow wanted to treat her husband the way Krishna has been treated.

Giribala discovers that she can play the part of the heroine on the stage much better than the professional actress, who has infatuated her husband. Having been persistently neglected and insulted by him, she leaves home and took to the life of an actress, which hitherto has been considered to be an ignoble profession before the present generation.

In all these stories, Tagore has depicted women characters who are being exploited time and again by the patriarchal system but when needed they have the power to defy it completely and stand up for themselves. Although Tagore raises many grave feminist issues in his stories but not very often does he provides any

solution to them. Through his major female characters, Tagore wants to indirectly suggest that these women are perhaps themselves responsible to a certain extent for their ill-treatment and deplorable condition. When in *Vision* Abinash says that "I have also something I want to say to you. Never again put me to shame by calling me your God", it states that women themselves keep men a level higher than themselves. Being born in a patriarchal society they grow up learning and accepting the norms of the social set up where a woman is always seeking favours and love of her husband. Yet, if their conscience is awakened, they can emerge as strong-willed characters who refuse to compromise with their self-respect and integrity and even go to the extent of choosing death like Chandra or sacrificing the social and financial security of a marriage, to follow her heart's desire, by going against the ways of the society and joining the theatre, like Giribala.

Notes

1. *Punishment* is the English translation of the short story, Shasti, the text that has been referred to here, is translated by Supriya Chaudhari.
2. *Vision* is the English translation of Bengali short story Drishtidan. *Vision* is anthologised in *The Hungry stones and other stories* published by The Macmillan Company in 1916. Text Source: <<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/rthungry.htm>>
3. *Giribala* is an English translation of Tagore's Bengali short story Man Bhanjan which was first published in *Modern review* in 1917 and was later included in *The Broken ties and other stories* in 1925.
4. From 'Introduction' of *The Oxford Tagore Translations* edited by Sukanta Chaudhari, pp. 22
5. Abinash had taken an oath in the name of his family God that if he remarries may the most hated of all sins fall on his head.
6. Kulin Brahmin is the highest strata of upper caste Brahmins in India's caste system. This term is more generally used to refer to upper caste "twice-born"

Brahmins in nineteenth century Bengal who considered themselves to be more knowledgeable as regards the scriptures as compared to other Brahmins. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulin_Brahmin

7. From the chapter 'Maidens of Tagore', in *Heroines of Tagore* by Bimanbehari Majumdar.

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Hunting as Political Allegory: A Study of Utpal Dutt's *Hunting the Sun*

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Hunting the Sun was first produced by Lokonaty as a Jatra play named *Samudra Shashan* at Biswaroopa Theatre on 3rd of October 1970. Later it was given the form of a stage play and produced by PLT renamed as *Surya Shikar (Hunting the Sun)* at Rabindrasadan on 28th March 1971. Both times the play was directed by Utpal Dutt. The play was first published in the *Sharadiyo Satyayug* Sept-Oct issue of 1975. The English translation of the play by the author himself was performed on 20-21st October 1978 at Rabindra Kalakendra Mancha, Bangalore produced by Bangalore Little Theatre and directed by Srinibas Goura Singha. The play was translated into Assamese by Pabitra Kumar Deka. The Marathi translation of the play was performed in Mumbai by India People's Theatre Front in 1983. The Panjabi translation *Suraj Da Shikar* by Kripal Kajak was performed by Ranga Darshan at Patiala State Library on 1st November 1978. The Malayalam translation of the play *Surya Vetta* by K. P. Karta was performed in 1985 in Mumbai.

It is a play where the metaphor of "hunting" has been used with subtlety as a political allegory. In the play *Hunting the Sun*, Kalhan, the Buddhist monk, reminds us of Galileo Galilei and his hunting for truth, knowledge. It is a story where the metaphor of "hunting" works at different levels. On the one hand, it is a conflict between science and religion where religion tries to hunt down science, and on the other hand, it is a conflict between a totally misogynistic man Hayagreeva and Indrani. Hayagreeva is a kind of person who hunts for separate women every night. To

