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IIS (deemed to be University) Journal of Arts, published by IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur, provides a forum for an in-depth analysis of problems related to various disciplines in arts and also encourages scholarly dialogue on a broad range of topics within these disciplines: English literature and language, French, German, Hindi, Fashion Designing, Jewellery Designing, Journalism and Mass Communication, Performing Arts, Textile Technology, and Visual Arts. The journal encourages inter-disciplinary research articles that are accessible to a wider group of scholars. It also publishes Position Papers, Review Articles, Research Notes, Comments, Monographs, Book/Film Reviews and Author-Interviews.

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IIS (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), JAIPUR A PROFILE

In July 1995, an institution with a difference was born in Jaipur. Christened 'International College for Girls'(ICG), it became a centre of excellence within a span of 18 years and is now one of the most talked about institutions in the state grooming its students to be world-ready-women. Grounded in Indian culture and heritage and with a focus on the development of a scientific temper and a positive attitude, ICG became an icon of quality education. The college was accredited A Plus by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission(UGC) in 2005, was conferred the status of a Model College by the state government, and was recognized as College with Potential for Excellence by the UGC. ICG was granted an autonomous institution status by the UGC, thus lending credibility and stature to the institution.

Another feather was added to the college's cap in 2009. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) declared ICG as a Deemed-to-be-a-University under Section 3 of UGC Act, 1956, leading to the establishment of IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur. The new University took off with a commitment to promoting quality education, research and innovation. The University has already started publishing four research journals in different disciplines as a major step in that direction. Our goal is to empower women, enabling them to play a leading role in all spheres of life.

IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur offers a wide array of Semester-based undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes which make for a robust academic environment. Apart from the regular courses of study, the University offers a wide range of career-oriented subjects like Tourism Business, Advertising & Brand Management, International Business, Human Resource Management, Visual Arts, Fashion Designing to name a few. The University has also taken a lead in introducing courses aimed at developing skills and competencies which would enable the students to keep pace with the times. Our motto is the three Es: Efficiency, Excellence and Effectiveness. The Review Committee constituted by the MHRD placed IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur among the first 38 'Deemed-to-be-Universities' under Category 'A', according the young, vibrant university the status it deserved.

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Rushdie's *Quichotte*: Chasing the Chimera

Pradeep Trikha

Abstract

The worlds of Rushdie's novels and short stories register largely failed attempts to move beyond the bounds of the present; to imagine other pasts and futures that might discharge the curse of similitude. The paper interrogates that if there is fear in Rushdie's fiction it is the fear of repetitions of entrapment in self-perpetuating structure. The attempt to break free, however, often leads to further confinement. From *Midnight's Children* to *Quichotte*, Rushdie has narrated stories of abortive revolution, of attempted transformation that only usher in destruction.

Keywords: Colonialism; Entrapment; Inheritance; Transformation.

I

Although the very notion of beginning a narration with world-ending events seems perverse, especially if the underlying theme of the novel is going to be optimistic, such a fantasy is very much in-line with millenarian thought. As Mircea Eliade points out "... The idea of the destruction of the world is not basically pessimistic" (Eliade 139). The same idea validates Quichotte's perception of the world around him. It seems Rushdie's Quichotte too is prompted by the following question- "Do people want to or have to live the way do now and what happens to the ones who want to change?" Though, most of his fictional writings traverse through varying pursuits for transformation his protagonists are prompted by the seeming need to escape from the nightmare of an eternal present. The invented worlds of Rushdie's novels and short stories register largely failed attempts to move beyond the bounds of the present; to imagine other pasts and futures that might discharge the curse of similitude. For if there is fear in Rushdie's fiction it is the fear of repetitions of entrapment in self-perpetuating structure. The attempt to break free, however, often leads to further confinement. From *Midnight's Children* to *Quichotte* Rushdie has narrated stories of abortive revolution, of attempted transformation that

only usher in destruction. They display, at the same time, their wariness toward the instant change promoters: the entertainment industry, with its manufactured dreams and bogus promises; the world of corporate advertising with its array of revolutionising products; the New age with its offer of spiritual renaissance available at a bargain price. "The future is a trap laid out by commercial image archers; the past, meanwhile, transformed into a packet of well-thumbed images..." (Jameson 152) present an avenue of escape into a historical theme park or the reconstructed media event.

Is it possible then to reinvent the past or to fashion a different future when both these projects have been co-opted by an all-devouring media culture? Carey's answer seems to be a qualified 'Yes'. Some of Rushdie's recent works, notably the novel *Quichotte* and *The Golden House*, are narratives that sketch the dreadful beauty of the apocalypse exposing the corruption of a post-modern world obsessed with images of its destruction. And yet like the earlier stories, the recent work somehow transcends destruction-its violence, though unresolved, prefigures a different future. As the author -Sam Du Champs, nay Brother contemplates:

The decay of the Earth in the novel would be a parallel to the decay- the environmental, political, social, moral decay of the planet on which he lived (Rushdie 356)

And again:

The growing catastrophe was not limited to the damaged and disintegrating physical fabric of everything that was. The laws of science themselves appeared to be bending and breaking, like steel girders melting under the pressure of an unimaginable force (Rushdie 370).

In *Quichotte*, Ismail Smile's journey revolves around the attempt to groom and reconcile himself with Sancho, his son; whereas Sam Du Champ's mission is to restore his relations with his sister. His success turns into a chimera. The attempt to retrieve the past unleashes a flood of painful memories; the family's secret history remains an unpaid debt. Both, thus inscribe a tension between *inheritance* and *invention*, between the obligation to relive the past and the will to recreate it. The constant pulls of Rushdie's work deal with transformation and entrapment, as the will to change is channelled into dominant structures of power. There is a consensus throughout his work, whatever its temporal location that the world must change or perish, that a point of Crisis has been reached. The 'crisis' is probably best described in the well-known terms of Gramsci, "...the old is dying and the new cannot be born in this interregnum, a great variety

of morbid symptoms appear" (Gramsci, 276). Rushdie's fiction examines this threshold state, captive to pathology; the state of the exotic hybrid and the sexual / cultural 'other,' and the realm of the grotesque, presided over by the monster. His characters represent well-worn images vulnerable to commercial exploitation. He explores the mythic power inherent in the conception of the remade world; he also shows how those myths may be used as a medium of enslavement. Colonialism, transnational capitalism, the advertising and entertainment industries are the structures of domination and are changing the parameters of being human and in this process these phenomenal 'isms' empower themselves.

This tension manifests itself throughout Rushdie's work in the theme of imaginary surrogate parentage. In this sense, like many others, *Quichotte* is very different from the seventeenth-century picaresque novel *Don Quixote* by Cervantes. Cervantes immortalised an old Spanish nobleman who constantly reads and is carried away by chivalric romances. On the other hand, Rushdie's *Quichotte* is a pooped medical representative salesman from India who is carried away a little too much by watching TV, so much so that he loses the ability to make a distinction between truth and fiction. Even though he retires, he nurses a passion to meet and marry a talk show star Salma R and begins writing letters to her. He even drives across America in his old Chevrolet Cruz along with his imaginary longed for son –Sancho. His journey adds picaresque dimensions to his quest to meet Salma R. On the way he picks up a conversation with Sancho:

"My silly little Sancho," he cries "my son, my sidekick, my squire! Hutch to my star sky, Spock to my Kirk, Scully to my Mulder BJ to my Hawkeye, Robin to my Batman! Peele to my Key, Stimpny to my Ren, Niles to my Frazier, Arya to my Hound! Peggy to my Don, Jesse to my Walter, Tubbs to my Crockett, I Love you!"

