

Literary Voice

A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal



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Editorial

Literary Voice 2017 has evolved itself into a Number engaged with the vulnerable predicament of the subalterns cutting across geographical, racial and socio-cultural boundaries. In fact, the notion of the subaltern was first referred to by the Italian Marxist political activist Antonio Gramsci in his article "Notes on Italian History" which appeared in his book *Prison Notebook* written between 1929 and 1935. The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's words 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. In critical theory and postcolonialism, the term *subaltern* designates the populations which are socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. In the 1970s, *subaltern* began to denote the colonized peoples of the Indian subcontinent and described a new perspective of the history of an imperial colony as told from the point of view of the colonized rather than that of the colonizers. In the 1980s, the scope of enquiry of Subaltern Studies was applied as an "intervention in South Asian historiography." In the words of Ranajit Guha, the word subaltern can be defined as "the general attribute of subordination . . . whether it is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way."

Subaltern literature talks about the struggle between castes, seen from the point of view of the lower caste, the minority, the marginal, the subaltern. An overwhelming number of articles in *Literary Voice 2017* focus on the marginalized members of different societies, as, for instance, Indian slum dwellers and social misfits in Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram*, American Indians in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*, Caribbeans in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, Dalits in the caste ridden Indian society in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Bama's *Sangati*, subalterns in Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop*, tribals in Mahasweta

Diaspora as a Human Condition: An Expository Note

Dr. Devendra Rankawat
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Devi Varma's *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, an abandoned/adopted poor Indian girl in Shilpi Somaya Gowda's *Secret Daughter*, the marginalized and doubly colonized Afro-American women in the Rhythm and Blues genre lyrics, and their sufferings in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. These literary texts are peopled by persons on the margins of society--racially oppressed, socially suppressed, culturally dispossessed, sexually abused, economically exploited--whose marginalized sublimity is awfully inspiring, as their struggle to seek identity and rightful place in a hostile society is characterised by a new level of subaltern pride, militancy, creativity and above all, the use of the pen as a potent weapon to lend authentic voice to the voiceless.

An Interview with Haiku poetess, Arvinder Kaur adds unique charm and substance to the present number.

Dear members, partake of this intellectual feast, and bless our efforts with your feedback. The Board of Editors, *Literary Voice* wishes you a peaceful, prosperous and happy New Year.

T. S. Anand

"There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land."
(Euripides, 431 B.C.)

Humanity has, by now, undergone vicissitudes of which any enumeration, classification or description, no matter how exhaustive, is doomed to be incomplete. Of all these experiences, however, one experience has persisted all through human history. This is the experience of being in diaspora; or, the experience of being in separation. It is, in essence, the experience of dislocation (up-rooting) and relocation (re-rooting). It may have been known by different names in different cultures at different times. But, by its sting upon human consciousness or *citta*, it has ever afflicted the same pain—the pain of having lost something forever. And this something is neither recoverable nor replaceable nor even substitutable. In short, it causes unbridgeable cracks in the human self. And, since the human self and the literature it produces deeply imbricate, a closer look at such a phenomenon surely leads through the portals of a wider understanding of writers in diaspora. This is what I aim at.

Mythological, Religious and Historical Origins

The earliest occurrence of the term 'diaspora' in biblical texts is traced to the Septuagint, the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, wherein occurs Deuteronomy, 28:25, which is translated as: "Thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth" (qtd. in Judith Shuval 2007 42). Septuagint was a project undertaken by the Greek-speaking Jews living in Egyptian diaspora.

In Jewish history, the term diaspora refers to the dispersion or scattering of Jews outside the 'Promised Land' i.e. Palestine, after the Babylonian captivity following the Babylon's

conquest of Judah, the land of Jews. This exile, that by most accounts lasted about 70 years, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. and continuing until when the Persian conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus the Great, allowed the Jews to return to Palestine. Interestingly, not all the Jews chose to return; rather, a significant number of them stayed back or went elsewhere and, thus, it was these Jews that constituted the first prototype Jewish diaspora.

The Hebrew terms for exile 'Galut', and 'Gola' were, however, not rendered in Greek as 'diaspora'. This assertion of semantic non-equivalence between the term 'exile' and 'diaspora' was probably meant as mere semantic dilution. Though the two states of being are often posed to be different, both are characterized by "the awareness of being an ethnic minority among a foreign majority, hence the consciousness of 'us' and 'others' held in common. Bustenav Oded in 'Exile - The Biblical Perspectives' implies a considerable degree of equivalence between the terms 'exile' and 'diaspora' as they both evoke the images of isolation and alienation. Exile is an oft-repeated term in most of the religious and historical texts. From the Bible to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to the Paradise Lost, all afford instances of this. In the Genesis there comes a mention of exile in the words of God to Abraham: "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs ..." (Genesis 15:13-28 2003). In all of the biblical literature, 'exile' is shown as punishment for sin. As such, it is fraught with the imagery of darkness, slavery, suppression, inferiority, vulnerability, and strangeness. Following is the biblical imagery of those languishing in 'exile': And the Lord shall scatter you among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other ... and among these nations you shall find no ease; neither shall the sole of your foot have rest. The lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. Your life shall hang in doubt before you and you shall fear day and night and shall have no insurance of life (Deut. 28:64-66) Likewise the curse on Cain: "You shall become a ceaseless wanderer on earth" (Gen 4:12), echoes a note of gloom and suffering concomitant with exile. Similarly, in the Ramayana, when King Dasharatha is tricked by his wife Kekeyi into promising her a wish, and as a wish, she wants Rama, Dasharatha's eldest

and most virtuous son, to go in exile (forest is just another name for going into exile) Dasharatha says:

"Send him to the forest? What fault has he committed? Of the hundreds of women in the palace, has anyone ever uttered a word against his honour or virtue? The whole world loves him for his great and good qualities. How did you alone among so many find cause to dislike him? . . . The whole world praises his truthfulness and friendliness, his learning and wisdom, his heroism and humility. . . . How can I, his father, say to him 'Son, go to the forest'. This can never be" C. Rajgopalachari 2000 73-4).

This is obvious what sending someone to forest meant in those times: evidently it was a form of punishment. It being afflicted as punishment amply shows how unpleasant this experience must have been.

In post-Babylonian era, the Jews largely made theological interpretation of the Babylonian captivity as God's punishment for violating the commands of Torah. Thus, living outside Palestine was interpreted as "transitory, miserable and unfavorable. It generally had "an unfavorable, disastrous meaning" (Unnik 86-87). Theologically, it was held that, at some undefined time in future, the Messiah would arrive and a final gathering of the Jews would come about in the 'Holy Land'. The Jewish theology, thus, seems to have put faith in a three-fold structure of transgression, punishment, and redemption. This is important here to note that, unlike contemporary discourse, the biblical conception of life ends with redemption, rather than endless suffering.

This account amply shows that diaspora originally evoked the 'victim-hood' status on religious basis. But at a later stage, the Christians, interpreting the term in line with their eschatology, used it as a 'polemical device' to attack the Jews. They construed the Jews' dispersion as fit punishment for their sin of not recognizing Jesus as Messiah. This was an act of hermeneutic politics that Jews have since had to suffer greatly for-- the worldwide spread of anti-Semitism. Still later, during Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the term came to be used to designate the minority status of Catholics among Protestants, and the reverse.

Then, in the latter half of the 20th century, the term was first

used analogously by George Shepperson (1966) to invoke an emotionally charged picture of the sufferings of African ethnic groups living outside Africa. The term served as a unifying thread for all the black communities outside Africa. Stephen Dufoix in *Diaspora* (2008) cites instances of earlier use of the term by such other writers as Du Bois, Aime Cesaire, and Leopold Senghor. Their usage albeit stopped short of 'black diaspora' and settled with terms like 'Negro diaspora.' From this point on, the term proliferated across disciplines: anthropology, sociology, ethnology and humanities. Indeed, in 1991 diaspora, in a way, became 'institutionalised' with the launching of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* by Khaachig Tololyan. In his editorial address, Tololyan declares, "We use 'diaspora' provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a large semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (4). Further, Ninian Smart in *The Importance of Diaspora* (1997) has related the concept to the religious groups too. In post-modernist parlance, scholars like Stuart Hall, James Clifford, Paul Gilroy, Homi Bhabha have so used the term as to make it denote "a specific type of experience and thinking i.e. the 'diaspora consciousness.' Here is where the term first became an 'un-essentialising' stance of 'race' and 'ethnicity.' In this context, the 'diasporic consciousness' has come to signify a specific awareness typical of people living 'here' and relating to 'there'. Remarking on this expansion of the term's semantics, James Clifford in his article 'Diasporas' writes, "Diaspora consciousness is entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogueDiasporic subjects are, thus, distinct versions of modern, transnational, inter-cultural experience" (307). In a similar vein, Stuart Hall holds, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (235). This is, in short, the trajectory that the term has taken so far.

Structure of Diasporic Consciousness

Gathering from the proto-type diasporic experience and the later understandings of this experience, it seems obvious that, at bottom, being in diaspora means suffering separation. If seen

through the interpretative frame of Bharata's *rasa* theory, separation is a *vibhava* that appeals to the *sthayi bhava* of *dukh* (grief) and the *rasa* experienced is *karuna rasa* (pathos). Further, diaspora experience causes a condition of the *citta* (self). So, it is the *citta* (self) that suffers. And whatever gets stored in the *citta* results into a *cittavriti* (tendency of the self). In *Yogasutra* and other Buddhist texts, there is mention of *cittabhumi* i.e. condition of the self. *Viksipta* (divided) is the state of a diasporic self (Kapoor 2004). As such, the diasporic self undergoes the pain of being perpetually torn in two. This is what Du Bois in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) means by 'double consciousness' in his discourse on the predicament of blacks in American society. Other designations for this mode of being have come too to indicate its pains and gains. Some call it mid-space; others call up the narrative of *Trishanku* (the state of being neither here nor there) to foreground the handicap it afflicts one with; still others choose to see it as the hybrid space offering bifocality i.e. inside view of two cultures, thoughts, and modes of being. Thus there are myriad approaches to make sense of this phenomenon that relentlessly involves two-ness.

Aesthetics of Diaspora

As discussed above, the condition of self and literary expression are intimately interwoven. Since a diasporic self is doomed to be anything but unified, its literary expression is bound to address the experiences endemic to such experiencers. Most of diasporic literature looks back on past experiences and seems trying to come to terms with it. M G Vassanji's *No New Land*, illustrates the point emphatically when the author-narrator says prophetically, "We are but creatures of our origins, and however stalwartly we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new worlds, the ghosts from our pasts stand not far behind and are not easily shaken off" (*No New Land* 9). Another overriding concern of diaspora literature is the writer's divided loyalties. This concern is succinctly captured by Amin Malak as he observes:

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

This concern emerges from a sense of loss or a sense of ontological insecurity that this mode of being entails. As the narrator in Rushdie's *Shame* thinks to himself: "What is the best thing about migrant peoples...? I think it is their hopefulness.... And what's the worst thing? It's the emptiness of one's luggage... We've come unstuck from more than land. We've floated upwards from history, from memory, from time" (87). Among other major concerns that undergird the diasporic aesthetics are role of memory, feeling of inconsolable nostalgia, identity consciousness and many more besides. The scope of this note precludes a fuller treatment of them all.

Morphology of Diaspora

The Greek term diaspora is composed of the verb "speirein" (to scatter, sow or disperse), and the preposition "dia" (over, around, about). Taken together, the term literally translates as "to scatter/disperse around." This etymological origin notwithstanding, the term, since its arrival into English usage, has given rise to a variety of other related terms. Considering the terminological inflation in the field, it is well worth noticing in what different forms the term has mushroomed. In addition to the concrete noun, 'diaspora,' designating a collectivity, there are abstract nouns designating a condition--'diasporicity' or 'diasporism;' a process--'diasporization,' 'dediasporization,' and re-diasporization; even a field of inquiry--'diasporology' or 'diasporistics.' There is the adjective 'diasporitist,' designating a stance or position in a field of debate or struggle. And there are the adjectives 'diasporic' and 'diasporan,' which designate an attribute or modality--as in diasporic consciousness, diasporic identity etc. (Brubaker 2005). 'Diasporan' is now also being used increasingly to refer to an individual from a diaspora group.

Typology of Diaspora

In addition to semantic inflation, scholars of diaspora have attempted various typological categorizations too for a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. Any taxonomy, however, of 'a ceaseless flow,' which is what social reality is, is bound to be limited in application, and more likely to be stance-specific. Robin Cohen, Khaachig Tololyan, Armstrong, and Brubaker have been the forerunners in this field. Cohen in his *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* proposes a taxonomy to classify the amorphous-

looking phenomenon of diaspora into four types:

1. Victim diaspora (Jews, Armenians, Palestinians)
2. Imperial diaspora (African, Indian)
3. Trade diaspora (Chinese)
4. Labor/worker diaspora (Indian, and other South-Asian countries)

In addition, there exist other classificatory categories of diaspora developed by theorists like Rogers Brubaker, J. Armstrong, and Kroeser. These categories are, however, more or less, variation on what Cohen has already set out. For instance, 'proletarian diaspora' is proposed as a new type whereas it shares almost all features of what Cohen has called 'labor diaspora.' Therefore, the one that merits special mention is 'accidental diaspora' proposed by Brubaker to designate the diasporic experience suffered in the wake of some violent disintegrational activities during war-times (Brubaker 2004).

As it is just an expository note, the attempt has been to simply put things together and make it easier for the new-comers in the field to make sense of this phenomenon and gain a perspective.

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Rethinking Diaspora: "The Black Atlantic" as a Concept for Diasporic Studies

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The term "Black Atlantic" entered into academic discussions after Paul Gilroy published his study *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* in 1993. Since then, scholars of diasporic studies have often been referring to the concept of 'Black Atlantic' as a crucial approach to understand the Black Diaspora. The present paper aims at discussing the significance of Gilroy's concept of 'Black Atlantic' by detailing the main concepts embraced by the term. It also takes a review of the reception of this concept in the academic world, and its distinctiveness for the examination of race and culture in transnational situation.

Gilroy's book was a result of his attempts to show his students, while he taught a course on history of sociology, that the experiences of Black people were actually a part of modernity. His argument exhibits how the conventional nationalistic paradigms are inadequate for discussion of Black Diaspora. Gilroy noticed the absence of a concern with race or ethnicity in most contemporary writings about Western Modernity and so deemed it necessary to establish the importance of slavery as an integral part of Western civilization. As he is also an authority in the field of music, Gilroy has discussed about the role of music as a significant factor to examine Black people's historical and present day situation.

Gilroy uses the term Black Atlantic to designate the common cultural aspects of the areas around the Atlantic Ocean where the people of African descent live. These areas include the Caribbean, a large portion of North America, most of sub-Saharan Africa, a number of areas in Latin America and many places in Western Europe. Though quite distinct from each other, these geographical areas became connected socio-culturally from the mid 1400s when the Portuguese, Spanish, and others began to

send explorers in search of new geographical territories. The slave trade can be marked out as the most important development resulting from this activity. It was a forced movement of black Africans into North and South America and the Caribbean. Consequently, it brought into existence the large Afro-diasporic population in various areas. Later, there has been movement of a small amount of Afrodiasporic peoples to different parts of Europe from the Americas, Caribbean and Africa.

The diversity of African heritages that were thus brought together gave rise to cultural and community development. Refusal to accept the dominant European cultures was a prominent feature of this development. The movement has been of a reciprocal nature. The movement of people and the exchange of ideas across the black Atlantic began in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This became more frequent in the nineteenth century because the intellectuals from across the black Atlantic interacted with one another in cities such as London or Paris, Travel across the Black Atlantic areas also became more frequent. Significant intellectual development ensued as a result. The contributions by Caribbean theorists like Frantz Fanon who influenced pan-African political thought, or by Harlem Renaissance poets like Langston Hughes who influenced the West African philosophy of negritude, deserve a special mention here.

Though the European and white "New World" cultures were also influenced by the Black Atlantic interactions, and the definition of the European self depended very much on the imagined black other, most of the academicians studied white literature and culture as separate from black literature and culture. Drawing attention to this lack of attention, Gilroy starts his analysis by naming the interconnected areas the "black Atlantic." He regards these places as one collective space due to the network of interactions that exist across the area.

According to his argument it is not possible to think about either white or black culture in the Atlantic without one another. The Black culture defines itself in the face of white culture's repressive or racially defined societies. Taking a deconstructionist stand, Gilroy posits that in his configuration of the Black Atlantic there is no one centre. Africa is not the sole originator of black Atlantic culture. He looks at each area influencing all other areas in

diverse manners. These ideas provide us with a new way of looking at the Black Diaspora.

Gilroy's manner of perceiving the black identity is also distinctive. He states that the Black identity in Europe and the New World should be understood as an ongoing process of travel and exchange across the Atlantic. This process has to be connected with our perception of European modernity. African diasporic intellectual culture has a long, complex history which has a transnational quality. In the chapter entitled "Masters, Mistresses, Slaves, and the Antinomies of Modernity" and also in the further chapters he demonstrates how major figures from Frederick Douglass through W.E.B. Du Bois to Richard Wright took up autonomous positions in relation to the great philosophers of modernity--Hegel, Marx, & Nietzsche. In the chapter on "Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity," Gilroy undertakes a detailed study of Black music as he feels that "music should enjoy higher status because of its capacity to express a direct image of the slave's will" (Gilroy74).

The concept of Black Atlantic is marked by three important factors to be considered in the study of Black Diaspora. The first of these is 'the sailing ship.' The image of the sailing ship is presented as a "chronotope" (a unit of analysis for studying language according to the ratio and characteristics of the temporal and spatial categories represented in that language) that suggests several aspects of the Black Atlantic. The sailing ship captures the specifics of the travelling locality within and outside national boundaries. It also evokes the middle passage of the slave trade that is necessary to understanding the experience of transnational black modernity. The discussion of slavery is the second crucial aspect in Gilroy's argument. According to him slavery in the West is first and foremost a shared experience of "terror" that lies at the heart of black diasporic communities all across the Atlantic. In a way it is the root cause of transnational black identity. The slave trade has been one of the most important factors in trade across the ocean. The Western modernity could achieve its economic and cultural hegemony mainly due to this. Here the abstract philosophical modernity is linked by Gilroy to the very real, very brutal practice of African enslavement. The third important aspect for Gilroy is Music. This is important not only because of its

popular status, but also because it unseats language and textuality as the most important expressions of human consciousness. For the slaves, music has been an attempt to express the unsayable. In his survey, Gilroy's account covers the history of music from the Fisk University Singers' 1871 trip to England through discussions about authenticity in Jazz and Jimi Hendrix and up to the present as he looks at Reggae, Bhangra and HipHop.

The purpose has been to trace the movement and interaction of ideas and styles across the Black Atlantic. It would be necessary here to take a brief review of other renowned scholars who addressed the question of Black identity, prior to Gilroy. Most prominent among these are W. E. B. Du Bois, Eric Williams, C. L. R. James and Frantz Fanon. These scholars explored the ways in which slavery and racism have been important in the formation of Western modernity. While considering the economic importance of Atlantic slavery to the formation of the West they also commented on the ways in which blackness was absolutely necessary for the construction of whiteness as an identity. The aesthetic responses of Black Diaspora peoples to racism played a critical part in developing the cultural institutions of the West. W. E. B. DuBois and C. L. R. James revealed this fact through their writings. Prior to Gilroy, Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) likewise pioneered the study of the music of the African diaspora, documenting the various ways in which it allowed for the articulation of a complex response to racism. The ideas of Eric Williams and W.E.B. DuBois were further developed by Stuart Hall.

The concept of Black Atlantic is helpful in the study of literature because writers from past and present and from various parts of the black Atlantic can be discussed alongside one another. As all these writers are united by a common bond, there remains little need to address them by separating nomenclatures viz. African, Caribbean. In the field of cultural studies Gilroy's text has been enormously influential. His focus on the heterogeneous nature of black expressive culture has significantly broadened the field of cultural studies. The placement of slavery at the centre of Western modernity, and transformation of the master-slave dialectic has made significant impact in the philosophical discussions of modernity. In the study of labour history, Gilroy can

be credited to have broadened the scope of labour history to include the struggles of nonwhites.

Contemporary scholars such as Arjun Appadurai, George Lipsitz, and Donna Haraway, valuing Gilroy's stand on transnational cultural studies, examine the intersections between local and global cultural dynamics. Though the critical response to Gilroy's book has been positive and negative, the concept of the black Atlantic continues to be a useful way of looking at the connections and cultural similarities of Africa, America, the Caribbean, and Europe. Gilroy has been criticized for not paying enough attention to mainland Africa as the chief source of traditions. Considering Gilroy's stand that so many combinations of cultures and ideas cannot have one clear centre, it cannot still be denied that Africa is of great importance to the formation of a Black Atlantic culture. It is noteworthy that Black Atlantic continues to provide impetus to academic discussion on Diasporic studies. The volume entitled *Beyond Black Atlantic: Relocating Modernization and Technology*, edited by Walter Goebel and Sasbia Schabio in 2006, contains efforts of renowned contributors who attempt to redefine and expand ideas of the Black Atlantic. The editors find in *The Black Atlantic* a tendency to highlight the African-American experiences of dislocation while neglecting unique African experiences of emergency and of emergence, which have allowed and allow for a number of local articulations of modernization and modernity and for a more pronounced role of emerging nationalities than the diaspora is generally likely or able to summon.

Another study published in the same year *Remembering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory* by Lars Eckstein refers to Gilroy's concept as a "unique metaphor charged with the fate of those millions who suffered and lost their lives before, on, and after the countless crossings between continents" (x). Eckstein carries out a close analysis of three exemplary Black Atlantic novels: Carlyl Philips's *Cambridge*, David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to show how different types of texts employ radically distinct strategies of remembrance.

The more recent volume *Recharging the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections* edited by Annalisa Oboe and Anna Scacchi, published in 2008, carrying the

exploration further, mentions that "the Black Atlantic presented in this volume does not overlap with Paul Gilroy's: it becomes a space where multiplicity of research/ cultural paradigms coexist, and where various locally inflected approaches confront one another" (02).