Hayagreeva "woman is merely flesh that you enjoy for a night" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 31). He says, "every night I suck the life out of a fresh body and the following morning, toss the dry meat out on the dungheap" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 31). It also depicts the conflict between the state and the common man, the power-holders and the powerless, the bourgeois and the proletariat. Simultaneously, it is also a story about power, knowledge and truth. In this play Utpal Dutt delves deep into the history of ancient India, the Gupta Age and reveals the exploitation and torture of the ruling class over the slaves and common people. These common people and the slaves have always been the object "prey" to the ruling class. How far this play of Utpal Dutt was influenced by Brecht's play *Galileo Galilei* is a different issue. This paper is not going to focus on the similarities or dissimilarities. But both the plays for sure raised the same question: Can the State suppress the Truth? Will the intellectuals surrender before the tyranny of the State? In an interview published in *Enact* in 1972 Utpal Dutt said "I love plagiarising when I am not caught at it. Bertolt Brecht has shown the way. But I do not plagiarize like some others do. I mean I don't steal. I transcreate" (Mukhopadhyay 155).

By taking a look into the socio-political context in which the play was written and produced, it will be easier to understand the undercurrent allegory of hunting. It will, at the same time enable us to understand the theoretical and socio-political standpoint of the playwright. Firstly, we will try to analyse and understand the socio-political situation of the country at that time. The internal conflict in the Congress party made the rise of Indira Gandhi possible. The Congress High Command chose Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister of India after the sudden death of Lal Bahadur Shastri. She took a few radical decisions without prior permission of the High Command. Thus the conflict in the party still continued with Mrs Gandhi and the old party workers. She took few clever so called "socialist steps" to reinvigorate India which, later on, proved to be totally worthless to the mass. But still she managed to keep her popular benevolent image with plans like nationalization of banks. She withdrew the P.D Act to get support from the Communist party and other opposition parties. She ensured the reimplementation of this Act in May 1971. She became

almost autocratic.

Firstly she attacked the CPI (M). At first with the help of Ajay Mukherjee she ensured the fall of United Front Government and implemented President's rule and then in the state election of '72 defeated the leftist parties in huge margin with the help of 'Indira Wave' and rigging to install Congress Cabinet in West Bengal. After that started the hellish torture and killings of the leftist party workers and supporters" (Archarya 130).

Another interesting information that is greatly relevant in this context is that Professor Darshan Chowdhury in his book *Gano Natyo Andolon* writes that "In between 1971-74 the number of political murders: became two thousand two hundred and forty four"². Another incident that was going on simultaneously during this time is the Naxalite movement in West Bengal. In 1967 the farmers and labourers revolted against the landlords of Naxalbari. The extremists among the Communists, called CPI (ML) joined and supported this armed revolution. On the other hand, the CPI (M) running the govt took the opposite stance. It cannot be denied however, that the possibility this farmers' revolt created, was never properly utilized. The Congress govt took this opportunity to suppress this revolution and started police torture not only on the revolutionists but also on their opponents. So the year 1969 saw on the one hand the extremist politics and armed revolution of the Naxalites and the police torture on the innocent people. As a result the cultural and social life in Bengal went through its toughest time. 1970 saw President's rule. Attacks, murder, threats, torture, and vandalization were very common to the political workers as well as to the cultural workers. During this time Dutt wrote a street-corner play *Bargi Elo Deshe* which exposed all these tortures and murders, at the same time reminding us of the great tradition and the philosophy of Vivekananda and Netaji Subhash Ch. Bose (Bandopadhyay 79). In 1971 came his play *Surya Shikar* or *Hunting the Sun*.

In the story of the play, the king Samudragupta is the symbol of state power, of tyranny of the state. He is a cold blooded murderer. He is a great politician. He is aware of everything that is happening in the country. It is clear from his words "How can you

think that the emperor is ignorant of anything in his empire?" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 60). He has conquered the whole of India. The sun is the only thing left for him to be hunted. But by proving that it is the earth that moves round the sun, Kalhan has challenged the king. Samudragupta plans for his execution:

Basubandhu: Your majesty, this is no laughing matter. Order Kalhan's arrest immediately.

Samudragupta: On what charge?

Basubandhu: For questioning the Vedas.

Samudragupta: He did not question the Vedas, he disproved them. There is a difference.

Virupaksha: Then because he is a godless Buddhist.

Samudragupta: Magnificent. I built a reputation by protecting Buddhists in my Empire and now I must arrest him because he is a Buddhist! Man, have you taken leave of your senses?

Virupaksha: Then arrest him for teaching the Vedas to the Shudras. Find something. Anything.