"Cut it out, Dad" the imaginary young man replies "What's in all this for me?" (Rushdie 189)

Rushdie's style mesmerises the reader due to elegance of literary allusions. The novel is more or less a caricature of Cervantes' *Quixote*:

'There once lived at a series of temporary addresses across the United States of America, a travelling man of Indian origin and retreating mental powers...' (Rushdie 3)

II

Quichotte has multiple layers of narration. Characters, in each layer, have the lives of their own and they even determine what they want to be as the

narratives evolve. In the beginning of the novel the reader is introduced to Sam Du Champ who is described as:

...the author of the preceding narratives.... was a New York based writer of Indian origin... who had written eight modestly (un) successful spy fictions under the pen name of Sam Du Champ' (Rushdie 21).

He has a life of his own and its sufferings too. Sam Du Champ's *Quichotte* story is a late breakthrough. On several occasions he creates an impression that there are several similarities between Quichotte's life and his own, though he, sometimes, vehemently denies to have any:

'Granted' he writes or rather someone else writes of his thinking, 'his creation and he was approximate of the same age: they had near-identical old roots, uprooted roots...and their parents lives parallel each other, so much so that he... on some days had difficulty remembering which history was his own and which was Quichotte's' (Rushdie 129).

Quichotte's hangover regarding India compels him to draw a parallel with the seven valleys^{1a} of a conventional prerequisite. He looks at the large map of the United States and says:

It doesn't have to be actual valley...The valley is a metaphor. His son asks him, not unreasonably, why in that case they are bothering with a map and Quichotte says; "Every quest takes place both in the sphere of the symbolic ...we maybe after a celestial goal, but we still have to travel along the interstate. 'You lost me there' his son replies (Rushdie 105)

The novel concurrently narrates the life stories of the characters that are doomed and at the same time damned. Contemporariness of socio-cultural and socio-political atmosphere of America, India, and the U.K. are replicated in *Quichotte*. The novel is a road trip story that lives on a steady diet of pop culture references. It could be argued that *Quichotte* is a novel that attempts to reflect the total crumbling insanity of living in a world emancipated from veracity, that shows what happens when lies become as good as facts. Rushdie does not take these issues to their consequential end, he chooses to ignore them, or simply does not care because, in the end, it is a novel about belief more than anything else. Or about *believing*, anyway that is to say about having faith in the conviction that credence alone is enough to make things authentic. At times *Quichotte* is congealed in such a way that the reader loses himself in its shifting reality, one forgets whose imagination one is visiting, detests the narrator for the bad-joke,

the suppleness of his voice, and the constant elbowing. But Quichotte has a tremendous capacity for enchantment because it has a seductive narrative, the saga of a man who loves a woman and a father who loves a son and who will do anything to earn their love. Sometimes that is adequate.

In *Quichotte* Rushdie ossifies his style. In his debut novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), he narrates a story of a boy "handcuffed to history". The narrative voice was that of Bombay dealing with migration and identity. He continued the pattern with *Shame*, the novel on birth of Pakistan, then came *The Satanic Verses* which compelled him to go into hiding for nine years and now the latest *Quichotte* in which his style is strenuous and grating, unlike his earlier works in which he seemed more flamboyant and freer. Parul Sehgal in her review article on *Quichotte* in the *New York Times* quotes Rushdie what he had said for a character in *The Enchantress of Florence*, "If he had a fault, it was that of observation of seeking to be not only himself but a performance of himself, as Rushdie notes regarding a character in *The Enchantress of Florence* which could be read like self-critique". The later books *Shalimar the Clown*, *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Nights*, *The Golden House* are all tics, technique and hammy narration that try to troupe over patchy stories, exhausting themes, types passing as characters.

For a writer so frequently praised for ingenuity, Rushdie follows a formula of sorts. One can make a bingo card^{2a}: classic novel or myth used as a scaffolding, *Femme Fatale*, story within a story (recounted by a Loquacious Narrator), Topical concern, and defence of Hybridity. *Quichotte* has *Don Quixote* as scaffolding and has debts to *Alice in Wonderland*, *Back to the Future*, the *Odyssey*, *Moby Dick*, *Lolita*, *Pinocchio*, Eugene Ionesco's play *Rhinoceros* and the twelfth-century epic - *Conference of the Birds*. The prose is dense with cultural allusions too: *Candy Crush Saga*, *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, the model Heidi Khan, *Men in Black* and many others. Rushdie offers his Google encyclopaedic awareness. Quichotte, the hero, becomes putrefied by his craving for American television host (*Femme Fatale*), Salma R. He sets off in search of his beloved, and chooses for himself a companion, a son he calls, naturally, Sancho. In their mission, they encounter an America of Trump Voter (Trumpistan) and rancorous racism, (allowing for the defence of Hybridity) and become tangled in the subplot involving opioid crises (Topical Concern). The story is revealed to the readers as a work in progress, however, the creation of a second-rate crime writer, another uneasy Indian in America who writes under the name Sam du Champ (the Garrulous Narrator), having some unfinished business at home. But taking a cue from Coleridge's phrase Rushdie creates "a world of willing suspension of disbelief" for his readers in which the reader

"willingly" suspends oneself in the writer's world of disbelief. Regarding chimera, E.M. Forster had contended that it involves fine-tuning on the part of the reader, a special suspension of disbelief. It is not necessarily a great adjustment but it must be accounted for and it must be made, otherwise, the reader will be left on a tenterhook, watching the author's proud meaningless exertion with increasing detachment and coldness.

III

Don Quixote is the first modern novel with its commentaries on fiction, metafiction and reality. "He doubts everything and believes everything." Quixote tells Sancho Panza a translucent precondition for reading fantasy (like a chimera). Don Quixote tells Sancho: "Teeth are more precious than diamonds." Rushdie's *Quichotte* inverts Cervantes' *Quixote* cheekily: 'Author and construct are joined at the hip, their lives entwined by race, place, generation and circumstances'. A Sancho and a Brother give *Quichotte* a sense of completeness. Though Sancho is invisible to the world and to his father at the beginning of his romantic quest, Sancho Smile begins to acquire a form and identity of his own because this is an era of "Anything can happen", a time of prejudice, bigotry, and racism all amplified by social media where everyone is someone else. Rushdie reiterates that "electronically propagated hysteria" has ushered in an age "in which mob rules and smart phones rule the mob." To critique the regression of the world, Rushdie explains, through *Quichotte*, "I think it is legitimate for a work of art made in a present time to say, we are crippled by the culture we have made by having made by its popular elements above all"; he even trusts that love is an audition and that he knows how to present himself best to the beloved (Salman R)

In an interview regarding *Quichotte*, Rushdie points out that in 'the present times we experience the end of realism as a form of literary fiction since it depends on a compact between the writer and his/her readers on the meaning of the world and that is no longer disruptive elements like the social media and false news emerging'. Though magic realism uses fantastic elements but where earlier forms incorporating the fantastic affirmed a moral order with divinity in command Rushdie's magical realism is an exploration of the Godless Universe. He often probes into quasi fantastic view in his earlier works, but in *Quichotte*, he is explicitly satirical. He depends on historical research to construct his novels because his childhood memories of India might have faded but he feels tied to India and tries to reinvent it egregiously and satirically. *Quichotte* is a difficult reading, because of the multitudes of characters not differentiated from each other. Their conversations are playful and appear to be more like ineffectual talk.