The concept has found response in the cyberspace with the Web site <http://www.blackatlantic.com> which is an archive of interdisciplinary material that helps the viewer understand the ways that the idea of the Black Atlantic has been constructed. Gilroy's concept of Black Atlantic, thus, having represented the interconnected cultural formation of four continents, tends to elicit continual response.

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Postmodernity, Consumerism and Identity Crisis in Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram*

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Postmodernist Literature, as many would agree, is neither an attack on Modernism, nor its endorsement. Beginning after the World War II era, Postmodernism continues to take shape and be written till today. Having elements of anarchy, chaos and abstraction, Postmodern Literature characteristically rebels its literary precursor and mostly succeeds in differing from it.

The primary elements that defer the definition of Postmodernism are the effects of globalization on culture. The influence of global interdependence and post-capitalisation has growingly produced many socio-cultural shifts in the contemporary period. One discerns changes in economies; cultural union or fragmentation of consumer societies and unique identity formation in great cosmopolitan cities in the world. Literature being the mirror of these changes is hence greatly affected by this 'Post-modernity' found in the society today.

Jean Baudrillard in his iconic text *The Consumer Society* proves how the postmodern society has been living under the spell of objects and their conspicuous consumption which in turn decide the affluence and hence happiness of individuals.

We are at the point where consumption is laying hold of the whole of life, where all activities are sequenced ...where the 'environment' is total - full air-conditioned, organised, culturalized (Baudrillard 29).

The dependence of the postmodern subjects on 'canned environments' hence makes the individual no longer concerned with object utility but rather with the unified signification that a group of objects give in totality. Baudrillard describes how

consumption and commodities like Language and Signifiers become indicators of socio-economic status in modern societies. This in turn leads to the conspicuous consumption of commodities which are not real but simply 'signifiers' or signs of happiness; hence conjuring the postmodern subject away from reality.

The present article focuses on Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram* from the perspectives of postmodernity, consumerism and identity crisis. Gregory David Roberts (born Gregory John Peter Smith; 21 June 1952) is an Australian author best known for his novel *Shantaram*. A former heroin addict and convicted bank robber he escaped from Pentridge Prison in 1980 and fled to India, where he lived for ten years. In 1990, Roberts was captured in Frankfurt after being caught smuggling heroin into the country. He was extradited to Australia and served a further six years in prison, and again he escaped prison during that time, but relented and smuggled himself back into jail in order to serve the rest of his sentence to give himself the chance to be reunited with his family. During his second stay in Australian prison, he began writing *Shantaram*. The manuscript was destroyed by prison wardens, twice, while Roberts was writing it. After leaving prison, Roberts was able to finally finish and publish his novel, *Shantaram*. The book's name comes from the name his best friend's mother gave him, which means "Man of Peace," or "Man of God's Peace." One often wonders how much of *Shantaram* is based on true events or is a conflation of real life and fantasy. Roberts has acknowledged that some experiences from his life are described pretty much as they happened, and others are created narratives, informed by his experience. Roberts lived in Melbourne, Germany, and France and finally returned to Mumbai (Bombay), where he set up charitable foundations to assist the city's poor with health care coverage. He was finally reunited with his daughter. The follow-up novel *The Mountain Shadow* was released in 2015.

Shantaram, the novel selected in this essay also proves to be the victim of consumerist activity. The happiness of all the characters and society of *Shantaram* is purely defined by consumerism. They voluntarily indulge themselves in consumerist activities that include alcohol and drug abuse which they use as defence mechanisms that push them away from reality. *Shantaram* hence proves to be one of those postmodernist texts that

elaborate upon the negative sides of mass capitalization, multiculturalism and consumerism. The book showcases the world of the marginalised in Bombay and that includes both, the urban-poor slum dwellers as well as the outcaste exiles that have fled their countries for various reasons. It is the story of modern urban 'yuppies' living the lives of stress and solitude while being encompassed by consumerism as they survive through unfavourable circumstances.

The city of Bombay in the book contains an omnipotent presence very much similar to what postmodernist scholar DeCerteau talks about in his work *Walking in the City*. Just like a person, Bombay too is like a breathing, moving personality having a character and temperament. It communicates with the narrator through its love and is rigorously omnipresent, even when he is away from it. The city also represents the general Indian community which is unconsciously viewed by most characters as the "other." Nearly all characters make efforts to adapt themselves to Bombay and its culture which the city heartily welcomes.

I am (Didier) French ... I am gay, I am Jewish, and I am a criminal, more or less in that order. Bombay is the only city I have ever found that allows me to be all four of those things, at the same time (Roberts 51).

Postmodernity in *Shantaram* is unquestionable. The complex narrative and occasional unreliability of the protagonist lets the Derridean reader to bring in autonomous interpretations. The reader is left independent of the author and the story and is empowered to interpret characters at his will. The immense cosmopolitanism and transculturation found in the book again contributes in its Postmodernity. *"There were Africans, Arabs, Europeans, and Indians. Languages and music changed with every step, and every restaurant spilled a different scent into the boiling air"* (Roberts 20).

Great Postmodernist scholars like Baudrillard and DeCerteau, make one understand the hedonism of modern urban societies. They unravel the role of consumerism in globalised societies along with the many narrative texts which are mostly viewed as marketable commodities themselves for profit-earning. Postcolonial specialist Graham Huggan in his book, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, discusses the same commodification of cultural

differences found in postcolonial-developing nations that are famously judged to be “exotic” in popular culture today. This attitude can of course be testified in the evidence that most diasporic writers of the East along with those writers who repetitively speak of the charms of the East are gaining the limelight. It is the same postcolonial, exotic charm and the transnationality found in *Shantaram*. .

Besides these complex cosmopolitan cross-nationalities, we also see Indian tradition mixing with the canned culture of the West thereby producing modern Indian “yuppies” or rather social rebels like, Vikram, Kalpana and Kavita in the book who disobey conventions consequently creating a new postmodernist atmosphere of rebellion and cultural chaos.

Unconventional cultural disparity found in the darkness of urban cultures in the book is discussed in the form of the merging of different marginalised groups. The book lets the reader view the city of Bombay and Indians through the unbiased eyes of an outsider. Majority of the characters tend to describe it in the most accurate and even the most beautiful lines as they see it.

The Indians are the Italians of Asia ...they demand a goddess, even if the religion does not provide one. Every man in both countries is a singer when he is happy, and every woman is a dancer when she walks to the shop at the corner. For them, food is music inside the body, and music is food inside the heart (Roberts 544).

The cultural complexity of *Shantaram* is another asset which helped it procure global attention. We see several exotic images of Indian tradition being poured into the western consciousness of foreign characters. Images like that of the Standing Babas, a street procession or the image of Karla worshipping the Hindu goddess, Durga, in her house are viewed from the eyes of Lin, a Christian and a foreigner from the West. While most Indians would see the Standing Babas or the Goddess from devotional angles; Lin and Karla see it for the fascination and exoticism they come with. This creates a unique sense of cultural understanding and an attempt by a foreigner to gain belongingness in an alien environment.

The text of *Shantaram* is characteristic of dark, depressive images unconsciously presented by the author. They let the

postmodernist intellectual bisect the text in order to find out what they mean. Negative images of suicide and crumbling buildings denote the stressed minds of characters many of whose identities committed virtual suicides before arriving in India. The dilapidated ancient buildings found in slums is symbolic of the dying old school of an emotional society that is now lost in materialism. Once being much prevalent, things like tradition, value and love are now narrowed down only till the boundaries of slums.

Crime being the major theme in the stories of each of the characters is viewed as – “the wrong thing done for the right reasons.” This leads to the postmodernist discussion of Morality being a fluid concept. Nearly all characters, including the hero, are criminals and libertines whom we love and admire. Like Dickens believed in unveiling the harsh realities of working class societies in London; the author attempts to re-create the real Bombay through Lin in a Dickensian manner. If we notice; the circumstances of Dickens' and Robert's societies share similarities. Bombay was going through a dramatic socio-economic phase in the 80s that is similar to the changes in London in the nineteenth century.

Characters, Identities and their Crises

Surrounded by mass production of well marketed commodities, every urban dweller is subjected to loads of influences that define his identity. The concept of individualism and personal identity is itself becoming a facade; for most people today try to become what they perceive to be the “ideal face”, “ideal body” and “ideal mind” the concepts of which are wholly dominated by global superpowers trying to dominate the consumerist market through media and urbanization.

The result is that globalization often works in one direction...negating the opportunity for equal exchange between peoples. The fallout of this uneven relationship permeates all aspects of society and the world. The increase of hybrid identities, diasporic populations, and migratory labor which result from globalization... (Hartweiger 09).

The great cleft created between cultures hence is in a way uniting countries and continents, the citizens of which follow stereotyped notions that are common to all. At the same time, the

originality and extraordinariness of various hegemonized cultures, though suppressed, continues to charm subjects leading to the production of bestsellers like *Shantaram* and also what Hartweiger points out, "Hybrid identities." The discovery of such hybrid populations in *Shantaram* is of much value for besides being simply culturally influenced; these identities are also fugitives and outsiders living in an alien environment of a bustling city. While being romanticised themselves by the exoticness of Bombay, these people also suffer from an intense insecurity which constantly makes them repulse their environment as a result of which they make continuous efforts to adapt to the place.

I had to change. I had to get involved. The city wouldn't let me be a watcher, aloof and apart. If I wanted to stay, I had to expect that she would drag me into the river of her rapture, and her rage (Roberts 73).

Despite accepting the warmth Bombay provides them, the exiles are always under the threat of being attacked or captured. They're insecure, psychologically troubled, reckless, materialistic, clever, and believe in easy money-making even if it costs them their life while doing something illegal. Each character comes with a distinct, darker past and a story that haunts them every day. Like many postmodernist texts, the multiple stories of each of these characters are assembled and smoothly flown into the main narrative which is the story of Lin, another fugitive and criminal. Each character therefore, holds a sense of mystery and a set of multiple identities for itself. Lin, Karla, Jhonny Cigar, Didier, Khader Khan, all keep role playing in the book according to their situations and their real selves; even the real self of the main character; is never known to the reader.

I belonged nowhere and to no-one...I was always and everywhere alone... I'd lost my family, the friends of my youth, my country and its culture - all the things that had defined me, and given me identity (Roberts 334).

The concept of identity crises in this postmodernist world hence has taken another fold, since a single person who used to be frustrated about Who to identify with? is now more confused about Which identity to take? The obvious consequence of such crisis is that the subject experiences alienation from the psychological turmoil of belonging nowhere and to nobody. The

lack of emotional connections also prevents the subjects from learning how to express their feelings to others or even to themselves. Basic psychological activities like communication and even introspection are therefore of great difficulty to the subject who becomes all the more frustrated with such inabilities.

The consequent identity crisis, psychological stress and chaotic relationships coupled with circumstantial urban environments, hence mute the book's postmodernist characters all the more. Consumerist distractions such as alcohol and drugs during times of such exasperations therefore become the plausible solutions to stress which lead them from bad to worse. Most characters at all levels of social status in *Shantaram* are in some way involved in some form of intoxication. They use inebriation as defence mechanisms which protect them from the realization of their ugly realities. Similar to what Baudrillard talks about, these characters are taken farther away from truth as they get lost in the world of drugs and consumerism. When we have poor alcohol addicts like Joseph and Rasheed who become violent and vicious for alcohol, we also have Didier, another addict who has been more or less a criminal himself. Khader Khan and his gang along with all the fugitives including Lisa and Lin are addicts of hash and heroin. Lin being an escapist never comes out of this addiction and even admits that the drug has been responsible for pushing him into crime. Other characters like Lisa, Maurizio and Ulla share the same story.

Emotional distance and apathy are also extremely common in the novel. Lin, despite of being passionately in love with Karla does not even remotely understand her. The uncountable cold-blooded murders; the aggressive mobs on streets; Abdullah's inexpressiveness; Karla's coldness; Lin's inability to scrutinize Khader; Ulla deserting the dying Modena in a hotel room; are all examples of deeply imbibed apathy, self-conflict and selfishness found in most characters, all of whose duplicates are equally common in modern society. Though comfortable in solitude, these characters are also lonely and very desperate for communication with a loved one.

Lin, the protagonist and narrator of *Shantaram*, is a courageous postmodern anti-hero whom we love and detest. The marriage of consumerism and morality in the postmodern world

has given rise to heroes like Lin who rapidly question the concepts of conscience. Quick in action and loyal in friendship, Lin believes in doing "the wrong things for the right reasons." Like all other fugitives in the story, Lin holds multiple identities which he is forced to undertake as masks that protect him from emotional despair and capture.

The false passport in my backpack in the slum said that I was a New Zealand citizen. The business card in my pocket said that I was an American named Gilbert Parker.

People in the village at Sunder had re-named me Shantaram. In the slum they knew me as Linbaba. A lot of people in my own country knew me as a face on a wanted poster. But is it my own country, I asked myself (Roberts 292).

The quote clearly indicates Lin's helplessness and frustration in coming to terms with reality. The inner conflict and alienation of Lin in an uncomfortable yet welcoming city is greatly visible even when he tries his best to conceal it. His thoughts and commentaries are often too dramatic and pretentious which give the reader the chance to doubt their authenticity. "Interested in everything and committed to nothing," Lin's rash character is that of an escapist who runs away from emotion and responsibility. Being a fugitive who once committed crime for drugs, Lin ran away from his responsibilities as a husband and a father and is also 'on the run' whenever he is encountered with any kind of emotional trigger.

The unreliability of the Lin is often revealed in his sympathetic yet biased and even racist descriptions of the Indian slums and Indian characters. Despite his compliments for the country, Lin seems to have lived in Mumbai solely out of the reasons of personal safety. His charitable work seems to have the selfish purpose of being safe and of gaining redemption coming out of remorse from his past as he speaks of it to Khader. His inferiority complex and shame in living with the slum dwellers is much visible in most of his descriptions.

Whenever I saw friends from beyond those sprawling acres, a part of me shrivelled in shame (Roberts 243).

I was almost angry that she'd (Karla) made me see the unlovely truth of my house (Roberts 244).

Being the victim of a consumer society, Lin avoids the

realities of his life through drugs. Despite being headstrong, he almost always escapes and suppresses his emotions. The realization that he is a fugitive who "will never be really free" aggravated his alienation and crisis. Born like a tragic hero with the "hero curse" of pride in his crime, Lin does not realize when to stop in spite of the warnings of Jhonny Cigar, Vikram and Karla. Because of his loyal nature, Lin blindly favours Khader in the Mujahedeen war which later leads to the beginning of his unending journey in crime. Being a postmodern hero, we never discover the rise or downfall of Lin as he proceeds into his ambitions and decides his own fate.

Suffering from postmodern urban problems, Lin becomes incapable of self-expression. His immense love for Karla remains unclaimed not simply because of her coldness but also because of Lin's impersonal austerity. As the novel ends, it's rather absurd how the woman he loved so intensely is at once out of Lin's heart and now he's even more confused about his attraction towards Lisa. Furthermore, it's worth noting how Lin falls into a drug relapse each time he encounters a conflict of his feelings between Lisa and Karla. Such dependence on drugs to avoid conflicting emotional encounters and one's impotence to comprehend the behaviour of the others or even the self hence represent the lack of communicativeness and emotional intelligence in the postmodern hero. Though relaxed in moral consciousness, the postmodern hero lacks the power to remain emotionally stable.

Numerous sceptical postmodernist beliefs that there are no single 'truths' or 'realities' and that morality does not exist as a constant concept, are few of the many postmodern maxims advocated by *Shantaram*. The book's narrative freely and rather cinematically flows in between stories of places, cultures and peoples that smoothly merge into the main narrative given by Lin. It not only questions the basic aspects of modern psyche and conscience but also questions the existence of being. Having innumerable aspects of urbanization, consumerism and identity crisis, the book discusses the resultant incomprehensible muteness and emotional dumbness of the postmodern hero/heroine. The rapid urban pace, commonality of cosmopolitan stereotypes and urban frustrations that lead to alienation are common to every modern city in the world and are elaborately brought to the

limelight in the book. The story carefully scrutinizes the modern 'yuppie' culture prevalent among the youth who loves solitude but is not well prepared for the instabilities it comes with. To say that the book is a highly postmodernist text which castigates modern urban societies would hence be a truism.

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Blemished Native Souls: Exploring the Aftermaths of White Intrusion in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*

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James Phillip (for Sousa) Welch was born to a Blackfoot father and Gros Ventre mother in Browning, Mont., hub of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Glacier County, not far from Glacier National Park. James Welch grew up on an Indian reservation, determined to become a writer and put into words the stresses on a people left out of the American dream. He won wide notice, especially in Europe, with fiction based on real life. As a Great Plains Indian writer whose poetry and prose explores the complex relationship between his origins and the world outside, which welcomed his work with critical praise and a measure of fame.

James Welch has described himself as both an "Indian writer" and "an Indian who writes." This double vision of American Indian experience as unique and yet representative, is at the heart of his first four novels--*Winter in the Blood* (1974), *The Death of Jim Loney* (1980), *Fools Crow*(1986), *The Indian Lawyer* (1990)--all set in or around reservation Montana and all revolving around protagonists, like Welch himself, of Blackfeet ancestry. Like any good writer, Welch arrives at the universal through the particular. But the particular--the stresses and strains of Native American culture in uneasy contact with the culture that nearly destroyed it--has not much figured as a theme in serious American fiction. Welch has helped to change that perspective without resort to sentimentality unlike James Baldwin.

The present paper focuses on his first novel, *Winter in the Blood* (1974) in which James Welch introduces a nameless narrator living on Fort Belknap reservation in Montana. The nameless narrator was heading nowhere as he was living a meaningless life.

He wandered from reservation to the towns of Malta, Harlem and Havre, and then back to reservation. Why is he wandering? Behind what is he running? What does he want? These questions are answered slowly as the life of the narrator is unfurled. The namelessness and the wandering attitude of the narrator suggest that there was a lack of momentum in his life. Mary Jane Lupton compared Welch's nameless narrator to the unnamed narrator of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. She quotes that "Ellison's narrator is an African American and therefore invisible in the dominant culture. In the same vein, the narrator of *Winter in the Blood* was a nameless Indian and also "invisible" (39). The narrator being a Native American was feeling a sense of non-being under the dominant culture of Whites.

As the novel begins, the narrator was coming home after a row with a white man at a bar. But this home-coming was devoid of any feelings of excitement or elation. He had a mother, an old grandmother and a Cree girlfriend named Agnes. But he didn't seem attached to any of these relations. It was clear from the narrator's speech at the beginning of the novel when he admits that "coming home to a mother and an old lady who was my grandmother. And the girl who was thought to be my wife. But she didn't really count. For the matter none of them really counted, not one meant anything to me" (1). The narrator didn't feel any bonding with his family or land and it was not due to any hatred or ill will because "the distance" he said "came not from his country or people; it came from within me. I was as distant from myself as a hawk from the moon" (2). So the narrator who thought himself as a mixed-breed was lacking a personal wholeness and his namelessness made him non-existent. His individuality like so many Native Americans had been eclipsed under the perilous umbrella of the dominant culture.

Welch explored the tribal past of an estranged Indian. His distant nature, his wandering, his inner dissatisfaction was because of his lost identity, distance from his roots. The dominant race had not only usurped their land and resources but had blemished their souls. The Whites had left no stone unturned to exploit the American Indians. From one-sided treaties to massacres, from bringing diseases and alcohol to the prohibition of

their religious practices, and then the policies of relocation, termination, assimilation, the life of the Natives was totally slivered. The Indian narrator and his family had also undergone these menacing circumstances.

Under Curtis Act, many Native American tribes including Blackfeet came completely under the U.S. government. They were forbidden to follow their traditional religion, speak their native tongue and the children were educated in government-established boarding schools located off the reservations. The Whites made various policies to improve the condition of the Natives but in reality it was just a false show of concern and nothing fruitful came out. They were just making attempts to assimilate the original race into their own culture.

When the narrator returned home, his assimilated mother Teresa gave him a cold welcome. She told the narrator that his Cree girlfriend had left taking away his gun and razor. Teresa was in friendship with a priest from Harlem and thus she had become half-Indian and half Catholic. According to Andrew Wiget: "His mother, Theresa is distinguished by her assertiveness, her assimilationist hatred for Indians (although she herself is Indian), and her demoralizing comments" (Wiget 90). With her Indian identity she had also left her responsibilities and concern of being a true mother, a daughter and a wife. She was one of the reasons behind the broken life of the narrator and her husband First Raise. Her hatred for Indians was clear from her stingy remarks at different times in the novel as "one duck can't be smarter than another. They are like Indians" (12) and when the narrator blamed her for the distant nature of First Raise, his father, she remarked that "He was a wanderer- just like you, just like all these damned Indians" (16). The narrator believed that his father was not satisfied with half-Catholic Teresa. That was why he always remained away from home.

First Raise was another deserted Indian who spent his life in mending things and in making the superior race happy. He spent his life in joking with the Whites or Long Knives "until the thirty-below morning ten years ago we found him sleeping in the borrow pit across from Earthboy's place" (5). He had dreams of hunting in the Glacier Park but he was scared of the penalty by the

Whites as the hunting was prohibited by the dominant race. He like every Indian wanted to go for hunts. He had made preparations several times but “planning and preparation were all part of a ritual” as “he never got caught because he never made the trip” (5). He died without fulfilling his dream as the intruders had broken the dreams of many such native youth. Owens describes his life in few beautiful words as “Displaced from the traditional male role of warring and hunting, First Raise still determined his life according to the traditional seasonal cycles” (135). The culture and tradition of the Natives had been surpassed by the Whites as seen in the character of First Raise. The Indian males were courageous warriors and hunters. They used to hunt for their families and defend them from all intricacies. But the Whites had grabbed everything from the American Indians. Thus First Raise lived a distant life and met a distant death too.

For the narrator, the priest stood as a negative force that was trying to separate the American Indians from their religion and culture. The friendship and concern of Whites for the Natives was just a pretense as narrator, while introducing the priest of Harlem, says that he is “a round man with distant eyes, who refused to set foot on the reservation. He never buried Indians in their family graveyards; instead he made them to come to him, to his church, his saints and holy water, his feuding eyes” (4). The feuding eyes symbolize the grudge and enmity of the superior race. This hatred prevented them to enter the Native American terrain. Thus, there could be no equality between these two opposing cultures.