Samudragupta: It will have to be very effective—a devastating charge—or else I shall have all the scholars from Pundravardhan to Purushpara on the warpath. Kalhan is an important man. I know he must die. Ultimately he will. Nothing can save him, for he usurps my prerogative of hunting the sun. Only the king hunts the sun, not this mendicant in yellow robes. But what will you say to yourself, Brahman, in the privacy of your thoughts? Will you confess that on the night of the full moon in the month of Shraavan a Buddhist renegade has swept the sky clean of fiction and chased the gods back to the primitive twilight when they had sprung? (Dutt, *Three Plays* 68-69).

He, to gain popularity among all kinds of people and to build his image as a liberal king, allows the building of Buddhist temple in the country. At the same time plans to prove the Buddhist monk Kalhan's theory wrong in the public and kill him. He says to Virupaksha, the High Priest, "Brahman, what do you know of politics?" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 60). The king knows the politics very well, for he permits Buddhist Ashrama to be built in the Empire, he receives in royal honour the ambassador of a Buddhist King and at

the same time plans to kill Kalhan. So there is difference between what he seems to be and what he actually is. Kalhan's scientific discovery has so unsettled everyone from the king to the High Priest Virupaksha to the Lord Chamberlain Basubandhu that everyone is feeling the threat of losing their power. So Kalhan must be silenced. Basubandhu, who was once the pioneer of astronomy, is not willing to accept the truth of Kalhan. This truth of Kalhan will turn the king, religion, and society upside down. The truth "that earth moves round the sun" will prove all the Puranas and the Vedas false. So as Basubandhu says, "Truth must be tempered by the considerations of state and civil peace"; otherwise this will "undermine the foundations of Brahmanical religion, perhaps even unleash a slave revolt" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 67). The state needs to falsify things to keep hold on things and to keep the people unaware of the ideology.

Kalhan: You call yourself a scientist and yet have no compunction in disseminating lies in the service of the state? You will deny the truth?

Basubandhu: (firmly) Yes, I will. We need lies. Some lies are necessary. For the millions on whose labour the fabric of the Empire has been built, we need some irrefutable and unchangeable lies (Dutt, *Three Plays* 67).

These people, the ruling class or the bourgeois, through this ideology make their exploitation easy and possible without any difficulty. They are like the hunter who hunts his prey and always keeps it under control. But when people like Kalhan and his disciple like Indrani try to break this illusion, they become a possible threat to the state. So Samudragupta takes Indrani captive and plans to use her as bait against Kalhan: "We must first systematically destroy Kalhan's reputation, and so anticipate and obviate the protests of the country's scholars. We shall not engage Kalhan in astronomical disputation, because we shall inevitably lose" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 77). Individuals have always been dominated through society, institutions, 'discourses' and practices. Truth and knowledge, as Foucault in *The Archeology of Knowledge* sees them, are relative and components of domination (Panneerselvam 14). Knowledge produces power and power controls knowledge. So when the less powerful like Kalhan,

belonging to the Buddhist minority and Indrani, the sudra girl, approach the people with their theory that the earth is not flat and it moves round the sun, they pose a threat to the institution called State, the king in this case. So the king and his men including the High Priest face the threat of losing their power position. They try to control the knowledge/truth and by force they try to prove what they say is the ultimate truth. Truth, according to the Marxist thinkers, is always the class truth. One accepts the truth of the bourgeois or the truth of the proletariat (Dutt, *On Theatre* 14). Samudragupta in this play, as we see it, goes to the ultimate level of cruelty. He sends a team who lampoon Kalhan's ideas in public and orders Hayagreeva to raid Kalhan's ashram. They go to the ashram and wreck the telescope and burn all the books. Thus they try to suppress the rebellion. When they fail to make Indrani say that her guru Kalhan sexually abused her or say that the earth is flat, she is ordered to be trampled by the royal elephant in the arena. On the other hand when the king hears that the slaves have revolted, he sends Hayagreeva, the Commander in chief to kill the rebels. But the king knows that in this way the revolution cannot be stopped. He says that "We have to uproot the very source of his idea" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 102). So he tries to prove Kalhan is a lecherous tantric. But in the course of the play, as he ultimately fails in this attempt, he takes recourse to a graver method. He cuts off his tongue and produces him before the court where the king reads a confession letter for Kalhan:

Samudragupta: Citizens, I have perused the charges diligently, but find this trial superfluous, because the accused Kalhan has since confessed and recanted. He declares science to be false. (*Consternation.*) I have in my hand his full and voluntary confession. The master Kalhan has expressed his intension of observing retreat—*maunavrata*—for 12 years to expiate his guilt. He shall not speak, and I am therefore constrained to read his presence. First of all, he says in his letter—the earth is flat, not round, the Puranas are true, Science is false. Have I read correctly?