Salma R's aunt Nargis Kumari, on her estranged sister's death says:

What a fool I have been!" Nargis Kumari cried in full tragic actress mode, to allow a mere man to destroy my closest friendship. What is a man compared to the love between soul sisters? He is a passing shadow. He is a random sneeze. He is a short rain shower on a sunny day. I should have been beside her every minute [whether in] sunshine or rain, now I am as empty as a bottle from which all the wine has been poured. I am a word in a dictionary whose meaning has been erased. I am as hollow as a rotten tree. (Rushdie 41).

Though some of it seems to be amusing if employed very often, it becomes pointless dialogue. If cross talk is inserted paragraph after paragraph in all kinds of situations, one recognises an acute writer's block. Rushdie does mention Priyanka Chopra and her TV show *Quantico* and hints at Indian Bollywood star-show like *Koffee with Karan* to draw a parallel with Salma R's show.

Quichotte is billed as a satire by several critics and reviewers. Satires have to have some elements of mockery of political and social phenomena it picks up as the targets. This argument holds good for classics such as *A Tale of a Tub* or *Gulliver's Travels* or George Orwell's *Animal Farm* or *1984*. But Rushdie feels that times have drastically changed. In the fast-moving and changing times, he tries to satirize not only ethnic and racial hatred in the U.S., U.K. and India, he also responds to the addiction of opiates, cow vigilantism in India, Brexit quagmire and the C.I.A. subterfuges, or mob lynching. It seems Rushdie feels lost regarding contemporary India and even the world affairs that are beyond his comprehension.

If one tries to interpret *Quichotte* from another perspective, it is a picaresque tale of Quichotte, framed within the narrative of the author writing it –framed within the outer text which encompasses both these stories. It is not just a story within a story but is a story that admits its artifice. *Quichotte* not only has characters that know they are being written but characters that have opinions on the writing. Thus, it becomes a metafiction within metafiction, where the story is so layered those characters are made up by characters and they cannot only question their existence but also that of the existence of their maker. They are self-reflexive, self-critical, self-conscious and are constantly reminding the reader about their fictionality. At times it compels the reader to question why at all invest so much of time and energy in reading, but one goes on and on. Like his predecessor Quixote, Quichotte too invents to build his story with the

characters of his choice to suit his quest. Quixote is on his chivalric quest and Quichotte on his enterprise to meet his dream-girl Salma R. He also identifies members from his memory, family and imagination to start his own voyage. Except for this family, these memories are not his alone but those of the author writing his story. Like his main character, Brother is also an Indian *immigrant* operating under a pseudonym, also in the twilight of his years, weighed down by dysfunctional family history. Brother is not sure if life is mimicking art or it is vice versa. The world of Quichotte is in flux, it is full of glitches, fast and noisy, and every wall is permeable. No one knows what will happen next:

A long quest comes to an end; here they stand in the valley of Annihilation, with the power to disappear into the universe and just possibly into something new. (Rushdie 389)

One may keep on enquiring about the existential identity of fictional characters. The author dozes off on his study table with:

'...his forehead resting on the wood, bowed down before the computer screen as if performing some ancient rite of worship. So it was on this day of the ending, he was in a half-sleeping, half-waking state when he thought he saw a tiny door open at the very bottom of a corner of his room, less than half of half a millimetre high and through that door a bright light flowed, an intense pinpoint of light, as if it might bethe light of other reality, another Earth, bleeding into his... (Rushdie 390)

The ending reminds the reader of Charles Lamb's essay 'Dream Children', channelling logic and flow of a dream in a series of long sentences, of the string together phrases and no paragraph breaks to be found. Like Lamb Rushdie deftly uses these stylistic concerts to pull the reader into a reverie, creating a sense of tumbling through this dream world with its series of dovetailing tangents. Though it is confusing and hard to navigate through the narrative of *Quichotte* until the reader reaches the end when, with a savvy twist, Rushdie explains the formal oddness of the yarn he has been spinning all along more like a reconnaissance of eupaptic chimera. We are ripped out of the hypnotic start into the most familiar one where:

There they [Miss Salma R and Quichotte] are in the gateway, on the threshold of an impossible dream. (Rushdie 390)

Thus one may conclude that Rushdie's novel is like its creator: ambitious, smart -sometimes over smart- critical and undoubtedly brilliant.

IV

Another level of interpretation of *Quichotte* can be in the light of Jean Baudrillard's 'Simulacra and Simulations'. According to Baudrillard to create in the new age is inevitably to recycle or simulate signs of the past cultures. Instead of some prior reality, for him, the Disneyland is an artefact that so obviously announces its fictiveness that it would seem to imply some counterbalancing reality. This, however, is a false dualism as the U.S. is a prolonged simulation (this is its reality). Thus, our perceptions are so entangled in pre-packaged media perspective that we can only make sense of the 'real' as a strategy, a means to certain ends decreed by apparently transparent media. It is in this sense that Quichotte's journey from Atlanta to New York can be interpreted. It is intensely woven into his and his creator's incidents of life. One has to ask why man in contemporary society has lost the sense of reality. If one intends to interpret *Quichotte* in Baudrillardian perspective one will have to probe into the five dimensions through which the narrative of the novel passes: media culture, exchange value, multinational capitalism, urbanization, and language and ideology. All these phenomena explain the loss of 'reality' both in the lives of Quichotte and Brother. They are in the grip of contemporary media which is only concerned with interpreting the most private selves of the individuals and compels them to approach the world around them through media lenses, far away from reality.

Secondly, in a globalised world in which money has become a "universal equivalent" against which everything in our lives is measured, things have lost their material reality. Characters like Dr R.K. Smile, Nargis Kumari, Salma R and several others only think in terms of money rather than in terms of reality and lose the sense of 'use-value'. Another essential aspect of the novel is 'multinational capitalism' where it is capital that defines the identities of the characters; the consumer-oriented society hardly pays attention to the proletarians. *Quichotte* is a satire on urbanization. Quichotte and Sancho travel from the West to the East of America, through the urban centres. Due to rapid urbanization man has lost touch with the natural world, so much so that natural spaces across the globe have now become "protected reserves and while travelling they cross the signs "Behold Nature". At times Rushdie suggests that language keeps us from accessing "reality" The earlier understanding of ideology corresponding to Baudrillard was that it puts out of sight the truth, that it represented a "false consciousness," and real working of the state, economic forces or the dominant groups are never visible. There is no outside ideology that can be articulated in language because one becomes so reliant on language to structure that any representation of reality is always ideological and is

always constructed by simulacra.