The narrator started his quest to find his girlfriend and his real identity. He roamed around to different towns to get his things and girl back. His girlfriend Agnes and her brother Dougie were also alienated Indians. They were leading broken lives; indulged in drinking, petty stealing and fights. The narrator started his search from Malta, then to Harlem and Havre. In addition to find his girlfriend, the narrator was also realizing his real position among the Whites. He acknowledged that how Whites had destroyed the life of too many Natives. The narrator was totally perplexed in the company of these unknown beings as “on the ranch he works and has some authority, in town he becomes the victim of the settlers’

hatred and his own lust” (Lupton 51). White world was an illusionary world for the Natives. The narrator appeased himself with liquor and sex but these things would give him no relief because his wounds were so deep to be healed easily.

Tired and disappointed by his futile visit to Malta, the nameless protagonist comes back to reservation. He made a visit to Yellow Calf, an Indian old man who later turned out to be his real grandfather. He was one of those old Natives who had experienced the pangs of separation from their land and customs. The natural world of the American Indians had been besmirched by the intrusion of the Whites. Whites had brought machines to dig out their natural resources, cleared forests to build roads and bridges, killed animals just for sport and thus bringing a disaster for the humans and animals. Native Americans were happy and satisfied in their primeval world but the dominant race had looted them of everything. Some adopted these changes, some broke down and others like Yellow Calf resisted and survived. He was living alone in his small cabin, away from the tarnished world of reservation, talking and listening to the voices of natural world.

The small meeting with Yellow Calf brought some relief in the stormy life of the narrator. But certain things were still unclear. He moved to Harlem again to make his life fuzzier. Finally he found his girlfriend in Havre. The narrator went to meet her but she showed a cold attitude towards him. Then suddenly she showed concern when she warned the narrator to be aware from her brother Dougie. And the warning of the girl proved right. The narrator got a strong blow on his face. Recollecting the incidents he was standing in the front of a hotel and “felt that helplessness of being in a world of stalking white men. But those Indians down at Gable's were no bargain either. I was a stranger to both and both had beaten me” (96). The narrator was disappointed not only because of the superior race but he was disenchanted that everyone he met became a source of disaster for him. The narrator was tired in these disgusting surroundings of the town where he gained nothing. He wanted to return home leaving behind the hallucinatory world. Above all he was tired with his own self which was still a mystery as “there were no mirrors anywhere” (100) in the town which would reflect his real identity.

Now it was third and final homecoming for the narrator. Reaching home, the narrator learnt that his grandmother had died and her dead body was sent to Harlem. The old grandmother was the only character who was still clinging to the old Indian traditions. She hated Crees for their close association with the Whites and she “imagined that the girl was Cree and enemy and plotted ways to slit her throat” (4). Being a true Indian, the grandmother didn't like Agnes who belonged to the Crees, the people who were involved with the Whites against other Indian tribes including Blackfeet. The dead old lady had been taken to Harlem as the priest was going to bury her. But the narrator interrupted by saying that “Why don't we just bury her here, where the rest of them are?” (106). The narrator knew that his grandmother was a pure Indian and her soul would feel at peace only among her own people and declared that “it would be easier to bury her here” as “she didn't even go to the church” (106). The protagonist was so worried because the woman who sacrificed her whole life for saving her Indian identity was going to be buried according to the rituals of the intruders.

Before the burial ceremony, the narrator again visited the tranquil world of Yellow Calf. This visit would mitigate all his worries and bring such disclosure that the broken pieces of his life would become a proper whole. He suddenly wondered that why his father First Raise used to visit Yellow Calf. He wanted answers for all his questions, all the questions which would revive the entangled threads of his life. When he forcibly asked the old man outpoured the whole story of Natives' downfall on account of white intrusion. Yellow Calf had witnessed the good and bad time of Natives. Here he was brooding over the tough time of natives during the Starvation Winter (1883-84) when buffalo hunts completely failed. The U.S. government too failed to provide enough ration and as a result more than six hundred people died of starvation.

The starvation and the death of Standing Bear (grandmother's first husband) left the narrator's grandmother alone. There was confusion, hunger, hopelessness all around. The people were relocated to reservations created by the government as told by the old man that the survivors were taken to “the newly

created Blackfeet Reservation” (123). Here the narrator found a resemblance in the story of the old lady and the old man and the secret which Yellow Calf was trying to conceal was ultimately revealed to the narrator. Yellow Calf was the man who stayed back with the lone lady. He became his hunter, his savior. And the narrator happily exclaims: “You . . . you're the one.” I laughed as the secret unfolded itself. The only one . . . you, her hunter . . . And the wave behind my eyes broke” (124). This was the moment of extreme happiness for the narrator. First time in his life, he was feeling this kind of ecstasy as he found the 'real him'. He was not a mixed-breed. The half-breed Doogie was not his grandfather but “*it was you, Yellow Calf, the hunter!*” (125). The narrator had been living in a false belief that he was a mixed breed. Many natives had to face this situation because of the plunder brought about by the Long Knives or whites. This distance, this identity crisis, this desperation was not felt by a single native family but almost every Native American. Long Knives had snatched almost everything from them in the view of fulfilling their own interests.

With a new identity the narrator was now attending the burial ceremony of his grandmother. She had been buried in the reservation and as always the priest was absent. The protagonist kept on roaming throughout the novel but finally he got a certain thrust which will reinvigorate his senses. But nothing was going to change in the life of any of the characters. The scars of the White deception were not going to vanish. The whites had turned their world upside down never to achieve its previous position. Many questions remained unanswered and the readers are left muddling with certain queries. This symbolizes the hazy life of the Natives which can never be mended in the way it used to be. The narrator was somewhat relieved but the readers were left finding certain answers. As the Native Americans are still under the control of the American government, these perplexities will never end and the Natives will not fully enjoy the independent status.

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Velutha's Marginalized Sublimity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Suppression, all pervading mercurial phenomenon accommodating marginality of caste, race, money, etc., nurtures some of the major disparities in human society, only to deprive the deserving souls of the credit and bliss of fulfillment. The deprivation not only stubs the burgeoning acknowledgment of the bounties of life but also smashes the tender sensibilities only to let the resentment settle in. The apparent quality of untouchability by birth and the inherent qualities of the sublimity of soul always remain in tussle for "... a real individual, lovable, thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak (with) ... broad intelligent face, (and) graceful torso" (Anand vii). Viewed against the backdrop of social iniquities and flagrant violations as the disdainful baggages of History, the most "striking aspect of the novel, *The God of Small Things* is the treatment of the dalits. Velutha stands out as the representative of the untouchables in the novel. They were a class of people who were not allowed to walk on the public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies and not allowed to carry umbrellas. To add to the humiliation they had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed" (Manavar 124-125). In spite of all these social barbarities, unpleasant choices and denied the space to explore successfully, Velutha manages to become the god of the small things to a woman and her children who matter to nobody. His supposed lacuna, a low caste birth, makes him more outstanding against the backdrop of so-called superiors. Indubitably, his societal duties and responsibilities include no rights, no equality and no dream of acceptance, not to speak about respect. Societal paralytic incumbency fails to etiolate his human

richness, reflected through his social service to society, his fatherly affection to Ammu's children, his chaste love for Ammu, and his craftsmanship as an artisan. Branded an untouchable by birth, Velutha successfully touches all the threads of humanity by the sheer power of his humane sensibility. His marginalization, nowhere, stops him on the level of humanity as he leaves others far behind in the race of virtues. Low birth margins set the boundaries; his marginality suppresses him with all its power but fails to touch his sublimity, the essential and imperative quality of a human being.

Velutha represents the untouchable class, targeted to oppression by social tradition. "Roy brilliantly captures the suffering of an overbearing social order, brings to light the utter injustice, and offers a valuable sense of awareness. Roy maintains the idea of destiny as applied to history throughout the text. One of these inevitable features is the oppression of class structure so prevalent in Indian society" (CMP). Though made to work for Chacko's family (the upper caste people) for many generations/centuries, he has a self-assured air. Unlike other untouchables, Velutha fails to abide by the societal norms of caste system. Extremely gifted with his hands, Velutha is an accomplished carpenter and mechanic. Unable to conform to his father's idea of the proper behavior for an untouchable, Velutha disappears. He returns to work at the pickle factory, when his brother is paralyzed in an accident. He becomes the indispensable—the one who fixes all the machinery. His easy-going nature brings Rahel and Estha close to him.

Situations, characters and ambience worsen the things for Velutha. Ammu and Velutha get close when grieving Margaret and Sophie are invited by Chacko to spend Christmas in Ayemenem; on the way to the airport, a group of protesters surround the family car and force Baby Kochamma to wave a red flag and chant the communist slogan. She feels deeply humiliated and Rahel's claim of seeing Velutha in the crowd ignites an acrimonious hatred in Baby Kochamma towards Velutha, an untouchable, a paravan. As a young boy Velutha used to accompany his father to the back entrance of the Ayemenem House to deliver coconuts because Pappachi didn't allow untouchables into the house.

This younger son of Vellya Paapen, a Paravan and thus an untouchable, was not allowed to touch anything that touchable touched. Despite all the social deprivation, he wielded superb dexterity in doing things with a specific touch of certainty. When Velutha was young, he used to make several toys for Ammu, whom he used to call Ammukutty; he would hold out those toys on his palms so that she need not touch him to take them. Ammu's mother, Mammachi noticed Velutha's remarkable facility with his hands; therefore, when he was eleven she persuaded Vellya Paapen to send him to the untouchables' school founded by her father-in-Law. Unlike most Paravans, he knew how to read and write. Quite determined to move ahead, this young boy neither shy nor insecure like most Paravans at the age of fourteen, began to work with Johann Klein in his workshop where he worked assiduously every day after school till late in the night. By the time Velutha finished high school, his diligence coupled with conscientious efforts made him an accomplished carpenter. Mammachi often confessed, "if only he had not been a paravan, he might have become an engineer" (Roy 75). He was like a little magician. He could make intricate toys like tiny windmills, rattles, jewel boxes, etc. He built Mammachi a Bauhaus dining table with 12 dining chairs and for Baby Kochamma's annual Nativity plays he made her a stack of wire-framed angel's wings. Apart from his carpentry skills he also understood a lot of machines.

Even after his five years of absence, Mammachi rehired Velutha and put him in charge of general maintenance. Paravans were not meant to be carpenters and surely not meant to be rehired, so to assuage the anger of the other workers and keep the others contented, she paid him less than she would a touchable carpenter but more than she would a Paravan. "Marginalization combines social exclusion and discrimination. It insults human dignity and it objects human rights, especially the right to live effectively as equal citizens" (Quoted in Duchak 72). Instead of feeling fortunate to have had such an intelligent and skilled worker, Mammachi wanted him to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premises and touched things that Touchable touched; on the other way, she always said that it was a big step for a Paravan as he was allowed to work with the people of other castes. Though he always remained an outsider, surprisingly he looked after everything.

Velutha taught Estha and Rahel how to fish; he also helped them mend the boat which they had found. His craftsmanship well chiselled by his diligence, made him an artist with finesse.

Velutha's determination had helped him to learn things and his experience had helped him to be quite sure of his actions. Since he had worked so hard, it had made him considerably confident of himself, which in return had made him quick in doing things with certainty and ease. It set him apart as a paravan. Though he lived in a little hut, yet he walked proud and held his head like a touchable, a quality that always startled his father to the point of dread. Vellya Paapen always feared for his son Velutha. He could not say what it was that frightened him: "It was nothing that he had said or done. It was not what he said but the way he said it. Not what he did but the way he did it" (Roy). Vellya Paapen had the apprehension that the qualities and characteristics his son had were only meant for a touchable but surely not for a Paravan, not even his son. Surprisingly, he was always sure of what he did. He even offered suggestions without being asked and did not even care to consider suggestions made by others; his certainty, faith and confidence simply made him act the way he wanted.

Vellya Paapen's deep-rooted fear was an outcome of the same neglected and suppressed life by his ancestors, something that was handed over to him through his blood. Obsequious servile and stringent societal norms did not allow him to think his son worthy of being an equal with the touchable. His fatherly fear of what this might cause to his son in the future always tried to caution Velutha. But since he could not decipher what it was that made him think so, his suggestions seemed like pestering, nagging which turned the good relation between father and son pretty acrimonious. Consequently, Velutha stopped going home and preferred to sleep outside near the river. Then all of a sudden, he disappeared only to return after four years, that too without any explanation. Lot had changed at the home front as by then his mother was dead and his older brother was paralysed but when Velutha returned he still had the same qualities which his father so religiously feared. Not to revive the erstwhile bitterness Vellya Paapen didn't say a word this time, but his fear became stronger than ever before.

The 'Terror' took hold of Vellya Paapen when he saw night

after night a little boat being rowed across the river to the History House. Whatever he saw was not even imaginable to him. He failed to keep it to himself and immediately went to Mammachi to tell her. His tearful account of what he saw reflected the effect of drudgery on him, something he failed to shed because of its lingering continuity with the untouchable. Tears flowed from his eyes when he saw what his untouchable son had touched. Shocked and ashamed, he even offered to kill his own son. Baby Kochamma and Mammachi could not believe the news. Mammachi shuddered at the thought because a touchable girl having sex with an untouchable boy would cause a scandal if it became public and to make the matters worse, it would put Ammu into the position of an untouchable. The marginalization made Vellya Paapen curse his own son, where as when Chacko slept with the other females, Baby Kochamma and Mammachi safeguarded him saying, "He cannot help having a man's Needs" (Roy 168). As Vellya Paapen reported the events, Baby Kochamma's hatred revived with vigour and now she hated Velutha even more. Without realizing she had begun to hate him since a communist man humiliated her. Rahel claimed to see Velutha on the march and so she began to associate him with that man that she hated and thus also hated him.

To avoid the stigma of being involved with an untouchable in such a delicate way, Baby Kochamma had to find a solution. So she first locked Ammu in her room and then went to the police to accuse Velutha of having tried to rape her niece. To concretize her plan, she forced Estha to confirm that Velutha had kidnapped them. The police found Velutha sleeping with the twins in the History House, though neither the children nor Velutha was aware of it. Unjustified and merciless beating became the cause of his death at night. When Ammu tried to clear the case, it was too late and the police showed no interest. This probably caused Ammu to go mad and later to die. Velutha is beaten to death in the police custody and later on unceremoniously dumped in the pauper's pit—"where the police routinely dumped their dead" (Roy 321). Truth cried and simply died because the victim turned out to be an untouchable.

Ammu's relationship with Velutha failed to get approval of the society. The inherited class one represented one's inborn worth and therefore it blocked the option to be otherwise, despite

the personal merits of an individual; one was ascribed a status at birth and no amount of achievement could grant one admission into a higher class. Ammu and Velutha's choice to enter into a relationship of such a forbidden nature was a flicker of rebellion, though the intention was not so much to challenge the social order but to feel loved and accepted by somebody. However, this got into head-on collision with the stringent social class and caste codes. What it took was not expected: "The cost of living climbed to unaffordable heights . . . Two lives. Two children's childhood. And a history lesson for future offenders" (Roy 272).

Velutha, despite being capable of handling multiple tasks with equal ease, was always looked down upon for one factor over which he had no control, that is, his caste by birth. The norms, to which they should conform to, were engraved in the social circle very clearly as it allowed no transgression. Trespassing was a grave offence and it had to be tackled as harshly as possible to maintain the social sanity. When Velutha exercised his right as a human being, he was made to remember that he was an inborn paravan, socially deprived of touching everything that touchable could; when he dared to neglect the societal norms, he had to pay for his transgression by paying his life.

Marginalization is at the core of exclusion from fulfilling full social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them; they may become stigmatised and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be limited and they may develop low self-confidence and self esteem (Kagan, et al).

Through the trials of this 'God' of small things, the reader gets to know of a world where people were subject to the laws of History--inevitable consequences for going against the prevalent social norms.

Utterly aware of the sacredness of the norms, Velutha intended not to challenge the societal system. His relationship with Estha, Rahel and Ammu was not to get recognition in the society or manipulate them to catapult him to success. Ammu had never loved him or felt drawn to him when she was young and unmarried because then she was properly taken care of. The

traumatic turn came in the picture when the three of them had no one to look to for love, compassion, acceptance and approval. Their marginalized acceptance led to nurturing a different kind of relationship, fulfilling the void. Rahel and Estha got drawn to an untouchable because he showered that love on them which was supposed to be showered on them by their father, grandparents, uncle and other members of the family. He, an untouchable, touched and fed the emotional void in their lives. Ammu was never interested in Velutha beforehand, but when she noticed that he had the gift to make her children loved and looked after, she noticed his manhood. While holding Rahel in his arms, he accidentally glanced up and caught Ammu's gaze. And the moment he looked into her eyes. "Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment, history was wrong footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off life and old snake-skin" (Roy 176). In that brief moment Velutha looked up, saw and heard that he hadn't seen or heard before, he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. Her arms were round, firm and perfect and shoulder shining. Her eyes were somewhere else and had the message that "he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too" (Roy 177). Ammu sees a dream in which she sees a cheerful man with one arm who holds her close. Then he does one thing at a time, viz., "If he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved her, he couldn't leave, if he spoke, he couldn't listen, if he fought, he couldn't win" (Roy 217) obviously, this one arm man is none other than Velutha. Their attraction never intended to attract the wrath of puritans; their relationship might have upset the canonical patterns but theirs was a need of a deprived person.

The stringent societal codes were sanctimonious for all the outsiders. Hence, Velutha turned out to be the transgressor which destroyed many other lives dependent on him. His inherent lowness made him an unfit candidate for the love of a lady of upper class. Though the intention spared the norms but the action did not because they were not only made aware of their sin, they were also forced to pay for it with their lives. Tragically, the person whom they banked on as the saviour and provider was gifted death as a result of his humanness. Although he struggled against the current of social norms he was still unable to escape the inevitable consequences of these actions in a coldly unyielding society. The

inevitability of history gets accentuated when fighting against his destiny, Velutha ran blindly into it.

Velutha, the most unfortunate soul, worked exceptionally hard to fight against his inbred marginality. The stringent forces pressurized him to find his niche in this respectable precinct. Despite being a very good craftsman, he had to struggle to make people accept that like all of them he also existed. Surrounded by a very stringent system, he made conscious efforts to make himself as well as others feel his presence. Groping for the real meaning of life, he came in contact with Ammu and her kids. As an individual entrapped in various crisscross currents, he longed to find out his relevance as a human being. Coming to the rescue of a woman who wanted to be loved and pampered, the arms of a paravan provided solace to her to make her exist in the most fulfilling way. Despite his heartfelt abhorrence for the upper class, he got drawn towards her. The unlimited shower of love from Ammu drenches his parched soul. He got what was deprived to other upper class people, that is, acceptance in love without conditions. In relation to Ammu and the kids, he knew he belonged but that did not bear the stamp of authority. He was watched over by not only the inner forces but innumerable social concerns and multitudinous unforeseen powers. However, this bliss is not allowed to continue. He is allowed to be nothing but 'The God of Small Things.' "He left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirror" (Roy 265).

Velutha which means white in Malayalam is represented in the novel in black colour. To save his fellow brothers from the anathema of marginality, he started working with the communist party, his dedication made him an intrinsic part of the group which had organized a march and demanded for an hour's lunch break for the paddy workers, increase in the wages of laborers, and the untouchables should not be addressed by their caste names. As the march was on the move, Rahel noticed Velutha wearing a shirt, she called him out but he deftly got lost in the crowd. Velutha emerges as a daring trade union communist who has succeeded in shedding the identity as an untouchable by being in his white shirt and mundu and fighting for the rights of the oppressed. His efforts to liberate his fellow mates from the drudgery of servile servitude did not help him when he really needed their support because the

people working for the rights were not untouchable but merely the representative of untouchables. When he went to Mammachi who wanted to see him, he was awarded with tirade and a threat to be castrated like a pariah dog. She also threatened to get him killed. As Velutha walked despairingly away from the encounter with Mammachi's wrath, he began to understand that he could not fight the consequences of his actions. "He refuses to symbolically crawl backwards with a broom as his ancestors have had to do literally in the past . . . His tragedy is representative of the fate of the untouchables . . . Velutha is 'The God of Small Things' and his elevation to a position of God-hood marks the real degradation and struggle in the lives of Paravans of Kerala" (Bhatnagar 95).

To sum up, Velutha, the untouchable, got engulfed by the oppression as his skill, honesty, compassion, sincerity, concern for the welfare of others, etc., helped him at no point of life. The only characteristic that earned him recognition was his untouchability. He had been brutally deprived of the right to live a life of equality with fair sense of pride. Socially, his indulgence for manual work was a must but his indulgence for real participation for fun, pleasure and equal rights got blurred simply because of his social marginality. Velutha, a real gem, with all the sheen of an invaluable treasure, failed to get the approval from the stalwarts of society. His exit from the drama of life also made to leave no prints, conforming to his work.

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Unravelling the Mechanics of Black Freedom Struggle through the genre of Rhythm and Blues

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I mean, the only thing that has changed now-there are no chains around my ankles, as a people, but they're around my brain now. You know, you are made to believe that these things are better, but they're not. They're not.

—Herman "Junior" Denby

The past is a remarkable copious source of information about the present.

—Cater and Jones (1989: 107)

Marginalization has been a living reality for all African American women and it goes without saying that reverberances of their doubly colonized reality is directly or indirectly reflected in their creative-artistic expression. This essay is a visitation of the artistic expression of African American women's living reality as finds expression in the rhythm and blues genre lyrics with an aim of unravelling the mechanics that validate their subordination and is further part of the dialectics that validates other such subordinations. In an inter literary, multicultural imperative, locating African American women in the realm of ecofeminism, two lines of thought that do not associate with each other, the essay attempts to bridge the gap between the womanists and the ecofeminists, embossing the similarities between the two theories, not to obliterate them but rather to work hand-in-hand, enriching each other, and becoming each other's strength and systems of support, to fight the socially constructed myths through a re-writing of the history of African American women in keeping with gynocriticism's call of creating a new canon in the female tradition.