Kalhan stirs, but does not seem to understand.

Samudragupta: The letter then goes on to say—the moon is

a god, the Rig Veda is true, Science is false. Have I read correctly?

Kalhan is restless.

Virupaksha: Why is Kalhan silent?

Dardura: Why don't you say something? They are destroying your ideas and making god of falsehood. Why are you silent?

Shishumar: Will you disturb the sage in his oath of silence? You are a villain.

Dardura: Kalhan, they are killing Indrani again in public.

Samudraguota: This slave does not understand the solemnity of a vow. Arrest him. Take him away.

Dardura: Kalhan! What have they done to you? You let them rape Indrani's memory? (*He is led away.*)

Basubandhu: Sire, why doesn't Kalhan speak?

Samudragupta: I am god. I raised my finger and he is struck dumb.

Virupaksha: Have you cut off his tongue?

Basubandhu: And drugged him I suppose?

Samudragupta: This is the language of the mortals. We gods call it a miracle. I can even turn him into a stone. You never know. As I was saying, the letter further says—God is true, the Vedas are true, science is false. Have I read correctly? (*Kalhan groans.*) Finally the letter says—I am sinner and liar. I shall have nothing further to do with the black art that goes by the name of science. May religion triumph! Have I read correctly? (*Kalhan shakes his chains and groans.*) You hear the master Kalhan's approval. Now for the verdict. Since the accused has acknowledged the supremacy of religion and denounced his subversive philosophy, it will be infamous and cruel to keep a scholar of his stature one moment more in chains. Shishumar, free him. Hereafter Maharshi Kalhan will be known by the addition of Rajkulajyotish and, royal astrologer, he shall live in the palace as our counsellor and friend. (Dutt, *Three Plays* 20-121)

This act of the king is very symbolic in the context of the play. This cruel act of amputation shows how the state tries to

suppress the voice of revolution. This at the same time reveals the hypocritical nature of the state. The ruler shows on one hand how just the government is. How the government is concerned about the well-being of every person in the state. On the other hand, the government finishes its enemies and every possibility of revolution without having any scratch on its public image. This metaphor of hunting the rebels by the state may perhaps be seen as the reflection of the contemporary political scenario. During that time the political rebels of West Bengal, the Naxal revolutionaries and the CPI(M) members were being hunted down and killed by the police and the ruling class. In this context the play is very significant. The king listens to no one. When he finds the real character of his wife he compels her to play the role of the empress for he says, "You are merely an instrument of statecraft, a womb to bear heirs to the throne—nothing else" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 118). Towards the end of the play when Basubandhu and Virupaksha find that it can be the end of their life, and tries to run away, the king says, "Anyone leaving the court will be summarily executed before sunset" (Dutt, *Three Plays* 119). This has a greater implication even outside the play. The state as an institution is for no one. When it starts functioning it can even sacrifice those who were instrumental in its construction.

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Being Tibetan: Nostalgia vs. Reality

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Euripides has rightly said, '*There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land.*' India witnessed mass migration of the population during the Partition in 1947 when thousands of people fled from 'their' part of the land and hundreds got killed. They are still called *refugee*. Similar has been the fate of Tibet, India's neighbour. The Tibetans had to leave their home in 1959 and seek shelter from the Indian government. Since then the *R-word* has been imprinted on their forehead. But despite their uprootedness, the Tibetans have emerged as a people having a strong will to survive notwithstanding alienation and hardships, trying to preserve their religion, culture, language, faith, and above all, their identity.

The present paper attempts an insight into the changing definitions of identity and nationalism for the Tibetan writers of the present generation, taking into account the factors responsible for the transformation. The paper shall undertake a study of Yangzom Brauen's novel *Across Many Mountains* to trace the metamorphosis of Tibetans—from being an agrarian, barbaric ethnic community in the not-so-distant past to a self sufficient, forward-looking diasporic community.