Notes:

- 1a. The Seven Valleys, a book of mystical writings by Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, leads the human soul on a path of spiritual discovery. Baha'u'llah's mystical treatise lists seven valleys, which symbolize the stages of spiritual development: The Valley of Search, The Valley of Love, The Valley of Knowledge, The Valley of Unity, The Valley of Contentment, The Valley of Wonderment, The Valley of True Poverty and Absolute Nothingness. In *The Seven Valleys*, Baha'u'llah wrote that the seeker's quest for union with God requires a powerful internal desire to search for knowledge and truth. That spiritual love of God, or truth, constitutes the guiding force that signifies both detachment and love.
- 2a. In the United States, **Bingo card** is a game of chance in which each player matches numbers printed in different arrangements on **cards** with the numbers the game host (caller) draws at random. It is also used as a literary device here to highlight characterisation, antagonist, protagonist, external conflict, internal conflict, foreshadow, irony, mood, tone, symbolism, theme, illusion, imagery, metaphor, personification, text- to- life connection, inference, pathos, ethos, logos, rhetorical question, diction and dialogue

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Re-Imagining Geography through Memory in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

Abhishek Trehan

Abstract

Faulkner's sense of region has challenged and at the same time dismissed the claims that his oeuvre is only provincial and at best experimental in nature. In particular, this paper focuses on the US South as a model that has time and again evinced the past that is precarious and riddled with a whitened Americanness. I argue that Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* re-imagines the legacy of the South constantly shaped by the politics of race and the culture of Jim Crow – that is still haunted by the memories of the past.

Keywords: Jim Crow; Memory; Past; Race; The US South.

In creating Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner represents the voice of the South in its unfiltered and raw form – mixing violence and chaos to transgress the boundaries of race, gender and class. A closer study of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha demands a nuanced understanding of its geographical setting and how the author has utilized the model in his fiction. It also becomes significant to probe the fictional county as Faulkner has set all but five of his novels in Yoknapatawpha. A known fact that Yoknapatawpha is based on Lafayette County should be studied in the light of its actual geographical setting. Attempts to understand the relationship between Yoknapatawpha and its actual origin have been several. But what does Yoknapatawpha County signify? First time readers of Faulkner often mistake Yoknapatawpha for a real place in the South taking the fictional setting as a microcosm of the American South. Although it would not be wrong to argue that Yoknapatawpha does replicate the South but it is safer to assume Faulkner's County as a place within the South that purposefully blurs the boundaries between real and unreal. Still any assumption that Yoknapatawpha is actually Lafayette, thereby should only be considered after a thorough assessment of the region. In his article *Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County: A Place in the American South*, Charles S. Aiken

offers an interesting take on this perplexity. By focusing on Yoknapatawpha in contrast to the Upland South and the Lowland South and rural and urban South, Aiken argues that Faulkner's fictional setting is a place within the South rather than a miniature of the South. The historical and economic background of the region offers an objective understanding by clearing any doubt regarding the setting of the fictional place. But does it really matter to understand Yoknapatawpha's geographical significance? Aiken's study is useful in interpreting the region's history along with its geographical significance, without which Faulkner's works cannot be fully understood: "Faulkner did not look inward and think of Yoknapatawpha County as a closed geographical model. Inhabitants of the fictional place reach toward other areas and operate within a broader spatial context" (348). Aiken's conclusion that Yoknapatawpha is not a closed geographical model and has a broader spatial context further allows room for argument regarding mobility and dislocation of the characters that appear in his works.

Faulkner's ninth novel *Absalom, Absalom!* published in 1936, provides an excellent example of how the author explores the relationship between place and people. Although at the outset the novel's overtone is unmistakably historical, there are attributes present in the story that point to the problem of slavery which itself is situated in the displacement of slaves. The narration of the novel is such that it becomes quite difficult to discern who is saying what to whom. There are layers of speculation about the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen that Faulkner presents through an abstruse narrative making the matters even more complicated. The novel begins with Quentin Compson sitting in Miss Rosa Coldfield's home one September afternoon, listening to her recalling some events that occurred forty-three years ago. Miss Rosa is the only person who has seen Thomas Sutpen in person and is alive to tell his story. Quentin who is unable to detach himself from the past of Sutpen later reinterprets the story with his Canadian roommate Shreve at Harvard.

Thomas Sutpen can be considered as the main character in the novel because it is about him that all other characters tell and retell their version of stories. But since the information regarding Sutpen is relayed by other characters often in first and second-hand form, sometimes even more than that, it becomes perplexing to confirm the authenticity of their versions. This style of the narrative complicates things and also shows the preoccupation of characters with Sutpen, thereby transforming him into a legend. Sutpen first realizes his social position when as a boy Pettibone's black butler tells him "never to come to the front door again but to go around to the back" (*Absalom* 188). This scene is significant due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the insult at the hands of a black person shatters

the worldview of Sutpen whose innocence until then was intact. Secondly, it prompts Sutpen to assess his own standing in Southern society and thirdly, this realization results in concocting of a design that would help him rise in the society. "I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family – incidentally of course, a wife" (*Absalom* 212). It is this design that provides momentum to the novel despite its flawed nature. Sutpen's rise and eventually his downfall is a direct result of adherence to the design.

An integral part of Sutpen's design is of course money, and so in order to fulfill his design, he goes to West Indies. "What I learned was that there was a place called the West Indies to which poor men went in ships and became rich, it didn't matter how, so long as that man was clever and courageous" (*Absalom* 195). Once in West Indies, Sutpen begins working on a plantation, successfully overcomes a slave rebellion and is able to marry the daughter of the plantation owner as a result. The wife Eulalia gives birth to a son Charles, and apparently Sutpen comes close to achieving his design. However, upon learning that Eulalia has negro blood, Sutpen repudiates his wife and child and finally leaves for Jefferson with a band of slaves and a French architect to once again work on the design.

Sutpen's appearance in Jefferson is narrated by Rosa Coldfield to Quentin as she says, "that Sunday morning in June in 1833 when he first rode into town out of no discernible past and acquired his land no one knew how and built his house, his mansion, apparently out of nothing and married Ellen Coldfield and begot his two children" (*Absalom* 7). Rosa's words that Sutpen has no "discernible past" is not only problematic but tragic too. Since Sutpen has already undergone the trauma of displacement first as a child when he moved from the Appalachian Mountains to Tidewater Virginia and secondly when he came back from West Indies to Jefferson, it cannot be said that Sutpen is a man without a past rather it is his past that makes him problematic. Sutpen's insistence on recreating his design again in Mississippi is simply a result of his traumatic past.