Among notable cross connections that exist between

womanism and ecofeminism are:

1. Both womanists and the ecofeminists recognize the systems of oppression as interconnected. A Black feminist Patricia Hills Collins enlists two works, namely, Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class* (1981) and Andre Lorde's (1984) classic volume *Sister Outsider* who consent with the view. In an essay entitled "Toward a Politics of Empowerment" included in her *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2009) Collins asserts that domination encapsulates within the tools of—structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power. These remind of Warren's detailed exploration of the dynamics of unjust domination and oppressions in the *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000). To briefly explain, the structural domain of power encompasses how social institutions are organized to reproduce Black women's subordination and the subordination of the multiple "Others." The disciplinary domain of power (reminds of Foucault) operates not through explicit racist or sexist social policies but through "bureaucratic hierarchies and techniques of surveillance" (Collins 299). The hegemonic variant, writes Collins, operates through school curricula, religious teachings, community cultures, family histories and the mass media in validating unjust oppressions of non-dominant groups. Lastly, the interpersonal domain of power operates in bringing domination by replacing: "...cultural ways of knowing with...hegemonic ideologies that...justify practices of other domains of power" (Collins 306).

2. Françoise d'Eaubonne talks of sexual control (cause of overpopulation) and the control on production (cause of surplus production) by man—these issues are echoed even in the U. S. Black feminist thought. A Black feminist chronicles, while White women were:

. . . assigned the duty of reproducing the national group's population . . . U. S. population policies broadly defined, aim to discourage Black women from having children, claiming that Black women make poor mothers and that their children end up receiving handouts from the state. . . White women are encouraged to increase their fertility . . . assisted by . . . technologies . . . fertility of undocumented women of color is seen as a threat . . . especially if such

women's children gain citizenship and apply for public services. . . (Collins 249).

3. Both recognize the social constructedness of the negative images of women. Where ecofeminists like Mary Daly talk of "Hags" and "Crones" in her *Gyn/Ecology*, Patricia Collins talks of the "matriarchs" and "welfare mothers" (Collins 92).

4. Both ecofeminists (even though some amongst them try to distance themselves from it all ecofeminist positions lapse into it eventually) and Black feminists are charged of being essentialists, focusing on women's physiological and social experiences. Both qualify under the category of "essentialism per se" if one was to judge according to Kathy Ferguson's categorization of essentialisms in her *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (1993).

5. Both hold an holistic view of nature and are sensitive to environmental ethics' third theory i.e. an ecocentric view of nature that the environment has an intrinsic value and has its rights as much as any other part of the creation. The first two theories hold an anthropocentric view that man has the moral responsibility towards environment and animal life because of his sense of reason.

6. Even though both celebrate the affinity of women to nature both are aware of the social constructivist aspect of it as well.

7. Both cultural ecofeminists (like Mary Daly) and certain womanists (like Alice Walker herself) seek answers in spiritual alternatives.

The sophisticated urban music, simmering since the 1930s, that took its full swing as an independent genre called the rhythm and the blues in the 1940s, derived from the tradition of the heavy rhythm of the jump blues, taking influences from the swing era's tradition of the tight brassy riffs, and that of the dramatic gospel singing, it also emulated the elements of wit from the minstrel shows and the 32 beat white pop music. Rhythm and blues then was a coming together of the blues that were gradually evolving to become suitable for even the dance halls, juke joints, and vaudeville theatres, and the rhythm of jazz. Since the rhythm and the blues was an amalgamation of the blues and the jazz it was also an amalgamation of the ecofeminist tendencies those genres of

African American music (especially that of the black women artists) embodied. The jostling forces of several stylistic influences on the rhythm and blues music facilitated an environment congenial for the critique and therefore thwarting of the systems through which the logic of domination functions therefore facilitating the deconstruction of the ideological strategies at the heart of these music styles and the politics of accepting or rejecting them on the part of the audience. Jerry Wexler coined the term rhythm and blues in 1947 while editing the *Billboard* charts finding the ten used terms “Harlem Hit Parade,” “Sepia,” and “Race” rather demeaning.

Rhythm and blues became the popular form of black music during and till sometime after the World War II, and therefore, telling parallels between the transformations of the rhythm and blues and the black freedom struggle. Marked by characteristic strong vocals and an emphasis on the form more than the content, rhythm and blues was a segregation phenomenon, even after almost a decade of the Second World War segregation still remained a living reality for the African Americans. A strong vocal voice from an ecofeminist lens is a strong connection with the nature for voice locates on the ontological-nature-side of the Cartesian dualism. Blacks during these years vied for black audiences' attention and hoped to grow their appeal beyond the little white audience they enjoyed, therefore churning out music in the rhythm and blues tradition particularly for the black audience but also wishing to break through the white pop charts. This aspiration of the black artists can be seen as an attempt at inclusiveness as much as ambition. Rhythm and blues was the music of the masses unlike the jazz music that catered to the mid classes, and therefore from that perspective also was comparatively more inclusive. However though the rhythm and the blues was meant for both the blacks as well as the whites this strategy somewhat diluted the intensity of the black cultural characteristics within this genre of African American music.

Rhythm and blues music was a consequence of the industrial, technological, as well as the sociological changes that took place during those years. The demographics of America was changing, causing changes in the mass consumption of popular music, causing new styles to emerge in order for that demand of

new tastes to be met, one of these new trends was the sophisticated urbane music that was the rhythm and the blues. Accompanying this shift in taste was the rise of the television, an important industrial change of the 1940s that made the radio station owners insecure enough to sell them to the blacks. The new owners mainly catered to the urban black Americans and gave chance to the new small but independent record labels such as Modern, RPM, Speciality, and later the Atlantic Records (in 1947) who aired the sounds of the rhythm and the blues to a black urbane audience. The music that appeared during these years has been a victim of our narrow lens of understanding that glances it as a mere reflective imitation of the civil rights, a mistake we shall endeavour to rectify at least partially in the pages to follow. Vincent Harding agrees in *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (1990) as he goes on to state:

Because we have so often chosen to reduce the extraordinary democratic explosion of the post-World War Two Black freedom movement into a manageable category called civil rights, it has been difficult, usually impossible, to know what to do in our classrooms with the powerful release of creative energy which was so central to that era of transformation . . . A narrow “civil rights” approach may have led many persons of every age group to miss the possibility that the study of artists and their work can be enjoyable, exciting, *and* fundamental to the creation of a more just and democratic society (126-7).

The *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* case judgement of 1954 which recognised segregation (separate public school facilities for black and white children specifically) as unequal marked a landmark that broke the constitutional intellectual foundation of the oppressive system of the Jim Crow apartheid, ushering in the dawn of the modern civil rights movement and a new phrase of mass black struggle. The “just and democratic society” that Harding talks about and towards which this 1954 judgement took stride partly resonates with the model of society that ecofeminists strive towards, therefore proceeding with the understanding that:

. . . the popular cultures of oppressed groups usually contain within them explicitly or implicitly-a critiques of

the system by which those groups are oppressed, and thus actually constitute a mode of psychological resistance to their predicament.

. . . In fact, Rhythm and Blues was a complex, often deeply paradoxical phenomenon which managed both to challenge and affirm the core values and assumptions of mainstream America (Ward 4).

It is interesting to note the reactions that the initial breakthroughs of rhythm and blues music attracted from the industrial giants in recording and broadcasting industry which were interspersed with hostility from the quarters occupied by adult white America. These Reactions help gauge the dominant current of beliefs that were seeped in racism during the mid to late 1950s as a projection of the political, demographic, economic, as well as the cultural pressures that moulded the modern civil rights movement, for it was also responsible for some major musical and lyrical changes that occurred in the rhythm and blues genre, which also helped the black artists to tackle the mainstream white market to a certain degree.

As part of that system, the recording and broadcasting industries did not merely reflect the prevailing racial assumptions of the 1950s, they internalizes them, functioned according to their dictates and, in so doing, helped to perpetuate them. Racial conventions permeated the organization and structure of the music industry at every level (27-8).

Artists irrespective of their race tried to challenge these aural and social conventions which were relentlessly checked through added efforts and arrangements. For instance, if a "Major recorded more pop-oriented black performers, hoping to emulate the exceptional crossover success of black pop acts..., they often appeared on the company's popular label and not its r&b imprint" (Ward 28). Similarly when the white music artist tried to bring together a country-pop sensibility and the bellow of the black shouters the rendition would be featured on an rhythm and blues label before its entry into the mainstream label and therefore on the both sides of the racial divide. The Independents were generally "more responsive and sensitive than the Majors to the diverse tastes of their primary black audience" because of "their more

extensive and intimate links to the core black market through local black performers, deejays, club owners, record retailers and jukebox operators" but none of them was "immune from the racial assumptions which circumscribed the Major's policy towards the categorization, production and marketing of black music" (Ward 28-9).

The development of the black-oriented radio then was the cog that set the success for the rhythm and the blues music in motion, establishing it "at the heart of a national black popular music culture" and also helped it "cut across customary, and in the South, legal barriers between the races to make that music available to young whites," a development that eventually (after a decade or so of the World War II) led to the "chaotic black-white collisions, fusions, thefts and homages which characterized the new musical hybrid," namely, rock and roll (Ward 29-30).

The black-oriented radio that facilitated the development of the rhythm and blues music had three key characteristics. Firstly, personalities with strong vocal quality and flamboyance became a norm within the black-oriented radio that was dominated by both men and women irrespective of their race. Secondly, the brokerage system of broadcast financing that this black-oriented radio followed and continued to follow till the 1960s gave deejays the latitude to air whatever they wanted for they bought the airtime from the station and were then personally responsible for reselling portions of that time to the sponsors. Thirdly, though not as a norm but noticeably there were very few radio station owners, managers, or even technical staff recruits who were black till as late as the 1960s when there were some four black-owned radio stations, namely, WEUP-Birmingham, WCHB-Inkster, KPRS-Kansas City, and WERD.

The technical advancements in the field of music have directly and indirectly been a plus for the black women artists as much as for their male counterparts. The significant role radio has played for the rhythm and blues' genre helping it gain popularity through an easy access to the general population and consequently to the white markets is a well established fact, even though it was a technological product that had been used and then passed over to the blacks because it was no longer of any relevance or productive value to the whites. Ecofeminism's overt technophobia is well

known but in truth ecofeminism does understand and therefore recognise the blurred boundaries between the nature/culture dualism that technology entails, and over the years has come to project a willingness to negotiate these boundaries, though during the second-wave of feminism's engagement with technology the ecofeminist stance was the one of strict opposition in keeping with the view of the ecofeminist claim that there exists a deep sense of alliance between the women and nature (which is seen as the nurturing mother) and that the growth that comes about because of technological progress and capitalism sanctions the domination politics that subjugates the "Others." Ecofeminists therefore call for a reclaiming of the natural and the feminine/maternal from the structural system of dominance that is scientific rational patriarchy.

While one approach towards technology is that of absolute rejection which establishes essentialist and materialistic associations between nature and women, a view supported by ecofeminists such as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, right on the other extreme of the spectrum is the view supported by the likes of Shulamith Firestone who in the work *The Dialectic of Sex* (1973) accepts technological development as a tool to thwart the oppositions women are subject to owing to their association with nature, clearly an anti-thesis of ecofeminism, or that of Sadie Plant, a cyberfeminist in her "Beyond the Screens, Film, Cyberpunk and Cyberfeminism" (1993) celebrates technology claiming that the silicon liberation and women's liberation track each other's development.

Then the ambivalent view within the ecofeminist quarters that neither celebrates the essentialist view that women have a special relationship/connection with nature (because of the innate natural association) or the view that technology can deliver women from their plight seems apt. What further complicates things is that some ecofeminists understand this special connection as a socially constructed myth because women and men are equally close to nature (for they are made of the same spirit), and it's through this constructedness and man's attempts to dissociate and distance himself from the nature that has left women in the role of the mediator between the two. This ambivalent approach seems more in line with progressive

development, and echoes somewhat with the call of the feminist Donna Haraway who in "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism" in the 1980s" as incorporated in *Feminism/ Postmodernism* (1990), edited by Linda Nicholson, proposes a breaking down of the boundaries that exist between natural and the technological, rejecting a totalising-universal theory invoking an image of the cyborg (a hybrid of machine and a living organism) as the objective relative of the ontology and the politics surrounding it.

Though Haraway clearly chooses to distance herself from ecofeminist thought when she declares that she would rather be a cyborg than a goddess, for while she is willing to explore the positives within technological development, ecofeminism still takes a comparatively sceptical approach, still valuing the natural more. While spiritual ecofeminism's ideological perspective dominated the 1980s, and postmodern cyberfeminism dominated the 1990s, the two seem to be coming rather close where the defining line is ever finer. Haraway's call to celebrate blurred boundaries is then in line with the present project of inclusiveness within the individual thought lines of feminism, especially the juncture of ecofeminism and womanism. The rhythm and blues music repeatedly displays these blurred boundaries, as we shall discover in the pages to follow, while we explore the lyrics to a few significant singles which featured African American women rhythm and blues artists, that made it to the 1940-1959 List of *Billboard* Number-One R&B Hits.

Ella Fitzgerald featured along The Ink Spots in the "Cow-Cow Boogie (Cuma-Ti-Yi-Yi-Ay)" (DECCA 18587), a single featuring a woman rhythm and blues artist on the *Billboard* rhythm and blues charts made its appearance on March 25, 1944. The song was written by Benny Carter and Gene De Paul, borrowing from the folklore of the singing cowboy (somewhere in the American West) who hails from a city and sings for his motherless calves ("doggies") to get "hip." The song was composed by Don Raye and was written for the film *Ride 'Em Cowboy*, though it was eventually dropped. The image of a cowboy taking care of the calves (nonhuman nature) and singing (an activity that qualifies as residing on the "nature" or the "feminine" side of the ontological dualistic scale) is resonant of the dualism-deconstructive nature of

the ecofeminist stance. The song undergoes the systems of domination that perpetuate the patriarchal construct of things, offering a picture where the cowboy has the first hand experience of dealing with the non-human other nature, as well as free expression of emotions through singing. The images the song evokes in one's mind as Ella Fitzgerald gives it her vocals is that of inclusiveness, reminding one of the idea of "revaluing nature" that Lori Gruen gives stating how "a conceptualization of values which focuses on chosen communities, direct experiences, and inclusivity is a starting point" for the ecofeminist moral theory (Gruen 370). The cowboy is shown as empathetic of the calves in the rendition, as much as he is well versed in his "knocked out western accent with a Harlem touch" and therefore the communities of African Americans, and that of the whites in America.

"Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall" (DECCA 23358) made it to the Billboard rhythm and blues chart on November 18, 1944, and continued to hold for almost eleven weeks. Performed by The Ink Spots and Ella Fitzgerald, the song was penned by Allan Roberts, and its melody was by Doris Fisher. The song takes from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Rainy Day," as it takes from the nature to create an image of trials and suffering that the singer is going through. The rain becomes the symbol of these miseries. Even though the singer realizes that some trials and experiences are important in life for the growth of the person, the unjustified amount of share she has received is unfair. Some of her folks find respite through the blues but for her even that spurs more misery. But she still hopes "that someday that sun is bound to shine." And in order to vent her misery she sings, an act that in itself becomes symbolic of finding a voice in the face of struggles through the use of her vocals that qualify as the in between of the culture/nature dualism, though slightly more edged to the nature side. Another important ecofeminist discourse that this song touches upon probably inadvertently is that of the relationship between man and the nonhuman world. One is made to mull over Lori Gruen's idea from the essay "Facing Death and Practicing Grief" as incorporated in *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth* (2014), edited by Carol J. Adama and Lori Gruen, where Gruen goes on to state how:

There is an important concern that living with other animals is characterized by relations that always position humans in control and nonhumans in conditions of servitude or, at best, dependency. Humans are in a relationship of patronage with nonhumans—we can be kind and generous, but always with an air of superiority. When humans bring nonhuman animals into their homes, for example, the nonhuman animals are forced to conform to the human rituals and practices that exist there....But even the most thoughtful, compassionate domesticated relationships can't erase the fact that companion animals are forced to live by our cultural standards. Companion animals are, in a very real sense, our captives (129-30).

The cowboy's call to the calves to become "hip" can be seen as guided by a similar mindset.

Dinah Washington's "Am I asking Too Much" (MERCURY 8095) made it to the *Billboard's* rhythm and blues list on October 9, 1948, and retained its spot for about a week. Dinah Washington in her gritty-high pitched voice sings with noticeable clarity in diction presenting a case for an ethic of care in the lyrics. While the rendition may be an innocent call to be cared for by a lover the wider implications of it working in the complex politics of the oppressive systems at work in the society it seems to echo Karen J. Warren's idea of the "ability to care" as finds expression in her essay "Ethics in a Fruit Bowl" incorporated in her *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (2000), where she states:

The ability to care is not simply an amorphous feeling, a "caring for" something. One may or may not have any feelings for the one cared about ("the cared-about"). "Caring about" another is the expression of a cognitive capacity, an attitude toward the cared-about as deserving respectful treatment, whether or not one has any particular positive feelings for the cared-about ...the ability to care about oneself or another is not simply an add-on feature of ethical deliberation; it is an element of emotional intelligence presupposed by it (110).

Warren therefore proposes "ability-to-care" as a condition necessary for an ecofeminist "care-sensitive ethic."

Clearly the understanding of the idea of interdependence is evident in the lyrics as Washington vocalises how if she is asking for “care” the lover too may want her to love him someday, in the line: “Can't you see there may come a day when you'll want me to love you?”

Another rendition by Dinah Washington that made it to the Billboard rhythm and blues list was “Baby Get Lost” (MERCURY 8148) on September 24, 1949 for a period of two weeks. It was written by Leonard Feather though it is often credited to Billy Moore, Jr. “Baby Get Lost” is an outpouring of a woman who is ready to let her man go because of his “two-faced” “cheating” demeanour. Contrary to the domesticated image of the woman the man is depicted as into “much travelin’,” at once expressing the socially constructed mind set of the social background to the song. It is also reflective of the fact as to how while African American women could get jobs in households and as performers but men had to constantly be on the run for the look out of jobs because of racist as well as gender biases. Dinah Washington in the song is aware of the “double crossing she is being subjected to by this “fine and mellow fellow” who is also as “stubborn as a mule” so she has decided to move on for she has “many men/That they're standing right in line.” The song reveals the oppressive hierarchical processes at play in our society while simultaneously attempting to subvert it, through the act of singing (giving voice to) of these struggles that women face, rejecting the silence that the dominant discourse imposes on women, and through the very literal act of leaving the lover for other men in the primary context of the song's narrative. Clearly then the song identifies that:

Domination is a pervasive ideology and practice, certainly in gender relations, but also related to ethnicity, class, culture, and the natural world. The practice of domination and oppression has identifiable roots in hierarchy, misogyny, and rocentricism, anthropocentrism, and in the origins of organized agriculture (Lerner 1986: 48-53) (Eaton 43-4).

While some ecofeminists recognise hierarchy as the prototype of oppression, some consider misogynistic hatred of women as the counterpart of androcentrism which together form the foundation of domination becoming the breeding grounds for

all cultural mutations. Although connected, misogyny and androcentrism as terms entail certain differences mainly in terms of their ideologies and social patterns of manifestation. While misogyny is an out-and-out overt domination of women (sexual slavery, lack of equal payment for equal work, etc.) androcentrism operates under the guise of the dictum that women and men are equal but different (this difference is the deliberately kept ambiguous ground that is for men to manipulate). The two are intricately tangled. It would not be an overstatement to conclude that misogyny and hierarchy share a dialectic existence. It is almost impossible to determine which paradigm of domination is more harmful among the two. Sadly, the interplay of the complex systems of domination (imperialism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, global capitalism, political structures, and the religious institutional structures has shrunken the value of life to that of a commodity. “Baby Get Lost” displays the said dialectic.

The song “Oh What a Dream” (ATLANTIC 1036) by Ruth Brown that made its entry to the *Billboard* rhythm and blues chart on September 4, 1954, retaining for a period of eight weeks was written by Chuck Willis. The Drifters backed Ruth's vocals. The song has tinges of gospel and torch singing. It plays its bid on the constructed psyche of the female who has come to romanticise the idea of a wedding, and desires and dreams of becoming a bride. Though ecofeminists recognise the value of love the song incorporates a certain sense of aversion to the commercial aspects associated with weddings for instance through the mention of the music organs and the like. Ruth Brown sings:

Dreamed we were walkin' down the aisle
The organ was playin' “Here Comes the Bride”
You looked out at me and you began to smile
When I looked around everybody began to cry

The desire for a wedding also touches upon another deeply embedded discourse within the day to day reality of the African American women, that which Barbara Omolade in the *The Rising Song of African American Women* (1994) explains in the following words:

White men used their power in the public sphere to construct a private sphere that would meet their needs and their desire for black women, which if publicly

admitted would have undermined the false construct of race they needed to maintain public power. Therefore, the history of black women in America reflects the juncture where the private and public spheres and personal and political oppression meet (17).

Women's sexuality has been a serious part of gender oppression. Women have been put into two water-tight compartments of the sexual categorisation, that of the asexual and the moral, and that of those who are sexual and therefore presumably immoral. African American women's sexuality because of the perspective Barbara Omolade sheds light on and other oppressive factors accompanying it, has been seen as situated on the wrong side of this moral scale.

The Bobbettes single "Mr. Lee" (ATLANTIC 1144) made its *Billboard* rhythm and blues list entry on September 30, 1957, continuing for a period of four weeks. The song was written by the Bobbettes themselves, it was written out of their disdain for a teacher by the same name. They even wrote a sequel to it, namely, "I Shot Mr. Lee," though it was shelved by Atlantic. In the song the idea projected through the image of the "male" glorification that the dominant discourse establishes is mocked at. Viewing this song from the perspective influenced by Chaia Heller' following statement from the essay "For the Love of Nature: Ecology and the Cult of the Romantic" from Greta Gaard edited *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993) gives a new insight into the nature of things:

Romantic love flourishes between the walls of hierarchy, allowing the oppressor class free reign to paint its own romantic image of the lives and condition of the oppressed.