Diasporic communities breathe a hyphenated existence. They live in two worlds—the parent nation and the foster land. Demographic dislocation leads to rootlessness, alienation, fragmentation, nostalgia, and estrangement, a constant effort to adjust and assimilate. These expatriates enter into an alien land and face many problems, identity-crisis being the prime most. They carry with them their socio-cultural baggage and this baggage consists of memories of their motherland in the form of language, art, music, paintings, rituals and festivals, religious

practices, native attire, and cuisine. Along with these, the diaspora try to adapt themselves to the host culture thus forming hybrid identities.

Homi Bhabha is of the view that affiliation to a single class, gender, religion, language or nationality should be relinquished in a global world and one ought to embrace the plurality of race, gender, religion, language, ethnicity and nationality for establishment in the postmodern world. But after more than half a century in exile, fear of cultural erosion looms large on Tibetan ethnic community, particularly those living in the West. The West allures the Tibetan youngsters and they easily integrate and assimilate into the mainstream of their host. The risk, therefore, is not only of loss of language or culture or religion, rather the whole identity of the Tibetan diaspora is at stake.

Paradoxically, Tibet does not exist in 'reality', at least not in the official diplomatic world. Nonetheless, Tibetan nationalism exists and thrives in the very lives of the Tibetans. The recurrent themes in Tibetan writings are the lost homeland; nostalgia; exile; feeling of alienation in exile; freedom struggle; and doubts about their future as a free ethnic community.

In 1950, the People's Republic of China (PRC) incorporated Tibet and laid down the Seventeen Point Agreement. According to this Agreement, Tibet was given an autonomous status but under China's sovereign power. The Dalai Lama would remain the religious and spiritual head but the actual political power was vested in China. Due to this move of the Chinese, there was huge unrest and after a failed uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled to India seeking shelter and since then hundreds and thousands of Tibetans have been living in India and some other countries as refugees. The Dalai Lama runs a parallel Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamshala (HP) in India and, along with other Tibetan refugees, has been trying to preserve Tibetan culture and tradition which seems to be on the verge of extinction due to various reasons.

The Tibetans did not move to a promised land. They had to face all sorts of hardships. A plethora of problems awaited them in India. Overcoming, sometimes succumbing to their fates, the Tibetan community has now assimilated comfortably in many

parts of India, viz. Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Delhi, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttaranchal. Despite living on the margins in a nation different from and indifferent to them, they have made their presence felt on the socio-political-economic front. This community has resettled not only in India but also in Nepal, Bhutan, Japan, the US, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Unfortunately, they are the global nomads. While their exodus poses a significant challenge to their ethnicity and language, they continue to struggle to conserve their language, ethnicity and identity in a globalized world.

Refugees live a disturbed life physically, mentally and culturally as they live in two worlds and the coming generations grow in two cultures; two frames of mind; two different systems. In the process of making adjustments, a displaced community unwillingly accepts the alien culture but does not want to forget its root culture. The most traumatic transplant in a diasporic movement is for the first generation immigrants who have the compulsion to adjust themselves to the new land without forgetting their motherland. As the process of assimilation begins, the picture of homeland becomes a frozen, static memory and begins to faint though it never dies and, in the case of Tibetans, they keep it fresh and alive, and this is done by Tibetans by celebrating March 10 every year as Tibetan Uprising Day since 1959 to commemorate the Tibetan rebellion against China's unlawful and inhuman 'rape of Tibet' (as the 14th Dalai Lama calls it).

"Our strong traditional heritage and spiritual ethics guide us through the tangled web of political chaos, physical dislocation and existential uncertainty. Our struggle to re-root ourselves under thorny circumstances is a variegated canvas." - Bhuchung D. Sonam

Across Many Mountains is a true account of three generations of Tibetan women – the grandmother Kunsang, the mother Sonam and the granddaughter Yangzom. Kunsang was born in a free Tibet and had seen life in its tranquil self. But as Sonam, her daughter is growing up, circumstances change and Tibet is occupied by Mao's men. Kunsang is forced to escape from Tibet with her family and in the course of her life-threatening journey to India she faces many hardships, even the death of her

own children. The novel tells the story of three women born in different times, placed in varying circumstances, facing similar, sometimes different hardships, having different perspectives, separated by time and space, yet linked with the delicate thread of love, care and responsibility towards each other; respecting the others' space and still being together.