Faulkner has depicted the character of Sutpen as someone who is able to repress and access certain portions of his memory without making any clear demarcation. Sutpen "didn't know why they moved, or didn't remember the reason if he ever knew it" (*Absalom* 181). In a similar way, "He didn't remember how he came to go to the school" (*Absalom* 194). On the other hand, Sutpen remembers his teacher mentioning West Indies, "I remembered what he had read to us and I went to the West Indies" (*Absalom* 196). Sutpen doesn't remember why they moved as a family from one place to another but he certainly "remembered how one time the gradual difference in comfort between the presence and absence of shoes and warm clothing occurred in one place" (*Absalom* 183). Does that mean Sut-

pen's memory is triggered by certain geographical differences? In other words does place have the power to evoke certain memories? This seems true at least in Sutpen's case. It is, therefore, essential to acknowledge the concept of place. John Agnew highlights three main dimensions of place: location, locale and sense of place. Place, therefore, can only be discerned when taking into consideration the material settings, social relations and individual experiences related to a particular location. While the construction of place is a complex process, it only becomes naturalized once individuals are able to relate to it, attach emotional feelings and create a sense of belongingness. The continuation of this relationship between an individual and place is of great significance in maintaining the identity of a subject. Any rupture in the continuity would therefore not only affect the otherwise stabilized identity but also impact the social relations.

By fulfilling his design, Sutpen wants to rise in the social hierarchy. But more than improving his social position, Sutpen wants to stabilize his identity—confirm that he would never be insulted again. Tuan argues that "sense of time affects sense of place . . . What can the past mean to us? People look back for various reasons, but shared by all is the need to acquire a sense of self and of identity" (186). Moreover, in acquiring a sense of self and identity, Sutpen needs a specificity in his endeavor as "to strengthen our sense of self the past needs to be rescued and made accessible" (Tuan 187). Sutpen through his design wants to access the past—a narrative of personal history by building Sutpen's Hundred that would allow him to hold a certain period of time as his own, because "objects anchor time" (Tuan 187). In this way there seems to be an interplay between memory and location i.e. place with Sutpen's Hundred being the site where this interaction communicates with the identity Sutpen has in mind.

Sutpen's design and ultimately his failure should be read in a larger context outside the personal history of the character. The fate of Sutpen is sealed once his realization takes hold of him. The traumatic affront prompts Sutpen to be a part of the same social structure that rebuked him for his poverty. Faulkner allows Sutpen to rise in social position by attempting to make him a part of Southern society that is plainly biased and preoccupied with a person's social footing. Sutpen thereby is already a part of the same social group that he retaliates against, at least imaginatively so, by temporarily forgetting his personal history. In *The Collective Memory*, Halbwachs notes, "In reality, the continuous development of the collective memory is marked not, as is history, by clearly etched demarcations but only by irregular and uncertain boundaries" (82). Because of irregular and uncertain boundaries, it is easier to violate them without even knowing that a violation has occurred. It is so because "History can be

represented as the universal memory of the human species. But there is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time . . . retaining only the group's chronological and spatial outline of them" (*The Collective Memory* 84). Once a part of the group, our very existence turns collective in nature, simplifying our memories within a collective framework.

It is Haiti where Sutpen first attempts to fulfill his design. Later when he arrives in Yoknapatawpha, Sutpen works to fulfill the design once again. The distance Sutpen travels from the US to Haiti does not change his pure desire to acquire wealth through which he aims to rise in the society, not even after he is traveling back, failing at his design already. Sutpen's design mirrors the plantation narrative of the South when he attempts to reproduce the same hegemonic structure he has witnessed firsthand both in Virginia and Haiti. Sutpen's internalization of the Southern ideology is a definite part of his upbringing in a society that recognizes an individual through an unequal distribution of power and wealth, complicating the matters even further by emphasizing a person's color. It is only when Sutpen is insulted by the black servant at the door of the plantation owner that the realization is triggered, prompting him to put internalization into action via his design. The master-slave narrative if read within the context of Southern plantation demands a nuanced understanding of South's labor history. Richard Godden foregrounds the Southern labor history by linking the South and Haiti when he asserts, "In the South, Haiti is synonymous with revolution" (252).

Godden further notes that Faulkner clearly had enough knowledge of San Domingo to use the context in his novel. But then why Faulkner presents one of the key events in history in a false light? Godden argues "the recognition that slavery is an undeclared state of war, in which black revolution is a permanent risk, is Sutpen's. His behavior as a slaveholder in Mississippi is eccentric but plain: on a regular and ritualized basis he organizes and participates in single combat with his slaves. While clearly slave codes were designed to police the peculiar institution on the understanding that black conspiracy was a fact of planter life" (254). The distrust Faulkner depicts through Sutpen aims at utilizing the codes to dispel any doubts regarding slave uprising. As a result, Sutpen is able to import his slaves from Haiti to Yoknapatawpha, make them work and build Sutpen's Hundred. In doing so, he not only inflicts the trauma of displacement on the slaves but also constantly keeps them well within the boundaries of the master-slave relations. It is well within the argument that Sutpen's Hundred can be identified as a site where identities are established through spatial and power anomalies. Firstly, Sutpen because of his internalization of Southern ideology builds a place that would allow

him to be recognized as a powerful individual.

Secondly, the slaves who are uprooted from Haiti are always kept under control since they are expected to revolt. The childhood experience of Sutpen puts him in the same line of thought as Southern society—prompting him to act according to the Southern codes. This makes Sutpen approach the past to construct his identity within a social framework, making him a part of collective memory. At any point, it does not mean that Sutpen is without personal memories but that his personal and the South's collective memory intersect—forming a meaningful relationship. As Halbwachs points in *The Collective Memory*, "every collective memory unfolds within a spatial framework" (140). Sutpen's Hundred provides this spatial framework necessary to stabilize the identity of its owner. Halbwachs further argues: "Now space is a reality that endures: since our impressions rush by, one after another, and leave nothing behind in the mind, we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings" (140). Since Sutpen's mansion, Sutpen's Hundred is a powerful symbol that exudes great dominance through its physical structure, it immediately becomes part of the plantation narrative—upholding the master-slave pattern prevalent in the South. Focusing on Sutpen's Hundred as a construction of space through which the codes of labor are superimposed on slaves, space becomes a means to control the meaning of supremacy by not allowing the slaves to decode the struggle in maintaining their identities. In the words of Lefebvre, "the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (26).

The only way Faulkner allows Sutpen to attain redemption is by bestowing upon him a design—a Southern coda embedded in the intermarriage of race and place—notwithstanding any external influence or absorption of any reinforcement that could systematically render the narrative pattern of the South useless. When Sutpen first goes to Haiti in search of wealth, his consciousness is already shaped within the Southern discourse of class and race. Sutpen grounds his identity in a place that is racially fraught with a biased tendency toward the division of labor and property. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* represents the South that is both troubled and conducive to destabilized identities of African Americans. What is apparent about the Southern situation is that time and again it requires a codification of myth and violence, place and memory within the past that stands upon the pillars of slavery. By creating a social spectrum through a reimagined geography riddled with prejudice and absolute racial difference, Faulkner attempts to depict a fragmented South tangled in its codes and principles. The physical space in *Absalom, Absalom!* as a

result, is shared between memories and place—soiled by the past that is undeniably fixated on whiteness.