Romantic love naturalizes and glorifies social domination, making the relationships between oppressor and oppressed appear inevitable, desirable, and even "complementary." It assigns romantic images of both the oppressor and the oppressed that obscure the natural identification, compassion, and rage that might bring individuals to challenge the social order. Romanticism allows the oppressor to dominate without guilt, and attempts to seduce the oppressed into accepting and even

rejoicing in their lot (229).

Chaia warns us against such romantic love and also the romantic notions we attach to nature (when we attach romantic images to the rural that is disappearing into poverty and agribusiness) for she goes on to elaborate that:

We as a society of individuals alienated from each other and from nature. If we are not careful, romantic love will continue to rush in, drowning out the motivation and analysis necessary for radical social and ecological change. Authentic love must dissolve hierarchical separations within society and between society and nature. It must undermine social divisions—including sex, age, and race—to establish the possibility for mutual understanding, active compassion, and cooperation (230).

The mockish ironic tone of the song "Mr. Lee" becomes apparent from this perspective.

The unfeeling and irrational systems of oppression and domination within the facade of rationality and reason disregard all sorts of display of emotion. African American women music artists' embracing of sentimentality in their renditions outrightly disregards this conceptual framework, though it was to a certain degree still conforming to their audiences' tastes. In that right then and through the intricate patterns of embedded nature associative sensibility the artists discussed display an ecofeminist character.

Notes

Heather Eaton in these paragraphs quotes from: Lerner Gerda's *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), Anne Primavesi's *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), and Elizabeth Dodson Gray's *Green Paradise Lost* (Wellesley, MA: Roundtable Press, 1979).

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Juxtaposing Illusions and Realities in Diasporic Experiences: an Analysis of Andrea Levy's *Small Island*

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Andrea Levy, born in England to Jamaican parents who sailed to England in 1948 on the *Empire Windrush*, engages in topics concerning the Jamaican diaspora in Britain and the way they negotiate social, cultural and national identities. Although, writers such as George Lamming and Sam Selvon too made the transatlantic journey in 1950s and as Caribbean (male) immigrants, penned down their experiences in fiction, thereby becoming the literary forefathers, yet Levy belongs to a young generation of Black-British writers who "began, uniquely, to map out the contours of their own identity as black British people, not as rejected outsiders, but critical insiders" (1999 28). Her first two novels *Every Light in the House Burning* (1994) and *Never Far From Nowhere* (1996), both set in London, delineate the stories of children born of Jamaican parents, their 'otherness' in a society of 'whites,' the racial consciousness and formation of their identities. However, after Levy's first visit to Jamaica, the setting of her later novels becomes at once English and Jamaican. In *Fruit of the Lemon* (1999), *Small Island* (2004) and *The Long Song* (2010), Jamaica finds its distinct voice both geographically and spatially. Levy's third and most acclaimed novel, the winner of three prestigious awards--Whitbread Book of the Year (2004), The Orange Prize for Fiction (2004) and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (2005)-- *Small Island*, is subject to scrutiny in this paper. Written from the perspective of four individuals (two couples) whose stories converge in London in 1948, *Small Island* is a consideration of the beginnings of Britain's multicultural society and the prejudices--in terms of race, class and gender--that permeate it. Starr E. Smith from the *School Library*

Journal referred to *Small Island* as “a masterful depiction of a society on the verge of major changes” (2010).

In *Small Island*, Levy looks back at the first Caribbean emigrants to England, who sailed on the ship *Empire Windrush* in 1948 in search of better life and opportunities, and their disillusionment after finding no comfort in the 'Mother Country'. She threads together the overlapping first person narratives of the four protagonists to bring home her argument. A distinct and clear voice is given to all the four protagonists, Gilbert Joseph, a young Jamaican who joined Royal Air Force in England, his wife Hortense, their English landlady Queenie Bligh and her husband Bernard who has returned from India after serving his country during the War. According to Corrine Duboin, “Through a series of long flashbacks, the novel expands beyond post-war London to rural England, to Jamaica and India. Levy thus contextualizes the migrants' arrival and the disruptive encounter with the racial Other within a global frame, showing how the trauma of World War Two, the decline of Empire, transnational migration and the beginnings of “colonization in reverse” led concomitantly to profound sociocultural changes that reshaped both Jamaica and Great Britain into “small islands” (each in her own way)” (2).

Small Island delineates the first wave of West Indian Diaspora to England—a place, always taught to them as being their Mother Country—full of hopes only to find that the destination they arrive at is not the England of their dreams. Told from the standpoint of two couples, whose stories come together in London in 1948, it is a reflection of Britain's multicultural society with its racial, gender and class based prejudices which affect it. The unique nature of this text lies in the fact that it provides equal space to both the migrants and the natives of Britain to bring forth the identity crisis of the Black Caribbeans after arriving in Britain, as well as of the English who too feel insecure and alienated by having to live among the foreigners.

Hortense, a well educated and dignified Jamaican woman, strikes a marriage deal with Gilbert Joseph in order to go to Britain, their Mother Country. She immediately imagines her new comfortable and secure life in England: . . . England became my destiny. A dining-table in a dining room set with four chairs. A starched tablecloth embroidered with bows. Armchairs in the

sitting room placed around a small wood fire . . . I sip hot tea by an open window . . . I walk to the shop where I am greeted with manners, 'Good day,' politeness, 'A fine day today,' and refinement, 'I trust you are well?' A red bus, a cold morning and daffodils blooming with all the colours of the rainbow (101).

England proves to be a dystopia for Gilbert. The post war England of 1948 has nothing to offer except frustration and disappointment. While in Jamaica, he excites Hortense for England when he says, “... opportunity ripened in England as abundant as fruit on Jamaican trees” (98). But he is looked down upon by every White face he encounters and is given no decent job in his land of assumed opportunities despite the fact that he, like many others, had rushed to help his “Mother Country” in her hour of need. When he was in England serving in R.A.F. with others from his homeland, they were welcomed by the White civilians. An old man shook their hands and said, “We're all in this together, lad. We're glad to have you here—glad to have ya” (138). But England has nothing to offer in return. Once the war is over and he is out of his R.A.F. uniform, the British start eying him with scorn and suspicion. He is humiliated by the employers whenever he goes to find some work as an ex-serviceman. He was scolded badly by an agitated man, “What're you doing here? We don't want you. There's no job for you here. I'm going to get in touch with that labour exchange, tell them no to send any more of you people. We can't use your sort. Go on, get out” (313). Similarly, Hortense too was denied teaching job in England and she was often the target of mockery by the White women. Gilbert thinks, “Hortense reeling wounded after a sharp slap from the Mother Country's hand” (458).

Gilbert and other Caribbeans had learnt everything about Britain right from their school days, but nobody in England has even heard the name of Jamaica, let alone the fact that it is a part of Caribbean islands and not Africa. “How come England did not know me?” (141) was the only question Gilbert wanted to ask the Mother Country. Gilbert mocks at a young English lady in his imagination, “ask her what she knows of Jamaica. 'Jam- where? What did you say it was called again. Jam- what?’” (142). This shows Levy's keen sense of showing up the illiteracy of the English as compared to the vast knowledge of the colonized and their

loyalty to the Empire.

Gilbert had dreams of studying law in England once the War got over because the English had offered courses for R.A.F. volunteers. He is reminded of an earlier promise by the British military men, "With a service record like that, those military men assured me, once the war was won, Civvey street would welcome me for further study" (145). But when he filed his application, the colonial officers shrugged their shoulders and denied him any chance of studying in England. His cousin Elwood teased him when he went back to Jamaica, "You no study the law yet, man? Me think you come back a judge. You no tell me the Mother Country no keep their word?" (197).

Hortense has to face disillusionment after disillusionment from the moment she arrives in England. People fail to understand her pronunciation which was thought to be the best in her school and college in Jamaica. The taxi driver teaches her to ring the door bell and asks, "You know about bells and knockers? You got them where you come from?" (17) and Mrs. Queenie Bligh educates her on what is a grocer's shop and a butcher's shop as if she has landed straight from a 'jungle.' Hortense comments, "Mrs. Bligh was a punctilious teacher. The shop with meat in the window she tells me is a butcher. That one with pretty pink cakes is the baker" (332). Thus, the stereotypical mentality and superfluous sense of superiority of the White people is very beautifully brought into light. At another place, Mrs. Bligh whispers to Hortense, "I don't mind being seen in the street with you" (231). Hortense, surprised at this statement thinks, "Now, why should this woman worry to be seen in the street with me? After all, I was a teacher and she was only a woman whose living was obtained from the letting of rooms. If anyone should be shy it should be I" (231). However, she is very mockingly treated by the English who simply declare her incapable of teaching the English kids. This again exposes the British pretence of their supposed superiority.

Hortense is appalled to see the filthy ways of English life. Since childhood, she has been taught the endless English manners for almost everything. She is disappointed to see a small shabby room with a tattered curtain, a small bed, a dirty sink to wash everything. She is sickened to think of living in such inhuman conditions. Horrified to see her new home, Hortense asks Gilbert,

"Just this ? Just this? . . . Is this the way the English live?" (21-22) Gilbert replies, "Yes, this is the way the English live . . . there has been a war . . . many English live worse than this" (22).

The Prologue of the novel contains Queenie's reminiscences about her visit to London and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924 as a child. There, for the first time she comes across a Black man, overwhelmed by an irrational fear. She observes, "He could have swallowed me up, this big nigger man" (6). Her childish reaction, her embarrassment, her repulsion are obviously backed by a strong racial basis; the disturbing African man, pictured as the borderline cannibal, the savage opposed to the civilized, is the stereotypical representation of the Black Otherness. As an adolescent girl, Queenie has her dreams too. But again they are shattered by the stark realities of life. She is bound in a loveless marriage with Bernard and disillusioned with life during the war years in London. After Bernard volunteers himself in R.A.F., she takes care of his father and takes in Black lodgers to survive and she has a soft corner for them. She is friendly when Gilbert brings her father-in-law home. At another instance, she goes to have tea with him and to watch a film with him. There also when Gilbert is harassed by American soldiers, she stands by him. Her inter-racial relationship with Michael is central to the plot of the novel. She reconciles with reality much more agreeably than other protagonists because she is a very practical woman.

Bernard Bligh, the fourth protagonist who gets posted in India during the war time is an unashamed racist. Once back, he is shocked to see a war-shaken England, a small island in place of an Empire. He cannot stand the darkies in the streets and is appalled to know that his wife has taken in Black lodgers. He wants to throw them out. His theory is, "The war was fought so people might live amongst their own kind. Quite simple. Everyone had a place. England for the English and the West Indies for these coloured people. Look at India. The British knew fair play. Leave India to the Indians. That's what we did" (469). But Gilbert reminds him of their interdependence on each other by calling in the need for a dialogue rather than a fight, "You and me, fighting for empire, fighting for peace. But still, after all that we suffer together, you wan' tell me I am worthless and you are not. And I to be the servant and you are the master for all time? No. Stop this, man. [...] We can

work together, Mr Bligh. You no see? We must. Or else you just gonna fight me till the end?" (525). The beauty of Levy's narrative lies in the fact that she never allows black and white discussions of race and racism. Bernard's horrific experiences of fighting in the far East and a post war stint patrolling violent disturbances in India are seen as contributing factors to his fear and loathing of 'foreigners.'

To conclude we can say that the novel discusses the difficult experiences of the first legal Caribbean immigrants in England in the 1950s, which was in sharp contrast to the cosy and comfortable life they had imagined for themselves in the diaspora. However, Levy suggests the idea that immigration is bound to lead to interracial and intercultural clash in the beginning because of so many factors playing their role in shaping the mindset of the people simultaneously such as, War, colonialism and race etcetera. Levy seems to take care to ensure that her readers understand the costs of bigotries and limitations of her characters, and their complexities. She does not use race to confer either knowledge or insight but, rather uses the interaction of her black and white characters to share an experience that could lead to more knowledge.

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Scattered Identities in Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop*

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India is a multifaceted country with diverse culture, creed, caste and religions. The only aspect that relates all these issues is the identity of a person to be recognized as an individual. The identity of a person depends entirely upon the class to which he or she belongs to, as well as the role of gender that distinguishes men and women as two separate entities. India, as a multicultural land, has been divided into many compartments based on religion and class-distinction. Sean Mc Cloud defines this class-distinction as:

...an obvious, yet elusive, concept. At its most basic, class is a combination of variables: income (how much money one makes), occupation (what job one holds), education (how much one has), and wealth (how much one has accumulated or inherited). But class is much more than this. Class is certainly about money and what we consume. But it is also about how we move our bodies, how we use them, and what we put on and into them. Class concerns boundaries, those distinctions we make between ourselves and others. Because of this, class entails relationships, identities, meaning and power. It formants comfort and discomfort. It can be explicit or hidden, conscious or unconscious (*Divine Hierarchies* 9).

This class hierarchy divides people into various divisions and sub-divisions which are generally categorized into three main sections as: the upper-class, the middle-class and the lower-class. The paradigm of identity which entirely rests on this division is perceived by society itself. In this division the lower strata of society becomes the worst sufferer. They have been deprived of even their basic rights. In fact, they have to struggle

hard for being recognized as the civilized member of society with an independent identity of their own. They don't possess the right to live an independent and respectable life because they don't possess financial strength that determines their status. Except the class variation, the role of gender also plays an integral part in identifying the identity of an individual. Gender, generally defines the social constructed role of man and woman in which man holds the neutral role and woman is considered as the departure. Society, at large, has been composed of various groups and divisions. It consists of both men and women equally. But in the patriarchal set-up of Indian society a woman is generally considered as 'the second sex', 'the subaltern' and 'the subdued creature' of society. In most societies, socially constructed differences pave way for inequalities which results in exploitation and oppression of the 'object' by the 'subject'. A woman is identified by the name of her father, brother, husband and son, having no identity of her own. Helene Cixous classifies the role of man and woman as a paradox to each other. She delineates this hierarchical opposition as "Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Heart, Intelligible/Sensitive, Logos/Pathos" (*Modern Literary Theory* 229). There is no denying the fact that modern woman has exceeded man in all walks of life. But in today's so-called modern, civilized and sophisticated society the matter of self-identity has bought its own set of issues. In fact, the criterion that identifies an individual has undergone a great change. In these changing norms of society the subaltern are always the worst sufferers. They are not only hegemonized by the upper-class but also by the people of their own class. As Roger Webster asserts:

Gramsci argued that historically the ruling classes have been able to exercise leadership not through direct coercion but by indirect means; through what he defines as the concept of hegemony. Under hegemonic control, people actively work towards their own subordination, which coincides with the continuation of the dominant power groups: as with Althusser/Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses, people become unwitting conspirators in their own exploitation and subordination" (*Studying Literary Theory* 63).

Rupa Bajwa hails from a small town of Punjab, Amritsar who registered her presence on the creative scene with her debut novel, *The Sari Shop* (2004) and got a huge recognition by grabbing many prestigious awards. Her other work of fiction, *Tell Me a Story*, appeared in 2013. In both these works of fiction she has presented the chasm between the two classes and their world of loss and hope. Her men and women strive hard to live a life according to their self-constrained norms and conditions irrespective of the society-ordained life. In this process, they find themselves neglected from the most vital area of their life, i.e. self-identity. In order to seek their self-identity, they drag themselves into the world of intangible realities that later changes their perspective towards life. The more they try to free themselves from the impertinent realities of life, the more they find themselves entrapped into it. Bajwa has presented the complexities of the have-nots in the third person narrative. She unpretentiously delineates the real men and women of a small-town like Amritsar. It becomes the predominant locale in both her novels. Her protagonists consist of both men and women are hailed from the lower strata of society. They equally become the victims of the class-distinction, as well as the patriarchal set-up of society. These various aspects have been very keenly and authentically presented in *The Sari Shop*.

The Sari Shop is a remarkable attempt in which Rupa Bajwa portrays two subaltern protagonists: Ramchand and Kamla, who become the victim of exploitation due to their underprivileged status in society that later result in multiple unpredictable misfortunes. The novel opens with the penetrating and miserable life of a young assistant, Ramchand, who works in The Sevak Sari Shop, as well as the frivolous world of the elite class who are responsible for the misery of the penury class. The compartment of the world into two fundamental distinctions creates turmoil in the sublimity of life as a whole. It disturbs the solidarity that creates a huge gap and even sustains it to a great extent. This excellent work of fiction presents a society which is completely divided on the basis of the upper-class and the lower-class and the impact of this division influences the lives of both men and women equally. The impact of patriarchal set-up cannot be denied. Both Ramchand and Kamla are the victims of this social hierarchy that leaves them to

their subaltern state. Ramchand is a young man of twenty six. He lives in a one-room rented house for a few years now. He belongs to the subaltern class of society, which is bound to work under unfamiliar situations. All his dreams to educate himself are thrown to ditch after his parents' death in a bus accident when he was only a six year old child. His distant uncle gives him shelter in his one-room house and possesses all that belongs to Ramchand. Finding it difficult to survive in his surroundings, he has been sent to Amritsar where he starts his profession as an assistant in a Sari Shop. Thirteen years of work experience makes him understand the psychology of women hailed from various strata of life. Bajwa delineates the fragile attitude of women and their aesthetical sense through the eye-view of Ramchand. The extended gulf between the high and the low- class of society has been delineated when at one occasion Ramchand gets an opportunity to visit the Kapoors' in order to show them saris for the purpose of their daughter, Ms. Reena Kapoor's marriage. His usual visits of the place bring out a satirical contradiction in their social life. This gives vent to his childhood spirit to educate himself and learn English. He wants to identify himself with the rich, behaving and showing literate spirit and speaking English. At one occasion, he gets an opportunity to attend the marriage of Reena Kapoor. He feels dazzled and mesmerized to see the glamorous and liberated life of the rich there. But very soon his dream to educate himself shatters again when he meets Kamla, the wife of an assistant at a sari shop. Kamla becomes the symbol of an unequal class-distinction in modern India where the poor have no existence of their own. The hollowness in her life is so pungent that it disturbs Ramchand to a great extent. When he finds no escape from this horrifying reality, he decides to help Kamla through Ms. Sachdeva, a social activist. The hypocrisy of the rich class in ambivalent when instead of helping him out she thrashes him badly. Bajwa describes the hypocrisy of the rich class thus asserting: "Oh, so that is it. There have been some horrible, filthy things going in, and now respectable people are to be dragged into it? Let me just tell you one thing, you try this once more, I'll shop manager about this. This just might cost you your job, do you understand" (214). Bajwa shows that woman herself is responsible for the misfortune of a woman. Ramchand loses his spirit to survive when he finds himself

unsuccessful in his attempt to help Kamla. Finding no escape, he decides to assimilate himself with the present situation and rejoins the sari shop just to reconcile himself accordingly.

Kamla is another subaltern in the novel. She is the wife of Chander, one of the assistants in the Sevak Sari Shop. She is a two-fold victim of the oppressive elite-class of society. First, she is the wife of a lower-fed, Chander and second, she is a woman. Her identity is manifested by the name of her husband. She is known as "Chander's wife" (140). Her misfortune starts after her marriage with Chander, who earlier worked in a small factory of the Kapoors' and the Guptas'. Later, the factory is closed down due to bankruptcy and no wages are being paid to the workers. Disappointed Chander seeks another job at a sari shop. This changes his life afterwards. Paucity leads him towards a diluted path of misery. On the other hand, Kamla proves to be an obedient and economical wife, who saves money from wherever she can. As Bajwa asserts in the third person narrative, "She carefully stored used cooking oil instead of throwing it away. And reused it couple of times. She recycled every little bit of scrap cloth and paper that she could. She prepared all the meals without using too many species, left garlic out completely and at the end of every month found that she has saved a little by all her efforts" (151). Paucity in life shatters their lives completely. She becomes the victim of her husband's ill-treatment as well as the brutality of society. Her husband comes home drunk and beats her. Physical oppression leads to psychological tumult. Her agitated spirit has been delineated when she goes to the Kapoors' and abuses them by considering responsible for the misfortunes in their lives. But the class-distinction again plays a dominating part when she is behaved harshly and captivated by the local police. Moreover, prejudice prevails in all walks of life. Even the police administration becomes the symbol of colonial suppression. Kamla becomes the victim of physical as well as psychological violence. The extent of brutality has been shown when she is burnt down by the ruffians of the Kapoors' only because she raises her voice against her tormentors. Thus, she suffers not only as an individual but also as a class. Both Ramchand and Kamla are the victims of the hierarchy and their attempt to violate this difference leads them to their doom. They are the subalterns who have no

right to speak.

Except presenting the gloomy part of life, Rupa Bajwa presents a vibrant and exhilarating picture of the buzzing bazaars of a small town, Amritsar. As the author asserts:

Even at ten in the morning, the bazaar was throbbing with activity. The halwai was already installed in front of the Mishthaan Sweet Shop, pressing Jalebi better into squiggly shapes that floated and simmered in the oil in a big iron cauldron. All the shops had opened for the day and Ramchand noted guiltily, all the shop assistants were already in place, trying to sell things with fixed, attentive smile on that shiny, bathed faces (4).

The attractive bazaars are the centre of attraction for both the classes. It is a place to rejoice, to shop and to taste their favourite spicy foods. The bazaars in India are a true predicament of Indian heritage, its culture and tradition. It becomes a microcosm of the inherited India which becomes a united place for both the rich and the poor. Bajwa presents a picture of an old, charming city in a mesmerizing manner. Here, the author's gynocritical approach has been presented:

There were no empty spaces. Just a jumble of old red-brick houses, aged gray concrete buildings, shops, signboards, numerous tiny temples at street corners and crowded streets thronged with people, cows, stray dogs and fruit and vegetable carts. There were no gates, doorsteps led straight from the streets into houses. Crumbling buildings ran into each other like cardboard boxes with glue. Their terraces overlapped, there were no boundary walls – you couldn't tell one finished and next began. Occasionally there would be a gap in the mass of buildings where a very narrow alley would nudge aside the unyielding walls and squeeze itself painfully through the solid structure, joining another similar narrow lane at some other end. It could take years to become familiar with the maze-like network of lanes and alleys and short cuts in the old city (4-5).