The novel gives a detailed history of Yangzom's family life in particular and that of the many Tibetan refugees in general. The narrative is a document on Tibet and Tibetan refugees. The plot deals with the ever-on-the-move homeless Tibetans, their settling, unsettling and resettling in different parts of the world in search of a 'home' but their search yields no permanent, everlasting result as their home is where their heart is – in Tibet, which is as inaccessible to them as was 54 years ago.

The theme of the novel is to highlight the plight of refugee Tibetans. A greater part of the novel is dedicated to the dislocation, location and relocation of the refugees within India and abroad; and their back-breaking, grinding hardships. Yangzom's style is lucid and her account is straightforward. She is critical of the orthodox Tibetan society where woman is treated as inferior to man and thus discriminated against. Difference between the Tibetan way of life and European lifestyle is also brought to the fore by the writer. The women of the first and second generation, Kunsang and Sonam respectively, experience a cultural-shock when confronted with the new technology and European demeanour.

Yangzom even juxtaposes Buddhist and European faiths and points towards their different approaches to life and death, materialism as well as spirituality. Yangzom also points out the change in the Tibetan community in India and is highly critical of the same. She writes, "In Dharamshala she [Sonam] came across rich Tibetans who exploited their Indian servants and employees. She disliked the child labour she saw in the hotels and restaurants belonging to Tibetans, who sent their own children to private schools" (290-91).

Though she feels that the Tibetan freedom struggle has two approaches - one ideological, the other realist, and she herself is a realist, she says, "This [Tibetan] culture will always be a part of us.

Regardless of the fact that we don't know the Tibetan national anthem by heart, have many gaps in our language and can't read or write Tibetan perfectly, the essence of the culture is firmly anchored in our hearts" (279). But she furthermore reveals a bitter truth. She says that the Tibet the Tibetans are fighting for is a utopia, existing only in the memory of the first generation of refugees and exiles. The utopia does not exist and it is worthwhile to move on, not clinging to the memories of what has been lost.

Tibetans have resisted diasporisation and permanent residency outside Tibet. This is particularly true of some South Asian Tibetan refugees who have not secured formal immigration status in their host countries even after four generations. In Bhutan, Tibetans who renounced the right to return to Tibet were granted Bhutanese citizenship. However, many chose not to do so as they indicated they would like to return to Tibet one day. That seems to be a distant dream in the present political scenario.

The biggest fear after 54 years in exile is that of cultural degeneration, particularly the loss of language. The Tibetan youth gets easily inclined to an alien culture and tends to integrate easily into the mainstream life of the host country. The Tibetan diaspora in the West has assimilated into the mainstream effortlessly.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) encourages Tibetans to return to Tibet whenever the situation is conducive. This stance reflects concerns that the Tibetan population in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and other regions of the Tibetan plateau will be further eroded by settlement of Han and other Chinese ethnic minorities.

Continuing in exodus in Europe and America, most Tibetans live in communities that offer weekend language and cultural schools in an endeavour to sustain continuity with their native culture. Most Tibetans, who earlier had little contact with modernity, have culturally adapted themselves remarkably well to the western way of life. Tibetan refugees have emerged from a nomadic, agrarian society into a largely postmodern, globalized expatriate population. At the same time, it is common for Tibetans in the West to send their children to India for short periods to become conversant with their native language and culture. Like

most immigrant groups, Tibetans too have imbibed peculiar features of their host culture. In India, these cultural adaptations, ranging from an appreciation for Indi-pop music and films to the adoption of Gandhian principles of non-violence, have been gradual but steady enough to minimize intercultural, intergenerational conflicts.

Though the Tibetan diaspora is caught in a political, socio-cultural, and identity crisis; though they live on the margins of two societies, yet they have an edge since they live and enjoy two-fold life. They have become conversant with cultures, attitudes and ideologies of two worlds – the host and the native, the frozen past and the dynamic present, the parent land and the foster nation. Thus, the experience of migrancy and exile though painful, is emancipating as well.

Changes are evident in the texts written by the second and especially the third generation of Tibetan refugees. The first generation of expatriate writers wrote about their lost land, its glory, the nostalgia attached to Tibet, and their struggle for independence. They also wrote about their flight from Tibet to India after facing many hardships, narrating how the Chinese troops tortured them after capturing them and the inhumane treatment meted out to them in prison. The major theme of these writers was eulogizing their motherland and expressing their yearning for their lost homeland.