Faulkner's Haiti is a reimagined geographical location where Sutpen goes in search of wealth that would help him acquire a social position in Southern society but more than serving as a mere geographical setting where people go to become rich, Haiti also highlights the transatlantic problem of slavery. The very depiction of Haiti in the novel supports this predicament as Sutpen's design depends on this "spot of earth which might have been created and set aside by Heaven itself . . . a theatre of violence and injustice and bloodshed and all the satanic lusts of human greed and cruelty . . ." (*Absalom* 202). For Sutpen, Haiti becomes a tool through which he could attain his design, and so acting accordingly he takes his share of negroes and returns to Mississippi to create a dynasty. The creation of Sutpen's Hundred has its own significance in the novel—one that surpasses every other object or being. Since Sutpen's Hundred assumes more than a geographical complexity, it exemplifies the link between place, memory and identity. Not only the substance of the plantation narrative strongly carries the element of a bygone era, it also recapitulates the Old South in its nascent themes such as class, race and violence. This recreation of the past is specifically embedded in a physical form—to support its appearance by presenting it as an unchallenged avenue of power. If indeed our memory unfolds within a spatial context and, in turn, assumes a meaningful resonance, then it can be argued that Sutpen's Hundred becomes a site of memory where Sutpen's own identity is contested because of certain memories that are evoked. Sutpen's design is the only way through which he could ensure his position and identity in society but this design is challenged once Charles Bon, his repudiated first son from Haiti appears at the door. Simply put Sutpen's design becomes a way "to repeat periodically that traumatic affront but in a different role. Henceforth, he will no longer receive the affront, he will deliver it" (Irwin 50). The spatiality that is constructed through Sutpen's Hundred is in tune with the societal codes of the South. Faulkner in verifying the past has allowed Sutpen to build Sutpen's Hundred because of a particular childhood experience—memory that Sutpen is unable to forget. It is only through memory that Faulkner attempts to stabilize the meaning of Sutpen's Hundred, which otherwise in the absence of a past would have been a mere building.

The legend of Sutpen is primarily based on the memories of other people. Rosa Coldfield is the only person at the beginning of the novel who is alive and retells the tale of Sutpen to Quentin. The reason Rosa chooses Quentin to divulge details about Sutpen is purely transactional. Rosa hopes that Quentin might share a detail or two about herself and Sutpen.

After Sutpen's second wife Ellen died, Sutpen proposes to Rosa who is Ellen's sister. Sutpen's only condition is that if Rosa gives birth to a male child they will marry otherwise the marriage will be called off. This insult is the prime reason, Rosa is unable to cast aside Sutpen's memory even after forty-three years, and to some extent hopes to find a sense of closure by disclosing information to Quentin. Invested in a regional past, Quentin's memories are a result of a trauma he has not even experienced firsthand but somehow has come to believe that it has changed his life "since he was born and bred in the deep South" (*Absalom* 4). Leigh Anne Duck argues that "certain pasts can overwhelm individual subjects and that collectivities can become so invested in a given interpretation of historic events that they provide little opportunity or support for persons who need to work through their traumatic relationships to these events" (98). Growing up in Jefferson, Quentin has heard stories about Sutpen from his father who himself has heard about Sutpen from his father i.e. Quentin's grandfather. This passage of information about Sutpen from one generation to another is made possible through memories. Even at Harvard, Quentin is unable to detach himself from the legend of Sutpen, as along with his roommate Shreve, he continues to reconstitute the tale of Sutpen.

Quentin's obsession with Sutpen's past can be understood because of his vested interest in the South. Coming from the South, he has imbibed a great portion of Southern history together with its regional artifacts, and that is what does not allow Quentin to separate his identity from the burden of his memories even when he leaves for Harvard. Our sense of meaning regarding the place we inhabit is shaped within a collective framework, which itself has an essence of selective images from the past—coordinating and expressing a kind of echo that now depends on mutual basis within the group. The give and take relationship allows a group to derive particular meanings out of the past—retaining the identity that has been shaped during the retrieval. This entire coexistence of meaning and rationality occurs within a spatial context. Quentin, as a result, is not just a Southerner but product of the South since his sense of retrieval of past has occurred within a collective framework. The change in geographical location, when Quentin leaves for Harvard from Jefferson, therefore, does not affect him. Although he is now in the North, Quentin still fixates his entire being in deriving meaning from the legend of Sutpen along with his roommate Shreve. The seemingly social expectation that a Southerner would behave differently in the North is quickly changed to a geographical stimulation through Quentin's obsession with Sutpen. Quentin is able to transgress the physical boundaries between Mississippi and Massachusetts since his sense of the past has been nourished within the collective framework of the South.

It is noteworthy to point that this particular notion is not simply nostalgia or longing for an identifiable environment but a way an individual has come to realize and locate the past because of a specific spatial context. In Quentin's case also, the relationship between place and individual continues to solidify itself through successive images of the past intimate to Quentin's memory. These images are of course related to Sutpen who in turn is located within the framework by Quentin. Rosa's intention and her understanding in disclosing the information about Sutpen is in tune with this notion since she already knows that Quentin possesses a certain share of knowledge about Sutpen as she says, "so maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it" (*Absalom* 5). Rosa's insistence that Quentin should write about Sutpen is nothing but an accumulation of memories that are relevant to a group of people. In a way, Rosa wants to commemorate—crystallize the tale of Sutpen as she understands her own position within the group. Paul Connerton argues that "Groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised and memories are localised by a kind of mapping. We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group" (37). For Rosa, Sutpen's Hundred becomes a mental space to situate her memories. It would not be, as a result, wrong to say that Rosa's memories have localised within Sutpen's Hundred. If Quentin has grown up listening about Sutpen from his father then Rosa had a direct confrontation with Sutpen, but in both cases, the site where the memories are actualized is Sutpen's Hundred. It is not possible to deduce with utmost certainty who is more involved with the tale of Sutpen since both Rosa and Quentin are unable to let go of the past. However, each in their own way contributes to the legend of Sutpen—making the already difficult subject of Sutpen even more indiscernible. But what haunts Rosa and Quentin is not merely the memories that revolve around Sutpen but an instability caused by a vortex of emotions as they try to reinterpret the past. It is problematic to arrive, as a result, at truth.

Faulkner in creating *Absalom, Absalom!* has kept the plantation narrative of the Old South intact. It is only through the design of Sutpen that the creation of Sutpen's Hundred becomes possible. The issue of slavery which is apposite to anything Southern is at the core of this design—bringing into focus the master-slave relationship. Sutpen utilizes the strand of the plantation narrative to construct the whiteness through which he propagates subordination. From the very beginning, Sutpen attempts to neutralize his slaves by various tactics. If Sutpen works along with his slaves, he also wrestles with them, leaving no room for an uprising. This whiteness is solely constructed within a spatial context. By excluding the slaves from any kind of geographical superiority, Sutpen establishes powerful bound-

aries of segregation that are based on the color of a body. "It seems that on certain occasions, perhaps at the end of the evening, the spectacle, as a grand finale or perhaps as a matter of sheer deadly forethought toward the retention of supremacy, domination, he would enter the ring with one of the negroes himself" (*Absalom* 21). Sutpen's actions demand a closer scrutiny since as the master of slaves, he does not have to put a display of authority time and again. To further probe this behavior of Sutpen as a master, the role of Haiti should be studied in the light of its historical setting. Haiti serves a dual purpose in the novel: firstly, for the planter class in the South, it becomes a reminder of the uprising against the white authority. Secondly, for slaves and abolitionists, Haiti is no less than a constant source of inspiration in their ongoing struggle for freedom (Atkinson 166-67). Sutpen is aware of the significance Haiti has for slaves, and, as a result, strives to maintain his dominance through violence. This systematic channelization of violence helps Sutpen in building his plantation and keep the band of wild negroes in control.