The carnivalesque description has been presented not only in depicting the alluring markets of the old city but also in describing the vanity of women of the elite-class like Ms. Sandhu, Ms. Gupta, Ms. Sachdeva, Ms. Bhandari and Ms. Kapoor. The description is not only whimsical but also throws a light on the grim reality of the subaltern class for which the elite or the

oppressive class is responsible to a great extent. Ms. Sandhu, the wife of a Chief Engineer in the Punjab State Electricity Board, possesses a huge house with latest gadgets, modern equipment and furnishings that show their elite status. Ms. Gupta, wife of an industrialist is fifty years old, but her fitness regime, careful diet and use of L'Oreal anti-aging and Lakme cream helps her look younger than her age. Ms. Bhandari is the wife of the DIG of Police, calls herself a social activist and has an impeccable taste for good clothes. Ms. Sachdeva is the Head of the English Department at a local college. She is literate and speaks English fluently to show her superior status. Ms. Kapoor belongs to the elite strata of life where it is not a big question to buy a pashmina shawl worth Rs. Ten Lacs. She doesn't like Ms. Sachdeva whom she considers a middle-class woman and an ordinary professor. She doesn't like her daughter to meet people like Ms. Sachdeva, because she does not match their status. As the author describes, "Ms. Kapoor excused herself and went out, telling Ramchand, she'd be back soon. That woman, speaking in English on purpose just to show her up, she thought, as she left the room fuming. Well, they didn't even have their house, they lived in accommodation provided by the college, so she wasn't going to bother about this sort of a woman" (92). Though all these women represent the elite-class of society, but their snobbish and arrogant behaviour shows the binary opposition between the upper-class and the lower-strata of life. Bajwa presents a paradox in an ironical manner showing that all these women, though proud of their status, are actually recognized by the surnames of their husbands. The author does not delineate any particular name given to them. Thus, the impact of patriarchy is prevalent in all classes of women. These women have no identity of their own. They are recognised by the names of their counterparts. Even education and economic independence do not provide them with their separate identities irrespective of their class distinction.

Thus, Rupa Bajwa portrays an authentic picture of Indian culture and tradition by focusing on the subaltern class of society whom she delineates in juxtaposition with the upper-class elite society. She makes her novels carnivalesque despite of her grim subject. She has successfully presented a microcosm of a true Indian society afflicted with both classes and the grave impact of this hierarchy on the subaltern class.

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**Tracing DNA: A Study of Shilpi Somaya
Gowda's *Secret Daughter***

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Transnationalism is an emerging socio-economic concept, an offshoot of Globalization, invoking heated discussions about one's origin and locale. The term was popularized in the early 20th century by writer Randolph Bourne to describe "a new way of thinking about relationships between cultures." Over the years, due to massive boom in economic and social transactions between varied geographical locales, the concept of "one world" has gained much popularity. However, globalization has been continuously facing the threat of neo-colonialism and xenophobia, making it difficult for the Diaspora to quieten the otherness within them. This has put the Indian expatriates in an uncomfortable place, where the feelings of aloofness continue to haunt them at both the exit and entry gates. They are now faced with alienation not only in their work land, but also in their homeland. These two worlds refuse to imbibe them, with the first calling them a foreigner and the other marking them as an NRI (Non-resident Indians). In order to trace their roots, the Indian writers have now started exploring the domain of Indian family set-up. The bond shared among the family members serves as a solid proof of their Indian lineage.

Faist, T., a renowned critic asserts, "By transnational spaces we mean relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across borders of sovereign states. Transnational spaces comprise combinations of ties and their substance, positions within networks and organisations and networks of organisations that cut across the borders of at least two national states" (Faist 2000b). Shilpi Somaya Gowda in her novel, *Secret Daughter* delineates two contrasting worlds, cultures and traditions. America with its modernity, zeal and vigour provides an astounding opportunity to the immigrants. On the other hand, India with its familial bearings and alluring spirituality provides a smooth base to fall upon.

Born and raised in Toronto, Canada, Shilpi Somaya Gowda has written two novels—*Secret Daughter* and *The Golden Boy*—so far. She crafted the story of her first novel, *Secret Daughter*, after working with an orphanage in India. The seeds of the diabolic relationship between the characters were borne out of her regular exchanges with India and its vast culture. The book was published in 2010 and sold over million copies in 30 countries. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an author actively indulging the nuances of Diaspora praises the novel: "Gowda has masterfully portrayed two families ... linked by a powerful, painful tie that complicates their lives ... A thought-provoking examination of the challenges of being a woman in America and in India—and in the psychological spaces in between." Anjali Banerjee, author of *Invisible Lives* calls it: "A beautifully composed compelling story of love, loss, discovery and the true meaning of family." Shilpi Somaya Gowda is a second generation Diaspora who has grown up hearing the eulogies about India and its rich culture. While her parents left India and eventually settled in Canada; she ventured into the U.S. for university, settling there, finally, with her kids. In an interview with Trisha Ping for the *BookPage* she exclaims, "The idea of having multiple cultures is very much my own experience. I've visited India all through my life, and it does feel like "home" in some way. When I took my children to India for the first time, they too fell easily into the rhythms of family and culture, and I have to believe there's some connection there on a deep level" (February 2016, 20). Talking about the struggles of an Indian woman, she asserts, "I am fascinated by something that is so far from my own experience yet, but for a very small change of circumstance, could easily have been my life" (*The National*).

Secret Daughter revolves around Krishnan, an Indian boy, young and enthusiastic to acquire a degree abroad. He enters America, overwhelmed by the American dream and stays on to chalk a laudable career. Being a first generation Diaspora, Krishnan has to adapt to and adopt new traditions and customs. His marriage to Somer, an all-American, career-driven girl, seems as a consequence of this assimilation. For Somer, India presents a picture of a mystic land encapsulated by its strong smells and bold colours. In her maiden visit to any South Asian country, she has to fight a stock series of cultural shocks that begins with her almost traumatic experience with a crowd of beggars in tattered clothes surrounding their car, and then her feeling almost lost within an

endless number of family members in Krishnan's family, the spicy food that she finds difficult to manage, the lethargic bureaucracy through which she has to go through to complete the formalities preceding the adoption – all these, not unexpectedly, make the idea of "mystic India" evaporate from her mind. Their adopted Indian daughter, Asha bears the pangs of dual otherness. She is neither an Indian, nor an American in the true sense. The author has beautifully crafted a story around characters, who while passionately working to find their roots, end up finding their own selves. The story is of a first and second generation Diaspora, their interactions with their parent world and their inhibitions towards the foreign land.

Bhikhu Parekh, a prominent Diaspora critic exhorts, "The diasporic Indian is like a banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world" (106). The characters in the novel, *Secret Daughter*, heavily borrow from the two cultures. The male protagonist Krishnan is plagued with the idea of homeland. When he had first come to America, he had developed a taste for American food, culture and lifestyle. However, the exuberating smells of *battata pakoras*, *chana masala*, *dhoklas*, *paranthas* and the enticing colours of the spice rack did taunt him occasionally. To him the look of a smooth concoction of mashed potatoes with a dash of milk and a hint of butter was reminiscent of a freshly made hospital bed. Though he missed the Indian cooking rituals, he tried to evoke its essence in the cooking experiments, he regularly engaged in with his daughter. To silence the noises of India in his mind, Krishnan would drown himself in a pile of workload. "The past decade since med school has passed in one long blur of days and nights, working relentlessly towards becoming a surgeon. He made it through one of the toughest residency programmes in the country. His colleagues now consult him on their most challenging cases...And he did get the blonde girl, now his wife. By every objective measures, he is a success. After fifteen years in this country, he has achieved that dream with which he was so taken" (115). He had conquered the American dream. Yet he felt incomplete. A part of him could not gulp the emptiness of the house and the sterility of their lives. In India he was constantly enthused by his cousins and relatives along with

their meaningless chitter-chatter and their impulsive quibbles. He would close his eyes to envision his superbly decked up *diya* lit house radiant with happy sounds. He had often raised the idea of visiting India, but Somer would never hear of it. She wanted to keep her daughter in a safe cocoon, far-removed from the prying eyes of Krishnan's family. For Krishnan, the concept of family was not limited to parents; it is a "wild sprawling thing, a strong thing that withstands years, miles, even mistakes." Since he could not take his family to India, he forces India onto their lives. He forbids his daughter to attend parties, have late nights or indulge the lifestyle of a normal sixteen year old American girl. Asha feels stifled by the customs of this "exotic" country. Krishnan is continually torn between both the cultures. It is difficult for him to decipher a single path for himself and his family. Due to this dichotomy, his relations with Somer and Asha are not able to gain momentum as well. His family life becomes a mere formality, thus, thawing his dreams of developing strong ties with his daughter.

Asha has to face a dual set of alienation. She is an Indian born living in America with parents who did not give birth to her. Her physical appearance bears no resemblance to her parents, her brown skin stands out in an all white crowd and her identity suffers a periodical setback. She writes letters to her birth mother, in a hope that one day she will be able to trace her. Even though Somer showers immense love on Asha, but the latter does not reciprocate. For her Somer is just a proxy mom carrying on with her maternal duties till the birth mom comes back. Asha wins a scholarship for a project in Journalism and travels to India, nestling herself in her father's family. She also uses her stay in India for the difficult task of tracing back her biological mother. For her project, she visits the slums of Mumbai, and while interacting with the women dwellers, she starts to unveil the different facets of a mother. She is overwhelmed to see that in spite of innumerable adversities mothers stand like protective shields in front of their kids, envisioning a better future for them. While admiring the veins of every facet, a dawn of realisation descends on her. Somer, her not-so-biological mother also had the same veins caressing her, encouraging her, defending her and supporting her throughout the journey of her life. Even though she did not give birth to her, she loved her unconditionally. Asha develops a new perspective towards her mother. The chasm that had emerged in their relationship dissipates and Asha abandons her resolve to find her

biological mother.

For Somer, the problem is much deeper. She is new to motherhood and also to its Indian connections. She has to straddle cultures and relations simultaneously. A new struggle begins for Somer as their adopted child, Asha, gradually grows up. Initially she tries to grasp Asha firmly, shielding her from all possible Indian connections, lest she should become more and more interested in India, her original home and should try to trace back her roots, which she actually does. Her feeling of insecurity intensifies as she finds Krishnan siding with her daughter on this issue. In order to explore her "freedom," Somer breaks up her family. She moves to a separate flat to give her career a little bit of push, restore the old friendships – striving to gain back a room of her own, as it were, and resisting "India" and everything that has been "Indian" in her life. However, she drowns the self in her in the process and ends up in a void. Somer understands in the end that the intimate human relations alone can give a sort of meaning to her life, and in order to recuperate her self, she will have to nourish these relations back to life. Finally, she comes back to her husband, and with him, to India, trying to revive her space within her family. She realises that in her desperate attempt to secure her daughter as her own, and in her attempt to eliminate everything Indian in the process, she has only succeeded in letting India, and even her own family, marginalise her. In a Gujrati joint family in Mumbai, therefore, begins her new struggle to assert self-not through coercion this time, but through love, empathy and nourishing. She casts a new look at Asha now, trying to befriend her, to establish a deep bond with her by accommodating her within a more expansive, embracing motherhood. She understands that she had been foolish to distance Asha from her roots, from the Indian family, and that she can be a successful mother only when she accepts her in Asha's familial space and rather adapt herself to this new familial space. This new motherhood therefore, proves to be redemptive for her and for the Indian family. Somer declares that her place is with her Indian family, and now she knows this in the deepest part of her being. Asha too, for her part, realises that she has not been denied the bliss of a real mother in her life as she used to think, for motherhood hardly implies biological mothering alone, but it is an immensely bigger idea that she has received from Somer. Consequently, she goes back to her adopted mother with a much more open heart and eagerness. The final picture is that of

Asha cuddling up herself like a child to Somer and Krishnan on the airplane seats as they fly back to California.

Somer's realisation that motherhood has strong cultural leanings is a stringent message given to the Diaspora. The latter may cross from one boundary to another but the familial ties continue to bind the heart. In an age of technological explosion, physical distance seems to matter little. Asha could find her true self only when she traced her roots in India. Somer could grasp the true meaning of family, only, when she understood the role of acceptance and adjustment in relationships. The same India, which once seemed obnoxious, controlling and alien to Somer, now emerged as a touchstone of love, compassion and benevolence. Krishnan could also now understand the source of the void that kept enlarging within him. He silenced the guilt of not giving back to his family and joined Somer and Asha in forming a more close-knit loving family.

It is noteworthy here that unlike other Diaspora writers, Shilpi Gowda never once mentions the need for her characters to leave America. In fact, in the end characters leave India to resume their lives in America. She not even once pitted both the countries against each other. On the contrary she made the American family have two geographically placed homes, dissimilar, yet connected through the genealogical roots of love.

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Bama's *Sangati* :A Critique of Marginalized Dalit Community

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Dalit literature is the voice of the outcastes and underprivileged in society. Dalit literature, though mostly remains in regional spheres, is recently being translated in English, so that its impact may be felt at the all India level and beyond its physical boundaries. This could also be an opportunity to examine Dalit expression and literatures in a renewed way and from different perspectives.

Bama is one of the most authentic voices in Dalit literature. Born as Faustina Mary Fathima Rani in 1958 in dalit Christian family in Puthupatti village, Viruthungar district, Southern Tamil Nadu, she articulated the pains of being a member of the deprived class of society and her status as an outcaste kept her tormenting all through her life. In fact, her voice got platform through her autobiography *Karukku* when Lakshmi Holmstrom's English translation of *Karukku* in 2001 won the Crossword Award in India and established Bama as a distinct voice in Indian Dalit literature. Besides *Karukku* (1992), Bama has published two novels *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002), and two collections of short stories *Kisumbukaran* (1996) and *Oru Thathavum Erumaiyum*. 'Change' is what underlines these narratives, the change towards self-assertion.

Bama's *Sangati* is a resolution of what she wanted the world to know. She resolved to write about Dalit women, especially about those who stood up to protest against the atrocities, not simply about the victims. Bama makes clear her intention in her Acknowledgements : "My mind is crowded with

many anecdotes; stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also their lively and rebellious culture; their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them, but rather to swim vigorously against the tide; about the self-confidence and self-respect that enables them to leap over their adversities by laughing at and ridiculing them; about their passion to live with vitality, truth and enjoyment; about their hard labour. I wanted to shout out these." Fictionalising pain and suffering is quite a formidable task, especially so in situations where the trials and tribulations depicted are based on the personal experience of the writer. More often than not, such writings bear strong traces of autobiographical elements related to the writers' past, so much so that distinction between fiction and fact becomes almost obscure, and objectivity in representations, questionable. When drawing on bitter memories and writing about them, the tendency to reconstruct instead of resurrecting the past is inevitable. In the process of reconstructing, writers may choose to restructure and present events or experiences according to the importance that they deem appropriate.

Sangati is a rare, remarkable and native novel reflecting the stories of *paraiya* Dalit Christian community, of insolvent and vicious world of dalit women as they are beleaguered and molested by upper caste public and by also Dalit males, doubly victimized. They participate in industrious works, earn low wages compared to dalit men and contribute to the economic conditions of the family. This imbalanced division of labor emerges as a major subject in *Sangati*. The Dalit community is also under the controlling patriarchal system whereby dalit men are also disregarded by the upper class land owners and dalit men in turn ignore dalit women. Bama depicts this idea of marginalization of dalit women by upper castes and dalit men in her lines: "It is not the same for women of other castes and communities. Our women cannot bear the torment of upper-caste masters in the fields, and at home they cannot bear the violence of their husbands" (65).

Sangati connotes events or happenings. The social dimension of autobiography also comes into play on an intratextual level in so far as any act of autobiographical communication addresses another—explicitly so in terms of constructing a narratee, who may be part of the self, a "Nobody,"

an individual person, the public, or God as supreme Judge. At the same time, autobiography stages the self in relation to others on the level of narrative. Apart from personal models or important figures in one's life story, autobiographies may be centred on a relationship of self and other to an extent that effectively erases the boundaries between auto- and heterobiography (e.g. Gosse [1907] 2004; Steedman 1987). The novel has interrelated stories in which we find unforgettable protagonists. Lakshmi Holmstrom opines in Introduction of *Sangati*, "*Sangati* moves from the story of individual struggle to the perception of a community of *paraiya* women, a neighbourhood group of friends and relations and their joint struggles. In this sense, *Sangati* is perhaps the autobiography of a community" (xv). Thus, the story of the novel is woven in such a manner to describe the autobiography of a community. The novel describes the real life stories of challenge, choice and change. In this autobiographical novel, the stories not only describe sorrows, tears, sexual harassment and restless labor of Dalit women but also their subordinate nature and their eagerness to face problems in life. Their hardships of life are overcome by their self-confidence. Thus, as a whole, this novel portrays the Dalit feminist picture before our eyes. It plays significant role in contributing both to the Dalit movement and to the women's movement in general.

Sangati echoes the voices of many Dalit women. They share the experiences of their daily lives. In fact, Bama's mother and grandmother used to narrate the stories. It is in fact, the outcome of these narrated stories that she throws light on various aspects such as economic inequality, authority of men, traumatic situation of women, child labors, helplessness, bitter experiences and ceremonial occasions. The observation and experience from the childhood and the questions which agitated her mind about the problems of Dalit women, inspired her to present the novel more meritoriously exposing the Dalit characters and their difficulties. All the twelve chapters in the novel are important in revealing the miserable and the restless conditions of Dalit women from the childhood to the old age. The first chapter begins with a lovely idiom, "*Munavaduponnu* Muthamellamponnu" as 'If the third is girl to behold, your courtyard will fill with gold.' This has become true in the life of Bama. Since she is the third child in family and now she is being considered as precious gold in the field of

Autobiographical Dalit writing.

The central character in *Sangati* is Vellaiyammaapaati, the grandmother of Bama. She is introduced in the novel as a social worker especially attending deliveries without expecting any benefits. But ironically the upper caste women did not invite this expert woman because of caste discrimination. After the disappearance of her husband Goyindan, she lived independently and brought up her two daughters. She worked restlessly till her death. She had close contact with Bama, shared experiences about the prevailing customs and rituals of her community. It helps her to acquire more knowledge about the historical situations from her grandmother's time to her age. The old lady had converted to Christianity. As a result Bama's mother Sevathi studied up to the fifth class. The burden of the family is always carried by the helpless woman even if her husband is living or left or dead. It is conveyed through the life of Vellaiyamma. The episode of Marriamma in the first few chapters creates deep feelings for her as she stands as the living example of the hardships of Dalit woman in every stage of life. Her reckless father lives with other woman and neglects his children. His cruelty and sexual harassment causes the death of his wife. He represents the life of a husband and a father in every Dalit family of that village. Marriamma as a motherless child, takes care of her two sisters and works restlessly in order to feed them. One day, while working she fell into the well and was hospitalized for months. But poverty compelled her to work; she went into the hill to gather the firewood. She was attacked by an upper caste landlord, Kumara Swami Ayyah. In order, to defend himself from this proscribed deed, he files complaint against Marriamma and Manikkam. The case was brought before the community panchayat. The male dominated panchayat, which could have given justifiable verdict, gives more prominence to that upper caste man. The leaders of panchayat raised the questions only to Marriamma and reprimanded her more for her moral audacity to repel the landlord's nastiness and snobbery. Therefore, they always tried to defend the interest of the landlord, sometimes at the cost of Dalits. This is an example of feudal sham which was worked to ensnare especially the Dalit women. The poor Marriamma was insulted publicly which injured her future and made her to suffer throughout her life. She was compelled to marry

a wicked young man, Manikkam. Through this sordid episode about Marriamma, Bama shows how Dalit woman miserably suffers, when she has careless father and an irresponsible husband. In another incident, Mudaliyar's educated son misbehaves with Paralogam, who hides the incident out of fear. These incidents are quoted to illustrate the cruelty of the upper caste people and show discrimination because of caste and gender.

Some of the Dalit women such as Shanmuga Kelavi tried to resist the oppressive nature of the upper caste men. Kelavi revolted for the essential resources, but in her own humorous way. She was caught up while swimming in the well that belongs to Srinivasa. She tried to escape from the supposed punishment humorously responding, "Ayya, the well water is not at all good, and it is all salty" (34). She also exhibited rebellion by urinating into Srinivasa Ayya's drinking water pot, when he rebuked a little boy for touching the same pot unintentionally. It appears shabby but it is her way of rebellion. Likewise during election, claiming the car for her return journey and reluctant to vote anyone are some of the actions of her protest.

This autobiographical novel also brings out the discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. When a girl child is born, there will be curses but when a male child is born there will be celebrations, in general, in all the communities. With its several dimensions of social 'relatedness', then, autobiographical writing is never an autonomous act of self-reflection, as sociological theorists of (auto-)biography have long argued (Steedman 1987). From a sociological angle, it may be considered a form of social action making sense of personal experience in terms of general relevance (Ricoeur 1991: 71). Autobiographical patterns of relevance are culturally specific, diverse and subject to historical change, as the history of autobiography with its multitude of forms and writing practices demonstrates. But Bama also talks about the nuisances of Dalit women relating to health. Dalit women are not able to get proper food and drink. They never go to the hospital even at the time of child birth. Thus, she portrays the vulnerable position of women in *Sangati*. Coming of age ceremony and marriages in *paraiya* Dalit community are described through several characters from the old age to the modern. The people, who are economically better, celebrate the coming of age ceremony in a

grand way. In this novel, a group of wedding of five couples at church is described in detail.

In *paraiya* community *parisam* system existed. It means a monetary gift given by the groom's parents to the bride. But now the dowry system is practiced imitating the upper caste. "Tali" (5) is not important among the *paraiya* Dalit women and they have the privilege of widow re-marriage. But it is not thinkable in the case of upper caste women. The predicament of Kuppusami Nayakkar's daughter, who is made to suffer as a widow, is one of the examples. In Dalit communities re-marriage is tried to bring some solution. But Bama does not say the widow remarriage is the ultimate solution. A girl has no individuality of her own. She is socially imprisoned or kept in the web of masculinity from which she cannot come out.