But with the change and passage of time, the writers of the second and now the third generation have experienced a change in their perception. Tibet still remains the *leit motif* in their writings but the notion of freedom has undergone metamorphosis. Most of these writers are living in the West and are addicted to its way of life. They do not wish to go back to Tibet, the country which is culturally their own but which they have never seen or been to actually. They wish to be identified as semi-Tibetan semi-Western. Their hybrid identity has taken the toll on their nationalist identity. These writers/poets have also become critical of their fellow Tibetans and do not hesitate in pointing out their shortcomings.

Their writings are neither intellectual discourses nor scholarly insights nor are meant for aesthetic pleasure, but are

voices of people in exile. Their works reflect their innermost doubts, hopes, opinions, aspirations and protest. It is just their ability to articulate and express themselves through their writings

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**Dhillon, S M. *My Slaved Country:
A Tale of A Blind Girl.*
Canada: Art Bookbindery (2013), pp. 213.**

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My Slaved Country: A Tale of a Blind Girl is an excellent attempt in studying the nuances of an orthodox Muslim Society positioned in the politically charged and economically starved locales of Pakistan. The novel deftly paints human agony and sufferance giving it the contours of a thirteen year old blind girl. The story revolves around this little face of innocence, one that is raped, defiled, rebuked and ultimately charged with adultery. The protagonist Parveen Bibi, being a girl and more so a blind one, is twice-removed from the mainstream society. Since the only education provided in her locale is available at the mosque, and, she being a member of the so-called enticing breed of womanhood, Praveen Bibi is better left without education. She weighs her time between household chores and playing an obedient slave to the wealthy landlords of the area. It is during the enactment of the latter role that Praveen Bibi is raped by the Chaudhary Sahib. Being a naive teenager without any exposure to the realities of life, Praveen Bibi is not able to comprehend the repercussions of the attack on her body, dignity and even more on her nascent self. The Chaudhary's being the hoarders of wealth have the final word on the entire episode. The thirteen year old child is branded as an enticer who not only weaved a web of sexual foreplay around the Chaudhary Sahib, but also forced the latter to play with her dignity. Considering the above facts, Praveen Bibi is labelled as an adulterous, one who can easily entice a grown man with her charms. She is sentenced to a life of rigorous imprisonment. Her problems develop a much ugly face, when she is found to be pregnant. This teenager cannot understand the changes her body is going through and is scared of the unknown being developing inside her body. The events take a political and religious turn, when an elite human rights lawyer takes up the case of Praveen Bibi.

Almas, who is herself a sufferer of human indifference, takes this case as a classic example of hypocrisy and dogmatism of Muslim clergy. The fact that the government is supporting the entire fiasco leaves Almas all the more disturbed.

The novel charts a new course with the arrival of a Pakistani Diaspora named Smaira onto the roads of Pakistan. She is a daughter of Pakistani grandparents, who had fled the country after embezzling a good amount of money from the locals. Smaira is a journalist brought up with the values of a Muslim but with an ideology of a feminist. She enters the frame of the novel as a symbol of an emancipated woman. Questioning the hypocrisy of Pakistani society, Smaira establishes her own identity by marrying a fellow journalist from Pakistan. This love story evolves amidst the staunch religious ideologies that not only try to stifle it but also pass a terse judgment on the character of the people involved. By bringing the character of Smaira into the framework of the story, the author has tried to introduce a viewpoint of the Pakistani diaspora on the present face of Pakistan. Smaira with her progressive ideas and her fiery opinions questions the narrow-minded and regressive thought process of the so-called modern Pakistan. She is perturbed to see that women, even those of elite background, have no voice and are merely trophies kept to decorate the household. In one of the chapters she meets a wealthy Pakistani businessman Sadiq, who keeps the women of his house "caged" and under constant vigil. Smaira is overwhelmed by the derogatory condition of women in Pakistan and refuses to listen to any justifications for their loss of freedom and individuality.

The novel is the fair attempt at weaving tales by S.M. Dhillon. He has categorised the storyline into 15 chapters, each craftily titled to give in the sequence of storyline. The novel starts with the chapter titled "At Loose Ends" and ends with the chapter titled "For Better or Worse". In the final chapter the loose ends alluded to in the start find a just culmination with the marriage of Smaira and Hameed. For the non-Pakistani audience, the author has also provided an exhaustive glossary of terms.