Faulkner carefully builds the momentum of the story around Sutpen without allowing him to appear directly. Yet the forceful intervention of memories in the novel becomes a kind of phenomena that should be considered before approaching the novel in its entirety. The trauma, clash of identities and a significant portion of the novel are situated around or within Sutpen's Hundred. If Sutpen's Hundred means a sense of closure for Rosa, then for Quentin it is a place where his memories are either evoked or formed. The onset of Quentin's memories is deeply embedded in the spatial context. Sutpen's Hundred extends this context by acting as a site where Quentin is able to derive meaning out of his memories. Our sense of memory is directly related to our sense of past. The lived spaces by providing us a framework enhance this sense—actualizing what was merely a tantalizing resemblance until now into a homogeneous experience that is fixated around a place. From General Compson to Quentin and from Rosa to Sutpen himself, the field of memory only seems to expand—ushering each one of them to a new horizon upon which the past laments their very existence.

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Justice, Dystopia and the Unlikely Utopia in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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Abstract

Arundhati Roy's novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) tells the stories of a diverse set of disaffected protagonists on the margins of the social, economic, religious, and political systems of Indian society. Along with their stories, the novel also foregrounds the systems and structures that produce the injustices of their situations. These multiple narratives are delivered in a structure that has been described as sporadic and uneven in its register, and has come in for criticism. Exploring the relationship between the dystopian vision and the narrative structure, this essay presents a reading that sees the angular form not as a flaw but as a corollary to the disconnect between disparate human realities and the structures of power and justice inherent in the vision of the novel.

Keywords: Dystopia; Justice; Marginalization; Narrative Form; Utopia.

The idea that hovers over all the stories in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and is the spirit that haunts it, is the subject of justice. Dealing with a whole array of characters on the margins of the social, economic, religious, and political systems of Indian society, the novel presents this world as dystopian. Roy portrays her disaffected and marginalised protagonists with a great deal of insight and empathy while also keeping the reader constantly mindful of the systems and structures that produce the marginalisation and the utter injustice of their situations. Roy received much acclaim for her novel but one aspect that elicited criticism is the structure of the novel that has been seen as sporadic, fractured, rambling, and so on. The review of the novel by Natasha Walter in *The Guardian* called it a "scattershot narrative," and while it acknowledged that this is deliberate, and reflects the "fragmentation in the world around us," the review still questioned the form of the novel, arguing that the "clashing

subplots and whimsical digressions can become rather unwieldy." Somak Ghoshal, writing for *Huffington Post* called the novel "frustratingly rambling" and "shockingly uneven in its register." The descriptions are justifiable. The question, however, is if the rambling narrative form, the unevenness of the registers, and the absence of a fitting closure in the structure are to be seen as failures in a potentially great novel, or if the form too is part of the message here.

This essay focuses on the issue of denial of justice to certain constituencies and characters and its relationship with the fractured narrative structure of the novel. The protagonists of the novel are a diverse set, with their unique contexts and histories: Aftab/Anjum, a transgender person and a Muslim; Musa, a Kashmiri; Saddam Hussain, a Dalit; Revathy, a radicalized communist; Dr. Azad Bhartiya, a general champion of several leftist causes; and several others. The protagonists come from vastly different social worlds, with differences of language, class, culture, religion, geographical location, and so on. The injustices and exclusions they face are also framed differentially in the contexts of politics, biology, caste, gender, etc., but what they do share and hold in common is the experience of victimhood. Their stories are told sequentially and then gathered together with some artifice at the end, when the plot brings them together in the space of the graveyard – literally the place on the "margins," but one that is here visualized as an egalitarian space with a real sense of community. While as a metaphor this makes perfect sense, it is the actual bringing together of all the protagonists of the novel to this space to create an alternative realm of happiness that lends a sense of unreality to the novel. Is this a flaw in the novel? On the contrary, this essay argues that this artifice and unreality, along with the angularity in the telling of the tale, is inevitable, because within the ethos of the novel there exists no space for a "real" closure.

Having rejected the grand narrative of a hegemonic nation, having created characters located on the utter margins of the social and economic mainstream of Indian society and nation with no voice, place, or role within it, how else could Roy's *The Ministry* be narrativized but in the sporadic way that it is? The argument offered in this essay is that the novel cannot be presented as a unified narrative; it must remain heterogeneous because within the discourse of the nation, as seen and presented by Roy, there is no location or vantage point from where these injustices can be recognized and rectified. There is no narrative framework that can inclusively contain the dystopian world and the hoped-for utopia because the apparatus of justice belongs to the system that creates injustice. All the protagonists in the story are wronged by society or the state and its institutions, and thus

they cannot hope to receive justice because the very definition of justice and its institutions belong to the state.

The argument here is based on Lyotard's concept of a *differend* as opposed to litigation, a victim as distinguished from a plaintiff, and a wrong, as against a damage. To quote Lyotard, "[a]s distinguished from a litigation, a *differend* would be a case of a conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments" (xi). Further, he observes,

It is in the nature of a victim not to be able to prove that one has been done a wrong. A plaintiff is someone who has incurred damages and who disposes of the means to prove it. One becomes a victim if one loses these means. One loses them, for example, if the author of the damages turns out directly or indirectly to be one's judge. The latter has the authority to reject one's testimony as false or the ability to impede its publication. But this is only a particular case. In general, the plaintiff becomes a victim when no presentation is possible of the wrong he or she says he or she has suffered (8).

The idea here, especially in the context of Roy's novel, is that those oppressed and wronged by the state and its dispensations have no legitimate recourse to the correction of their wrongs. The focus in the novel is thus on the enormity of the injustice to them and the futility of any struggle to get justice. It is this exclusion and "victimhood," as stated earlier, that unites the protagonists in the novel; it also becomes the justification for a random bringing together of diverse characters to the alternative space of the "paradise" in the graveyard.

Implicated in this question of injustice and narrative form in Roy's novel is also the question of language, and of communication. In an essay entitled "In What Language Does Rain Fall Over Tormented Cities? The Weather Underground in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*," included in her recent collection, *Azadi*, Roy dwells on the centrality of the linguistic awareness in the novel and in the process of her writing the novel. She says that "*The Ministry* is a novel written in English but imagined in several languages," referring to the various ecosystems and constituencies that it encompasses (*Azadi* 13). And she talks about the need for these people "to coexist, to survive, and to try to understand each other," even if it is in imperfect translations (*Azadi* 14). The insight that the novel provides about the importance of language, that it is both the condition of marginalization of people and the weapon of their resistance, is seminal to the novel and the

question of justice. And this connection between justice and language, in and of literature, is crucially highlighted by Lyotard too. Lyotard states that "[w]hat is at stake in a literature, in a philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to *differends* by finding idioms for them" (13). Only in language, in idioms can wrongs be apprehended, and thus recognised.