Bama discusses the problem of widowhood and socio-economic stability of a woman. If she does not work and earn, she has to depend on others for livelihood. People believe that the Christianity is a religion of freedom and brotherhood. But in *paraiya* community, a girl or a woman is not allowed to choose the life companion. Once she is married, she has to live with the husband, though worthless till her death. Bama portrays some couples in the quarrel scenes. In sheer liberty, the Dalit women pick the quarrel with their husbands for the wages or for sharing responsibilities. A woman has a longing to have a better domestic life. She does not want any inequality between herself and her husband. The Dalit women have the feeling of insecurity. They are threatened in many ways both inside and outside the world. When a Dalit woman is deprived of some kind of love in a family, she wants to take it in one form or the other .

In Bama's opinion, education is the only way to eradicate the casteism and poverty. It is appreciable that now Dalits are awakened and enlightened through education and they are aware of their responsibilities. After completing her education, Bama finds it very difficult to face the life as a Dalit woman. House owners, neighbours and even colleagues disturbed her with several questions. Her courage and confidence prepared her to go against the challenges in life. She concludes *Sangati* with a message, "we must bring up our girls to think in new ways from an early age. We should educate boys and girls alike, we should give

freedom to girls" (102). There is a warning embedded in the last lines of *Sangati*, "women can make and women can break" (123). The stream of rebellion is perceptible among Dalit Paraiya community (Ruchi Tomar 8).

Voicing her own perspective of revolting against the repressive norms of society, Bama felt like a bird whose wings were broken and now the bird can be safe only in a cage. Her work cannot be reduced to an engagement with victimhood. In the hands of Bama, it has spawned new literary cannons by disturbing the usual language available in the pre-existing canonical literary circles. Her works today have established unique as a new mode of literary/aesthetic imagination and writing. Guy Poitevin (2002) rightly pointed out, "Women testimonies make us discover a female world of hidden feelings of dissent and moves of subdued revolt under the yoke of endured humiliations as memories drift back and past days and years are recreated. Specific ways and motives of a shared feminine sensitivity and cultural creativity are highlighted, as nowhere else."

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Subaltern Voices of Resistance in Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*

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Mahasweta Devi, a social activist, was one of the most renowned Bengali writers. She travelled to remote tribal areas, gained an understanding of the deprived state of the underprivileged masses, associated herself with a number of organizations working for the tribal welfare and wrote because she felt the urge to communicate to the world about their struggle for survival. Her fiction is an instrument through which she battles against the exploitation of the tribals by documenting not only their oppression but also their resistance. Her novel, *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, spans three important phases of India's history, namely, the period of colonization, the post-Independence years and the post-emergency period. While talking to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the translator of the novel, in the interview "Telling History," Mahasweta Devi says that Indian Historiography does not take the continuity of the tribals' struggle into account and in the novel, she attempts to highlight this aspect:

I find that Birsa's uprising did not die with Birsa. And so through the figure of Dhani, I wanted to say that there had to be a magic arrow, not magic in the narrow sense, but an arrow that Dhani Munda wants to hand over. This arrow is a symbol for the person who will carry on that continuity. Chotti is an emblem of that (xi).

By weaving the colonial and postcolonial history into the story of Chotti Munda, Devi delineates the unremitting subjugation of tribals and their subsequent resistance. Ranajit Guha, founder of Subaltern Studies Group, while introducing the agenda of this group, also underscores the "notion of resistance to elite domination" (Guha "On Some Aspects" 5). According to him, the elitist historiography is biased and does not give the subaltern his due place in Indian history. It does not acknowledge the subaltern's acts of articulation and its contribution in the formation

of Indian nationalism. The prime concern of this group is to retrieve the consciousness of the subaltern and rewrite history from his perspective. Guha critiques the observation of E. J. Hobsbawm, a British historiographer, who calls the peasant rebels "pre-political people" (5). Guha says that subaltern's consciousness cannot be labeled as "pre-political" and backward as the subaltern was capable of understanding his contemporary world. The peasant uprisings that took place during the colonial times reflected that "It was a political struggle in which the rebel appropriated and/or destroyed the insignia of his enemy's power and hoped thus to abolish the marks of his own subalternity" (Guha, *Elementary Aspects* 75). There always existed the domain of Indian politics, alongwith the domain of elite politics, which constituted the subaltern masses. Partha Chatterjee observes that even after Independence, the subaltern continue to remain in a different political domain which is beyond the grasp of the people constituting the "domain of the formally organized political parties and associations" (9). He further asserts that if we intend to write their history, we must take into account different forms of subordination as well as resistance and their efforts to cope with changing ways of life (21).

By establishing a link between history and fiction, Devi attempts to achieve this objective. The character of Chotti Munda comes across as a symbol of tribal aspiration. Devi delineates the continuity of this aspiration through Chotti's forefather, Perti Munda, whose sole desire is to live peacefully in a small village with the other tribals and worship the Munda god, Haram. But he is compelled to constantly move from one place to the other because "however remote the place he travels to, something will come from under ground, immediately a big settlement will grow there. His Mundari world will shrink" (1-2). When he starts living by Munda river, he realises that there was gold dust in the sand of the river. The apprehension of seeing his village and its natural surroundings being spoiled by another settlement makes him go to the tea plantation in Mauritius. He leaves his village because he does not want his tribe to suffer for his knack of unearthing the treasures of nature, but his dream of saving his community from being assaulted by the outsiders remains unfulfilled. Soon a southern railway starts running near the river and the people of different ethnicities settle there. The Mundari world that he had envisioned now leads a shrunken life.

Similar desperation to save his tribe is experienced by Dhani Munda. Being a part of the tribal movement led by Birsa Munda, Dhani feels anguished to see his tribe reeling under the oppression of moneylenders, forest officials and other *diku*. Birsa's *Ulgulan* "had grown out of the forty years of the Mundas' frustrations caused by the alien's expropriation of their lands" (Singh 224) and they had resisted against their oppressors so that the other people of their community could lead a dignified life. The objective of the resistance against the intrusion of non-tribal traders and settlers was to restore their old way of life but Dhani feels that the goal has not been fulfilled. The Munda still lead a deprived life and are dependent upon the mercy of *diku*. He laments that the same arrow that was once raised for the dignity of his tribe has now become a source of terror for his own tribesmen. He teaches archery to Chotti with a hope that he will carry the struggle forward and his act of handing over his arrow to Chotti becomes emblematic of that continuity.

Through the character of Dhani Munda, Mahasweta Devi shows that history of resistance is retained in the memories of the subaltern and it needs to be explored. Daniel J. Rycroft avers that through memory-work a "continuity between anti-colonial resistance and contemporary praxis" (58) can be sustained. According to him, the subaltern historiographers, in their attempt to retrieve the subaltern's consciousness, do not take into account the memory of the insurgents' descendents. It is important to understand how they perceive the anti-colonial insurgencies in which their forefathers were involved. The memory that Dhani shares with Chotti makes him understand the importance of retaining Munda identity and gives him courage to sustain the struggle against their exploiters.

The novel portrays the subjugation of the tribals in the hands of moneylenders, landlords, contractors and others. They are forced to give bonded labour and market cuts to the *diku*. The moneylenders like Bajinath and his son Tirathnath want to bind them in perpetual bonded labour and if anyone refuses to comply with them, he is made to bear their wrath because "The landlords or landed farmers and the Daroga in an area watch each others' interests" (52). Chotti's father, Bisra, is humiliated and harassed by Bajinath for not borrowing and it eventually leads to his death. Unending mistreatment leads tribals like Dukhia to resort to violence. He kills Nakata King's oppressive manager despite

knowing the fact that the result would be his own death as he is soon afterwards tried and hanged by the government. His act of killing his oppressor makes Chotti ponder that despite being aware that the outcome will be death, one has to take certain actions "in order to remain right to oneself" (69).

The next manager turns out to be even more exploitative. He entraps every tribal in bonded labour and makes their lives miserable. In order to escape his tyrannical rule of the manager, the tribals decide to join the Mission but before leaving, they plan to take revenge on their oppressor. They start giving their thumbprints to the manager for borrowing paddy and maize and then they vanish from the village. This infuriates the manager and makes him feel that the tribals have slapped him in the face before leaving. He feels insulted because the tribals borrowed a lot of grain from him and then betrayed the agreement of bonded labour. Through this incident, the writer interrogates the strategies that are adopted by the tribals to resist their exploitation. The writer shows that the continuous subjugation of the subaltern makes them adopt various tactics to subvert their oppression. The Mundas of Kurmi village assert their resistance by challenging the position of the manager strategically.

Chotti comes across as a man of conviction who believes that "Borrow means bond labour" (29) and firmly stands his ground against it. He is vigilant enough to lead his community out of different challenging situations. During draught, Tirathnath prepares to victimise more people by taking their thumbprints for food and thus making them his bonded labourers. Chotti, on the other hand, forges unity among not only the tribals but also the low-castes and reaches the concerned officials at Tohri to demand relief. Chotti also argues rationally with Tirathnath that instead of putting their thumbprints on paper, they will take daily food as loan which should be adjusted against their wages. But the hypocrisy of the whole system comes to the fore when titles like Raisaheb are bestowed upon people like Tirathnath for helping the needy people with 'bug infested grain' during drought and people like Chotti are looked upon as potential threats by the white government for bringing the poor people together.

When Chotti is blamed for rousing the tribals and low-castes, he reacts: "Yes, we're bound together. By hunger fire" (52). Through the togetherness of the deprived masses, Devi reinforces her belief that "solidarity is resistance" (Devi, "Telling History"

xiv). The novel is replete with the instances of subaltern solidarity. During the draught in the post-Independence period, the tribals and the low-castes work together to dig holes in the river bed and bring water up because they know that Lala Tirathnath would not lend them help and, in time of need, they can only rely on each other's support. Their collective resistance is witnessed at its best by the end of the novel when "a thousand adivasis raise their bows in space and cry, No! The non-adivasis raise their restraining hands" (363) to express their anger towards the despotic regime of Independent India.

Freedom fails to bring any kind of solace to their agonized existence and it makes them a victim of the government's development spree. The contractors, industrialists and leaders have occupied the central position in the national economy and the subaltern still remain at the margins. Being a part of the democratic country, the tribals are also given the right to cast their vote, but the writer shows how their right is also manipulated by those in power. When they go to cast their vote, they realise that their vote has been already cast. The political hoodlums of the 'elected' leader make their lives hell. The writer critiques the development programmes of the government of Independent India that aims to make it a "Baby's playroom" (241).

Chotti expresses his disillusionment when he learns about the government's plan of opening schools for the tribals: "Won't teach us so we understand our rights" (137). When Chotti comes to know that a law has been made against bonded labour, [The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976] he laughs and says "Lord. They've made t' law, t' law's made, but they put a stone in t' law, an' t' law tumbles. T' debtor, t' labourer, will charge that boss? By what strength lord?" (300). When they eventually refuse to work as bonded labourers in the fields of Tirathnath, they have to confront the political hoodlums, Romeo, Pehlwan and Dildar. The tribals are attacked on pay day and the ruckus results in the death of a few tribals and one of the goons, Dildar. It is ironical that a hundred thousand rupees and a petrol pump are given to the family of Dildar and the deaths of tribals are barely noticed by the government. Similarly, The Minimum Wages Act (1948) is also violated by industrialists like Partap Chadha and his son, Harbans Chadha. Although they give better wages than Tirathnath yet the amount is very less as compared to what the Act demands. In fact, these Acts passed by the government are reduced only to the shape

of posters which "get stuck on trees and stations and bus-bodies in the remotest parts of the country" (241).

Chotti and the other tribals and low-castes refuse to give cuts and bonded labour in the post-Independence era and continue to assert themselves despite the repression. When the suffering grows beyond endurance, young Mundas of Narsingarh kill Romeo and Pehlwan. Chotti's act of taking the offence on himself shows that he wants the young generation to carry forward the legacy of resistance. His act of handing over his arrow to Harmu is symbolic of the continuity of subaltern resistance. Prathama Banerjee pertinently observes that tribals have always been displaced into the domain of culture and they are always defined within that context, but they possess a strong political consciousness:

. . . through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and through different political ideologies, the adivasi repeatedly appeared in India as a contrary political presence within capitalist modernity, and therefore played the role of that very political agent who undoes, at the very moment of establishment, the hegemony of the superordinate political form of the time- be it empire, nation or global capital (130).

Devi calls *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* her "best beloved book" in her interview with Spivak, "Telling History" (xiii). She documents numerous experiences that she had during her meetings with the tribals in the novel. She underscores various aspects of subalternity of the tribals in the novel and also highlights their desire to lead a dignified life. Through the character of Chotti Munda, Devi shows that resistance does not always have to take a violent shape. Despite being an expert archer and the possessor of the 'magic arrow,' Chotti never resorts to violence. He advises Dukhia against violence and also disapproves of the aggressive resistance advocated by the Naxals. But at the same time, he also understands that at times, one has to react in order to remain true to oneself. As Devi herself affirms in her interview, "If we think of what Gandhi means, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, tribals have it . . . They can do it, we cannot. We get angry, lose our tempers, become beasts, they do not. When they do it, one must understand their extreme desperation" (Devi, "Telling History" xxii). The novel, thus, is a powerful critique of the mainstream society and represents the aspirations of the subaltern. The open-ending of the

novel seems to convey the warning through the raised bows and hands of the tribals and the untouchables indicating that if the exploitation of the underprivileged continues, it could entail dire consequences.

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Changing Contours of Masculinity in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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The aim of the present paper is to trace the transformation of male characters from the position of dominators to the position of supporters in Alice Walker's widely acclaimed novel, *The Color Purple* (1982). Heather Alumbaugh in her essay "In Search of Alice Walker: An Overview" defined *The Color Purple* as "a novel of brutality, redemption and emergent consciousness (Alumbaugh 57)." The characters in the novel struggle hard to get recognition and realize their dreams. The story revolves around Celie, the protagonist and narrator of the novel. The male characters in the novel have gradually been shown conforming to Walker's concept of "Womanism." "Womanism" emerged out of ashes of the feminisms such as white feminism also considered as the mainstream feminism and black feminism as they are biased towards particular race, class and colour of woman. The feminist movement ignores the inclusion of men in their regime. Walker accuses Black feminism for being separatist, she says, "they choose women over men. More than that they choose to live separate from men. In fact, to be consistent with black cultural values (which, whatever their shortcomings, still have considerable worth) it would have to be a world that affirmed connectedness to the entire community and the world" (*The Color Purple* 89).

A number of literary texts by Black women writers focus on the victimization and subjugation of women at the hands of males, and unfortunately very few works seek the solutions to the problem. Men have always been portrayed as dominators in the works of women writers. The literary works which move beyond the binaries of male and female and seek solutions to the problems, are called 'womanist.' Walker's work can be subsumed under the category of Womanism. Alice Walker's response to the urgency of

the Black women movement and the issues pertaining to the survival of all black women, is embodied in her collection of essays, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983) and her idea of "Womanism" not only includes black women but all the women belonging to minorities. According to the definition, a womanist is, "a black feminist or feminist of color (1983 xi)" corresponding to the fact, both man and woman can be feminists. The activism of Walker is not limited to defending the rights of black community only as she is "Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female (1983 xi)."

Alice Walker's multiple definitions of the term "womanism" shed light on the issue of why many African American women prefer the term womanism to black feminism. Walker offers two contradictory meanings of "womanism." On the one hand, Walker clearly sees womanism as rooted in black women's concrete history in racial and gender oppression. Despite her disclaimer that womanists are "traditionally universalist," a philosophy invoked by her metaphor of the garden where room exists for all flowers to bloom equally and differently, Walker simultaneously implies that black women are somehow superior to white women because of this black folk tradition. Defining womanism as the opposite of the "frivolous, irresponsible, not serious" girlish, Walker constructs black women's experiences in opposition to those of white women. This meaning of womanism sees it as being different from and superior to feminism, a difference allegedly stemming from black and white women's different histories with American racism.. Womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black men. Womanism is system that continually evolves through its rejection of all forms of oppression and commitment to social justice.

The Color Purple chronicles the constant struggle and transformation of Celie and other black women in the novel. Celie is a fourteen year old girl who was trapped within the confines of the norms of patriarchy. Her mother died after enduring intense agony caused by her husband Alphonso. After the death of her mother, Celie was left at the mercy of God and her father who was actually her step-father. Alphonso married again but he continued

to molest and rape Celie against her consent which left her traumatized, oppressed and moreover mute. Gradually, Celie was relieved from the dreadful memories of her step-father, Alphonso and her husband, Mr. Albert and male characters realized the importance and pains of the female characters. As a result, Mr. Albert developed a warm and supportive relation with Celie. In the novel, the male and female characters have undergone a regeneration which is required to heal their pains and help them to re-affirm their identity.

Alice Walker has been pilloried for her controversial portrayal of male characters, being partial with the depiction of male characters as cruel and dominating towards women which is attributed to her personal rage as her mother and grandmothers had endured intense pains of rapes and pregnancy, not only at the hands of white men but black men also. The assumption of her being less than objective gets overturned as Alice Walker has presented all aspects of male personality from kindness of Samuel to the brutality and inhumanity of Alphonso and Mr. Albert. In the novel, Walker articulates her belief in Womanism through her both male and female characters. Walker has tried to maintain the balance by showing both good and bad pictures of men; Harpo, Adam and Samuel showing the good side and Mr. Albert and Alphonso presenting the evil side. For a black woman, family is at the centre and men are an inevitable part of the family.

Harpo, Adam and Samuel exhibited care and love for their family. Samuel was a missionary who was married to Corrine and unknowingly adopted Celie's biological children, Adam and Olivia. Samuel respected Corrine in every aspect, even if she blamed Samuel for having relationship with Nettie, Celie's younger sister and accused Samuel for having children with Nettie, Adam and Olivia, outside their marriage. On the other hand, after Mr. Albert's assault on Nettie, Samuel helped her in every way. The goodness of Samuel makes him a womanist who actually worked for the upliftment of his people. Adam, Celie's son loved Tashi, an Olinkan girl who underwent a painful tradition of scarring her face. Adam, in order to prove his love for Tashi himself went under the same painful tradition of scarring. The character of Adam is shown as a 'perfect man' who sincerely loved his wife and did everything to prove his love to Tashi.

Harpo also loved and cared for his wife, Sofia Butler. Harpo had impregnated Sofia before marriage and could not leave her in the midway so he married Sofia against the wishes of his father, Mr. Albert. Mr. Albert had bitter memories with his father as his father never showed him any kindness. His father's strict and inhuman behaviour turned Mr. Albert into a merciless and heartless man. Mr. Albert used to beat Celie in order to control her. Due to the bad influence of Mr. Albert, Harpo also wanted to control Sofia forcefully but Sofia was a bold and assertive woman who could not bear any injustice towards her.

When Mr. Albert asked Harpo if he had ever beaten Sofia, Harpo refused. The reaction of Mr. Albert to Harpo's refusal revealed his attitude towards women, he said, "Wives is like children. You have to let'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating (1982 37)." The stance of Mr. Albert clearly showed that the problem of inequality is deeply rooted in Black culture. In the end, when Mary Agnes left Harpo to go with Celie and Shug to Tennessee to realize her dream of singing, Harpo realised his mistake and reconciled with Sofia. Harpo realized Sofia's importance only when Mary Agnes left him.

Mr. Albert and Alphonso have been shown carrying the evil inside them. Celie's step-father, Alphonso sexually abused and impregnated Celie several times. Alphonso always had an inhuman attitude towards Celie and never bothered about her feelings and pains. Alphonso snatched the babies and pretended to kill them in the woods but sold them instead. Alphonso forced Celie to marry Mr. Albert which made her life more miserable. The evil inside Alphonso could not be eradicated. Alphonso died without showing any positive change in his attitude towards women. His own nefariousness killed him. While portraying Alphonso's character, the intention of Alice Walker might have been to point out that the issue of inequality has not resolved fully.

The evolution of Albert's character shows that there is still hope for good change to happen to him.. Walker created circumstances in such a way as transformed Mr. Albert to some extent and eventually he realized his mistakes. Although, Mr. Albert's consciousness is not that important from the point of view of the novel but he actually underwent a significant

transformation. Nettie, Celie's younger sister, loved and wanted to marry Mr. Albert who was presented as Mr. _____ throughout the novel. His journey from Mr. _____ to Mr. Albert is of interest to Alice Walker and the black women as black women always dreamt of having unity with men. Black women acknowledge the importance of men in their lives and they know that black men can act as a strength for them which will help them in finding their long lost positions as 'normal human beings'.

Mr. Albert wanted to marry Nettie and asked for Alphonso's consent to his marriage to Nettie. Alphonso refused and instead offered Celie in the place of Nettie. Though, Mr. Albert never liked Celie for her being ugly but he accepted the offer as Alphonso confirmed him that Celie will be loyal wife and he can do anything with her and she will not retaliate as his harsh and cruel treatment has domesticated Celie. Even after the marrying Mr. Albert, the series of oppression did not stop as Celie had to look after Mr. Albert's barbaric children who hurt her physically and mentally. Not only the children but Mr. Albert tortured and raped Celie constantly. He never considered her a human but a commodity which could be used in any way. Mr. Albert carries the role of a master and Celie had to endure the pains by being a slave and a servant who was always at his disposal. Kate Millet in her famous work, *Sexual Politics*, commented on the image of woman in a society, "the image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from fear of the "otherness" of woman (2000 46)." Accordingly, women from ages have been victims to men and their needs and "the male has already set himself as the human form, the subject and referent to which the female is "other" or alien (2000 46)."

Shug Avery, ex-girlfriend of Mr. Albert was a burlesque dancer, a successful, self-assertive and confident woman and was trying to live in the society of men on her own terms. Mr. Albert loved her and took her home when she was sick from some sexually transmitted disease. Initially, Shug considered Celie to be 'ugly' but gradually, they developed love and care for each other. Shug helped Celie at every level of her life. Shug 'appreciate[d] and prefer[red] women's culture' and gave shoulder to Celie to cry. Shug 'value[d] tears as natural counterbalance of laughter', and supported Celie in realising her strength.