To suffice, the novel not only questions the hypocritical feudal system but also unravels the nepotistic nexus of fanatic mullahs. It is an excellent study in understanding the political-religious nexus operating in the present-day Pakistan. There are

numerous monologues, in the novel, that reveal the opinions of the author on the subject. In fact, it would seem to the reader that in many instances, the character Samira is the alter ego of the author himself.

Divested of the usual trappings of a diasporic text, the novel under review, is a refreshing change as it charts out a different territory of exploring devilish designs of feudalistic social set-up wherein human values have become extinct, and specially women whose basic dignity is undermined and their dreams, desires and aspirations are crushed under the feudalistic male heel.

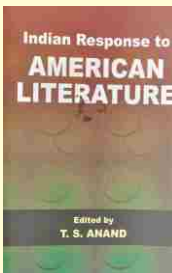
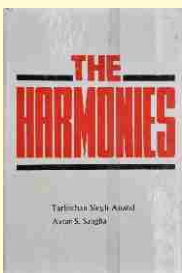
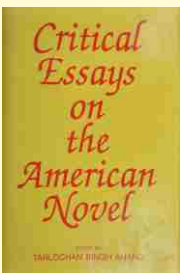
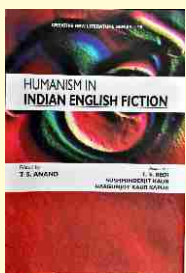
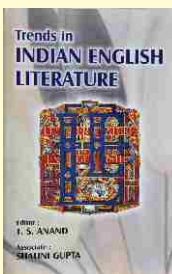
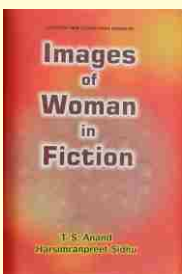
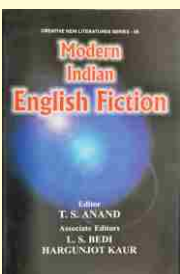
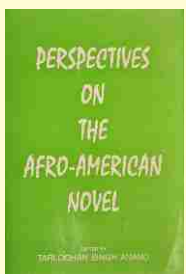
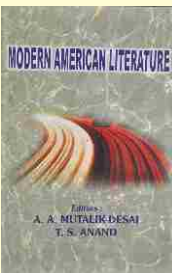
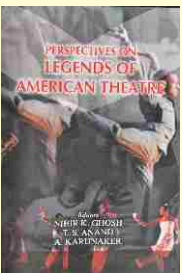
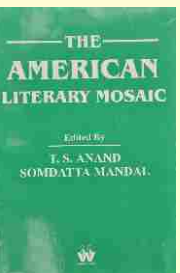
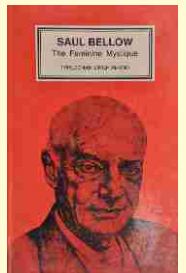
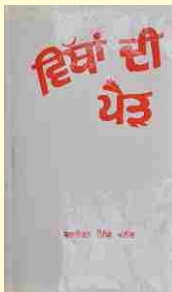
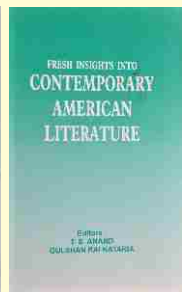
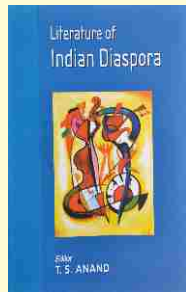
Misgivings in Love

This is a war of emotions
Where head falls heavy on heart and stirs the feelings.
Feelings, full of notions, creating turmoil and commotion.
This is a war of hearts,
Waging a ruthless battle
Breaking the bonds, annoying the selves
The torn sentiments lulled to sleep by broken promises.
This is a war of head and heart
Inimical and trying to conquer, over-rule.
The heart prevails and ascends the head.
In the war of emotions all is ruined without any caution or
precaution.
No questions, no answers, no justifications.
Appalling, apocryphal antics ruin the intimacy
Relationships are annexed
Love is jinxed with no antidote
Misunderstandings, misgivings, and antipathy ripen.
Though despised yet there is no respite.

Geeta Bhandari
SDP College for Women

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