In the end, Shug decided to take Celie along with her to Tennessee so that Celie could live independently of Mr. Albert and other male oppressors. Mr. Albert was shocked and tried to stop Celie by cursing and telling her, "nobody crazy or backward enough to want to marry you (1982 186)." Mr. Albert did not consider him married to Celie as throughout his life, he maintained a master-slave relation with her. After knowing that Mr. Albert had concealed the letters of Nettie written to her, Celie got exasperated and exploded her long suppressed anger and cursed Mr. Albert for the misconduct and harsh treatment she had to undergo all her life. Celie made a firm decision of going to Tennessee with Shug Avery but Mr. Albert again tried to stop Celie by threatening her. Mr. Albert had always thought in his mind that without him, the existence of Celie is nullified.

When Mr. Albert observed an extreme change in Celie, he attacked her confidence by saying, "You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all" (1982 187) and remarked that in Tennessee, Celie will remain a servant of Shug as she does not have the ability to live on her own but Celie had made her mind. She retaliated and proclaimed her final words of liberation from all the bondages and she said, "But I'm here" (1982 187). These final words by Celie poured a burden on Mr. Albert's heart. From this point, Mr. Albert's character began to experience a transformation.

Mr. Albert's transformation is evident when Celie wrote a letter to Nettie in which she wrote that for the first time "I [Celie] look in his eyes and see he feeling scared of me. Well, good, I think. Let him feel what I felt" (1982 201). Gradually, they came closer to each other as Celie once said, "Mr ____ seem to be the only one understand my feeling" (1982 235). Both began to love and respect each other. Celie made him learn sewing which is considered to be a woman's task and seen inferior by men. In the company of Celie, he realized that love and respect is never commanded but earned.

The women characters in the novel are very important but the importance of men in the development of the story cannot be ignored. Alice Walker's theory of Womanism is incomplete without men. Through her works, the novelist has tried to create a space for men who do not occupy the other end of the Man-Woman spectrum. Alice walker has shown how men can be compassionate

like women. Her aim is to have a community in which all the men and women join hands and work together for the common good of all. *The Color Purple* aptly traces the transformation of rigid male members of the society who always try to obstruct women's growth and development.

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Sumati in Conversation with Author Ms. Arvinder Kaur



Ms. Arvinder Kaur, a prolific writer of Haiku in Panjabi and English, has published her poems in many international journals. Presently, she is Principal, Government College, Dera Bassi. Apart from teaching literature for more than three decades, she has five books to her credit, including one of translation. She lives with her family in Chandigarh.

Dr Sumati, Govt. College for Girls, Sector 11, Chandigarh, an author and researcher of eminence, interacts with Ms Arvinder and probes her initiation and ongoing journey into the world of Haiku poetry.

S: Your finer sensibilities, sensitivity and creativity are well known facts and the creative writings have already been appreciated. Has it always been there or became a preferred hobby later?

A.K.: A deep sensitivity and an urge to express is there in all of us. It's just that some of us manage to be a little more eloquent. I started writing while I was still in college. These were little prose pieces and columns in national dailies. I wrote whatever I felt strongly about; the curve of an emotion, a social issue. Many things in life have always touched me closely and I developed a habit of observing Nature as well as human nature around me. Through my

emotions I get connected with what we call in literature 'the collective human consciousness'.

S: How did poetry happen then? And that too Haiku which is comparatively less known, written or taught verse form in India? How did it become the medium of your choice?

AK: It was not a sudden transformation I must say. I came towards poetry in late 90s when I started writing long verses in Punjabi. Hence, a book in Panjabi verse was published in 1999 entitled *Kujh Kaisalay Supne*. After this came a phase when I felt that my long poems were losing intensity. It was at this time that I chanced upon haiku. I read these three line poems and was totally fascinated by the genre. Here was a form in which I could present concentrated images that were pithy and strong at the same time. So I started experimenting with haiku, first in Panjabi, my mother tongue, and then in English. This was the time when I felt that this was my chosen form of expression. So I read a lot about haiku, its techniques and requirements which appears simple but can be very complicated if you peer closely at them. My first book of Panjabi haiku *Nimolian* was, therefore, published in 2013.

S: Haiku is generally known as a uniquely patterned seventeen syllabled Japanese seasonal verse. What is it for you? What is so unique about it?

AK: For me, haiku is a kind of sudden manifestation of something which is deeply personal, spiritual and universal at the same time. It is what, James Joyce would perhaps call, an epiphany. The traditional Japanese haiku consists of seventeen syllables. But as it evolved in different languages the syllable count became less important. Many poets in English have experimented with different kind of haiku. It should certainly not be very wordy. Traditionally, a season word known as kigo is very important. I have also tried to practice writing in the fragment and phrase technique, the theory that was given by Jane Reichhold. So, you can see there is so much of technique in it, a lot of poetics behind it.

S: Is/are there any other Haiku poet/s you have read and been inspired by?

- AK:** Everyone, doing haiku, begins with and is fascinated by the four Japanese haiku masters; Basho, Buson, Issa and Shiki. Basho has influenced me a lot. The sensibilities of a woman master, Chiyo-ni have appealed to me as a woman. And yes, there are many modern poets who have influenced me because of their relevance to the modern times.
- S:** There seems a romantic streak in you in terms of your indulgence with Nature and corresponding reflections on human life. Is it a conscious effort or comes naturally to you? How long does this orientation go back in time for you?
- AK:** As a student of literature, it comes naturally to me. Romance is a part of my life. I feel that there is romance strewn around us everywhere. It can be there even in our daily chores. I feel that life itself is a romance. It is an adventure and a roller coaster ride. The difference between a human being and a robot is that a human being is a born romantic. And there is fathomless romance if you can find it in Nature. I feel extremely hurt when flowers are used and trampled upon and I find that Nature is always teaching us lessons of life. For example, in the month of June when the surface of earth gets scorched with heat, there is a flower that blossoms, and that is the laburnum, or what we call in vernacular, *amaltas*. The hotter the earth, the more it blooms. Now, doesn't this teach a lesson in life?
- S:** A deep-rooted bond with the past; familial or cultural is perceived in your poems. You seem to brood over with a sense of nostalgia, loss, longing. Is it a right observation/reading? Does haiku serve to treasure that?
- AK:** Yes, it does. I have a strong Punjabi past, I love the culture of Punjab. I have spent my childhood in the interiors of Punjab. So its cultural tropes are woven into my conscience. Your deeply felt longings can only be expressed in such cultural tropes and that also, only in your mother tongue. Many people have asked me this question about my writing in Panjabi despite the fact that I am a teacher of English. In fact, I have a love for both the

- languages. English has been my professional necessity but the song of the soul must also be written in one's mother tongue first. As far as nostalgia is concerned, it is an inseparable part of me. I am very nostalgic about my childhood. Memories stay with me. I have cherished moments and somewhere those moments connect with an image of Nature. And I try to transform them into words.
- S:** How do you find their parallels in Nature? Is an idea or image already in your mind that comes to the fore in nature or vice versa?
- AK:** I think Nature is replete with images that reflect human emotions and we have to be fortunate enough to find those images and express ourselves through them. Yes, sometimes images remain tucked in a corner of one's heart and suddenly come out in the form of an experienced moment. But otherwise, the process of observation is constant and that is what adds new images to one's treasure. When I was introduced to haiku, I realized that it requires a very strong sense of observation, for the form is extremely sense oriented.
- S:** Is creativity constantly working in you or is it some fleeting moment of inspiration which arrests your attention?
- AK:** I think it can't be constant but it is always there inside. Famous Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz says '*tujhse bhi dil fareb the gum rozgar ke*'. Hence, the mundane activities also have to be attended to. Life consists of both. One cannot live in a reverie all the time or be like what Wordsworth calls "wander lonely as a cloud." Even he went through all the mundane activities. But along the way, certain things get stored in the mind. These images emerge suddenly and surprise you. For example once when I was a young mother, I noticed crimson colored nasturtium growing wildly. I had just had a miscarriage. Their beauty immediately went into my heart and connected with the pain that a mother feels at the loss of a child. It made me feel that beauty grows and blooms provided we human beings let it grow. Mother Nature never hinders the growth of such beauty and I suddenly felt deprived of the

beauty that might have bloomed in my womb. It came out intensely:

scattered petals...

this sudden longing

for my aborted child

S: Is writing poetry cathartic for you? Does it strengthen/relieve you in some ways?

AK: Yes, it is extremely cathartic. And in that sense the relief is very strong also. Although there are days that you go through the writer's block. This is a painful phase when you feel that you want to say something but the words would just not come. If at all, they do, you find them inappropriate. But then there is always light at the end of the tunnel and one clings to the hope of living through the painful phase. Eventually it does pass.

S: Do you sense the vulnerability of being the object of personal inquiries through your poems? Or you, notwithstanding, assured of their universal resonance, intend to go on?

AK: I feel a writer has failed somewhere if the readers' response is just about the biography. A good piece of writing must have universal resonance. However, the tendency to read between the lines has always been there and it is kind of unavoidable. Personally, I would feel rewarded as a writer if my work resonates with the reader and goes beyond merely being an autobiographical sketch.

S: Now-a-days, we hear much of Nano-literature especially Nano-fiction. Do you agree that Haiku, being a power-packed encapsulated form of literature, fits in as a genre of Nano-poetry?

AK: Well, I haven't really read about Nano poetry though I am familiar with Nano fiction. Yes, it is Nano in the sense that it is micro poetry and in the sense that it is pithy but then I don't know if it fits into Nano. It is a very strong independent form and has been there since many centuries.

S: What is your take on using social media platform like Twitter, considered to be the best suited one for such writings, to write and share your haiku?

AK: I do write on social media but I try to preserve my fresh writing as many journals do not accept pieces that have appeared on line but I do share the published ones.

S: Does such poetry just happen or you need some specific, isolated space to word your inner reflections?

AK: It can happen anywhere, anytime. Two days ago, while I was walking with my brother, he used a word 'old age home' in the context of our parental house. It remained with me till I could say:

autumn symphony...

how my childhood home

turns into an old age one.

What is very important in haiku is that you have to leave things unsaid, left open to interpretation on the part of the reader. They can try and make their own story.

S: Coming to your Panjabi haiku, weren't you apprehensive about opting for this culture specific form. Were you comfortable transposing the Japanese ambience to Panjabi language?

AK: Apprehensive, No. I haven't used Japanese ambience at all. I haven't been there and I don't know the Japanese language. I have read the four masters in translated form in English. To me Japan evokes cherry blossoms and Mount Fuji and of course haiku and the vibrant, beautiful *hanami* festival. I keep seeing their pictures and try to connect with the joy that it evokes in the Japanese people and of course in all of us. Likewise, Punjab has its own cultural ambience. My mission is to take Punjabi culture to the haiku world and to awaken the readers to its fine nuances. Many poets in India and abroad are doing the same service for Punjabi culture and I am proud to be a part of it.

S: If we talk of the poetics of today's fast paced world, how does haiku fit in; as one of the many tributaries to the main current or the main tributary reviving the main current? Especially, say, in India?

AK: It fits in completely. Haiku can be read faster than news headlines, and that's why it is very difficult to sell a haiku book because people will just flip through it and give it

back! But the real reader would take time and go into its deeper layers. As for it being the main tributary, it's still a distant dream. I wish it catches the eye of the academics so that it can be prescribed in schools and colleges as it is form that is making its presence felt all over the world

S: Would you like to share some of your favourite haikus with the readers?

AK: As of now, I am reminded of only a few:

Bean stalks –
the height marks fade
in our childhood room
collecting shells –
a bit of sea breeze
in my pocket

bedtime stories –
tracing the flowers
on mother's quilt

after the funeral –
the shape of his feet
in the slippers

homecoming...
another dollop of cream
in the kofta curry

dandelions...
how i learnt
to let go

S: Thank you for providing some insight into your anthology through these samples of haiku. Do you plan to teach and promote haiku in some way?

AK: As of now, I am very busy professionally and am unable to spend the time that it deserves but in future I may.

S: Could you name any haiku poets in India or abroad who you are in touch with?

AK: There are so many modern poets--Angelee Deodhar, Kala

Ramesh.(India). Jim Kacian, Margaret Chula, Roberta Beary, Alan Summers, Tom Clausen, Michael Harvey, Michael Welch--and so many others, the list is so long. Also there are Panjabi haiku poets in Canada, Australia, and England. They are doing a lot of work.

S: Do you read a lot?

AK: I do. In the previous few years, not many books were available so I would go on websites, check online journals. I do try to keep myself updated.

S: Are there easy takers for haiku in the publishing world?

AK: It is very difficult to publish. Reputed journals are very particular. You have to have a strong technique, a new image conveyed in a novel manner. Publishers do not find it a lucrative proposition. In fact, poets have to selfpublish and that can be a major deterrent.

S: Tell us something about your latest work '*dandelion seeds*'.

AK: It is a bilingual book. I am delighted about it as I have incorporated both the languages that I love i.e. English and Panjabi. The haiku were written originally in English and then I transcreated them into Panjabi. Many of these little pieces are not just translations and may also stand independently because it is very difficult to transport the fine cultural implications into a foreign language. I thoroughly enjoyed doing it and hope that the readers will enjoy it also.

S: I am sure it is a delightful reading for haiku lovers. What will be your advice to the budding haiku poets?

AK: I would say read, observe, notice, and keep your eyes open. On the contrary, youngsters are glued to their phones which I think is a bane of modern times. As a result delicate art forms are dying.

S: True. I am sure you have given us a lot to contemplate upon regarding this refined art form. Thank you for sparing time and helping us comprehend such an amazing poetic form.

AK: It has been a pleasure talking to you, Sumati.

Lalit Mohan Sharma. *Loud Whispers: A New Collection of Poems*. New Delhi: Books Plus 2016. Price: Rs 300.

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The expanse of this book of poetry bearing an oxymoronic title is limitless. A motley cumulation of spectacular images delineated by this modern Rimer transcends the earthly into something empyrean, entrancing the readers into a continent of his variegated consciousness with a remarkable deftness. The title *Loud Whispers* is amply suggestive of the poet's working of mind, bearing the testimony of the latitudes he has touched upon, with all the blues and grey shades. Borrowing Coleridge's words: his poetry appears to be wonderfully esemplastic.

The cover page of the book is profoundly symbolic, insinuating the privy emotions of the bard to everyone. Such personal feelings whisper loudly as they move out in public, leaving the ramparts of the poet's own citadel. The emotions recollected in tranquility speak loudly of the inner recesses of the soul; the thoughts too whisper in the mind, the heart, the eyes, in dreams, when awake, in relationships, in fact, at all times. These emotions/ thoughts keep happening at all times and as the poet enunciates they withstand invasions, heal up with the passage of time and are construed into words, eventually into a book form for the world to share and feel. An exquisite assortment of 37 nicely constructed poems put together by synthesizing seemingly incongruous images effect a magnificent harmonious impact on the reader's mind. Happily co-existing within the framework of these poems are the 8 beautifully captured colourful eternities that reflect a diversity of wonderful emotions/ locales captured at different times, and in different moods. An aesthetic splash of varietal sentiments traversing from tender feelings of love, affection and delight to the complexities in association, togetherness, friendship and relationship (societal or personal): all find place in *Loud Whispers*. The fourth book of poetry by the Dr.

Sharma, written post-retirement, makes use of free verse to express his feelings. These 37 poems can be broadly categorized as social, love and nature poems. Poems of varied lengths (some wrapped up in just few lines, while others run into few pages) happily collate to produce loud whispers.

Feeling like a free bird flying in the boundless skies, the poet embarks 'to a new vehicle of time,' where he has the freedom to, 'live the private and secret, the public more of an option;' and where he can, 'compile the text without fear.' Everything is viewed with a renewed vigour, and he sets afresh to acknowledge and extol for all what he has been blessed with. Family, love and relationships find ample mention in majority of the poems and he thanks the Immanent for it with a sense of gratitude and reverence. Hanging the persona as a raincoat, in the Golden Years of life, the poet is ready to live life gracefully. He sketches down a beautiful relationship with his wife, of bond where 'One knows the other likes him, Grim glum and gloomy, and where 'A touch of fatigue on your face' is easily replaced with a smile as he 'touched your face and hair, called out your name,' and 'The mind settles modest and happy.' Poems like *A Silver Jubilee*, *Togetherness*, *Heart-Beat*, *A Case of Love and Breathing in Flesh*, and *A Modest Touch*, all show the love and care that the poet has in this unique relationship.

Poems such as *Rain-Drops* (celebrating the Rainy season), *Chiffon on the Sea-Shore* (of the sea waves and the activity around), *Emblems* (of Autumn season), *Parable* (wintery evening), and in *On Sixtieth Birthday as if for the first time* (pristine beauty of picturesque Dharamshala with its natives) make use of amazing imagery to reveal how Nature provides an instant joy to the living beings. How simply the beatitude is sensed as we go through one of the shortest poem in the collection, where

One rain-drop said to another
let us run away
They keep running
that's how rain is in full bloom

Although, he is also at pains to witness the harm that we do to Mother Nature, as in one of the poems *A Festive Carnage* he tells how 'Crackers split into weird sound . . . power of hearing paralyzed, So scared and perplexed lies, Infant daughter of my son.'

Furthermore, he wonderfully adduces the resemblance that is found in life and nature as he says in *Emblems*:

I am so glad when rain pours
To dilute the summer's heat
Its emblem for me is a visual
Of my friend in a maroon top

In few of the poems, a tribute is paid to all those whom the poet terms as *Mental Friends* and he relishes such relationships with them by saying 'Don't die ever so my friend, The feelings so cherished by us' where there is 'need no known words' to what they feel and think alike. In *The White Tendril*, he lauds the role of all such 'By writing about you alone I know, I shall write about many I have known.' All such have helped him in all the walks of his life.

Poems like *Independence Day Oath*, *Not A Blind Alley*, *Venetian Blinds*, *A Late-Night Dream*, *A Grandpa's Testimony*, *Down the Spine of a Mind* talk variously about our motherland, its rich historic background, about the beautiful world we live in, of our culture, of our religion, of universal brotherhood, of hard work, of the impermanence of the life, in fact, on a wide range of issues. The importance of our earthly existence and the might of Time are didactically implored in *A Late Night Dream* where he says:

Look not for tomorrow
For must when it arrive
It is another today

The temporality of the earthly sojourn is acclaimed in a deeply heart-rending poem *Death-Wish* for there will be a time "of lying in your own courtyard, A grain-filled vessel with incense, As a cloth is spread all over you" and embarking on an eternal journey leaving the whispers echoing loudly, far . . . far behind.

The last poem shares the concerns of the market driven literature. 'Sources are forgotten and untapped, Beckon as the poet is trapped . . . Innovations can usher, A new-look literature.' The claim to what the poet felt initially and what is written subsequently is at loggerheads and the poet has to cater to the demands of the market.

Avowal

Dr. Bhagyashree S. Varma
Professor of English
University of Mumbai

I am neither Ophelia
wallowing in pain
but march unmindful
of loss or gain . . .

Nor am I Meera
to drink poison.
I celebrate my self
fly out of webs
of hoary confusions
personal delusions . . .

Neither a Ruler
who died
for the nation
nor the mother
straining with
the legacy of
an idle son . . .

I am just a reader
of men and manners
My eyes are oceans
of literary emotions . . .

A teacher of love
preacher of knowledge
user of wisdom
seeker of elusive peace
traveler of Woods

dark and deep
much to learn
kudos to earn
much to spurn
a lot to overturn
before I sleep.

Wish to change the milieu
with infectious smile
before the eternal fiat
that turns me senile . . .

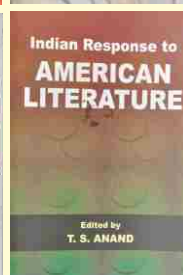
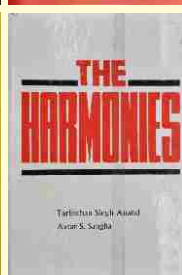
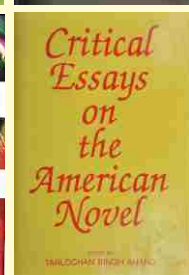
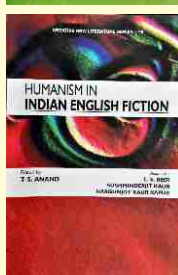
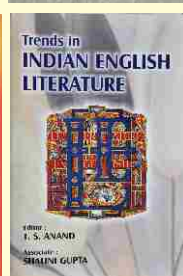
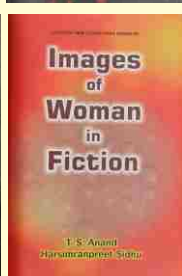
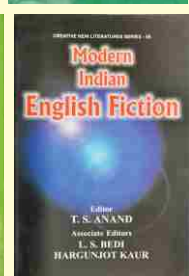
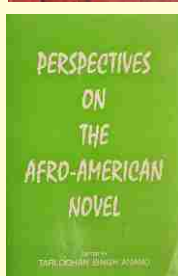
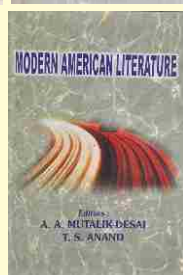
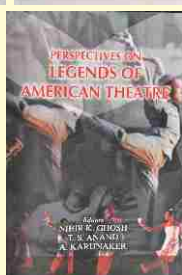
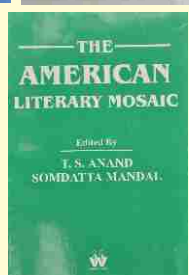
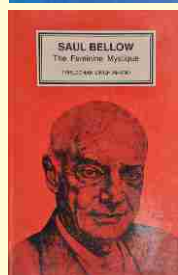
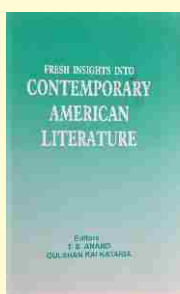
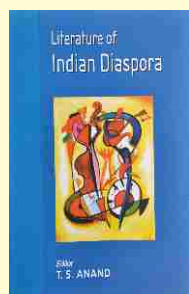
Much to forgive
much to give
much to forget
much to get
from human souls
with loving touch.

My little orbit
relations and friends
untouched by
crazy trends
negatives I leave
by the roadside
to overcome
jarring tides.

My undying faith
in sanctuary of Hope
in Mom I see
my only Pope.

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