Given the context of linguistic awareness in the novel, it is appropriate that the title itself is loaded and polysemic. The word "Ministry," in the context of the secular, "democratic" India, has the primary connotation of the governmental unit that incorporates both legislative and administrative powers. The irony it evokes here is of the absence in the structural conception of the nation/society – there being no such Ministry – as well as the absurdity in the idea of there being such a Ministry. In its secondary connotation of a priesthood, the term "Ministry" also invokes an alternative possibility. Such a possibility implies that in the absence of the provision and protection of happiness of certain constituencies of people, the ministering work could still happen, with the work being assumed by self-appointed "ministers," such as Anjum in the graveyard.

The preface of the novel is a powerful piece of writing and contextualizes the novel in a haunting way. In disarming, poetic language and tone, it delivers a brutal message: the death of vultures by diclofenac poisoning caused by their feeding on the dead bodies of the cows that were fed the chemical in the interest of increased milk production. So, in the midst of the consumption of the abundant ice-creams and milkshakes, nobody notices the passing away of the birds that had existed for "more than a hundred million years" (*The Ministry* 1). The novel itself does not really deal with animal subjects but the use of bird references in the preface underscores a seminal point. Lyotard, in *The Differend* calls the animal "the paradigm of the victim." Here is how he explains it: "This is because the animal is deprived of the possibility of bearing witness according to the human rules for establishing damages, and as a consequence, every damage is like a wrong and turns it into victim *ipso facto*" (28).

Among these crows and the vultures lives Anjum, the protagonist whose portrayal in the first chapter is a feat of characterization. In just a few pages, Roy creates a character who lives in a graveyard "like a tree," but one who has such richness of emotions, human connections, loyalties, language, and laughter in the midst of destitution, rejection and loneliness that she seems to create a centre outside the periphery of society. Having given us this perspective on her, the novel tells us the backstory of her birth as Aftab, her parents' reactions to her bisexuality, her own discovery of her desires, her move to *Khwabgah*, her experiences in Gujarat riots, and

her eventual move to the graveyard.

At each stage of her story, what is emphasized is the idea that her identity falls outside any structured parameters of social existence. When Aftab's mother discovers the unformed "girl-part" lying underneath the "boy-parts," her response is described in phased and numbered reactions: after terror and recoil, she feels as if "she fell through a crack between the world she knew, and worlds she did not know existed" (8). She knows a word, really two, for those like her baby who are neither feminine nor masculine, *Hijra* and *Kinnar*, but as the narrative says, "[t]wo words do not make a language" (8). Later when she shares the fact with her husband Mulaqat Ali, a man with a passion for Urdu poetry who could produce a couplet for any occasion out of his vast repertoire, we are told that "for the first time in his life Mulaqat Ali had no suitable couplet for the occasion" (16). When both the mother's prayers at the dargah of Hazrat Sarmad, and the father's attempts at medical cure, fail to produce the desired results, Aftab, jeered at by the children for his feminine proclivities, withdraws from school and his music class, and begins to be drawn towards *Khwabgah*, the home where the eunuchs live. Aftab thinks of *Khwabgah* literally as it is named: the House of Dreams. So when he finally enters the place, it is "as though he were walking through the gates of Paradise" (20). Having faced social alienation, Aftab moves into *Khwabgah* at age fifteen anticipating bliss, but then he is assailed by the hormonal conflict within his body. Nimmo Gorakhpuri had already warned him of this when she had declared that god created eunuchs as an experiment of "a living creature that is incapable of happiness," because the conflict is right within the body: "the riot is inside us. The war is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us. It will never settle down. It can't" (23). Ustad Kulsoom Bi, the head of the household, attempts to trace the history of the *Hijras* to the mid-eighteenth century in the reign of the Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah Rangeela.

In the Sound and Light Show at the *Diwan-e-Khas*, "the Hall of Special Audience" at the Red Fort, Kulsoom Bi alerts everyone to listen to the "deep, distinct, rasping, coquettish giggle of a court eunuch," which to her proves that the eunuchs were never commoners but members of the royal palace staff (51). The only problem is that the said giggle is so fleeting that nobody actually hears it. Kulsoom Bi's efforts to console the *Hijras* "as beloved of the Almighty" also do not bring much respite. Gudiya, the only Hindu at *Khwabgah* tells a story in Hindu mythology, of how when departing for the forest with Sita and Laxman, Ram asked all the men and women to return home but forgot to mention the *hijras*, who then waited for him for the entire fourteen years of his exile. "So we are remembered as the forgotten ones?" asks Kulsoom Bi (51). Aftab, now named Anjum,

discovers that *Khwabgah* is as diverse and complicated as the *Duniya*, the real world she had left behind. And so, after more than thirty years, she leaves *Khwabgah* to move into the graveyard, which is in a way a return to *Duniya* (the world), and sets up Jannat (Heaven) Guest House, a refuge for those that are marginalized even from "the tightly administered grid of *Hijra Gharanas*" (68).

Anjum embodies not only the ideas of social exclusion, historical absence and biological conflict, but also of religious intolerance. These multiple realities come together in one incident, harrowing beyond recourse, during her visit with Zakir Mian to Ahmedabad that happens to be the time when the riots break out. Hidden within the story and told almost reluctantly, is the horror of their experience during riots: Zakir Mian was murdered by the Hindu mob while Anjum, lacking the courage to do anything, was found by the crowds lying on the street pretending to be dead, and was spared by them when she was discovered to be a *hijra*. "*Nahi yaar, mat moro, Hijron to maarna apshagun hota hai.* (Don't kill her, brother, killing eunuchs brings bad luck) (62). The memory of Zakir Mian dead, "lying neatly folded in the street" and of herself as "un-killed," "neither folded nor unfolded" becomes the nightmare that defines Anjum's existence thereafter, and this forces her to leave *Khwabgah* for the graveyard. As she tells Saddam Hussain, their very existence is questionable: "This place where we live, where we have made our home, is the place of falling people. Here there is no *haqueeqat* [reality]. *Arre*, even we aren't real. We don't really exist" (84).

The story of the Kashmir valley is told with deep sorrow interwoven with poetic lyricism but with a great deal of calmness, the calmness that comes with simultaneous sense of resolve and futility. It unfolds before us like a dirge, not just the story of Miss Jebeen the First, or Musa, or Tilo, a character who bears some resemblance to the author herself, but the story of the land and its people. It's a fight in which there is no possibility of appeal or justice, because it is a fight against the state. In an almost classic example of Lyotard's idea of victims as distinguished from plaintiffs, the Kashmiris engaged in this war are seen as having been wronged because they have been done "a damage accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage" because in this case, the "enemy" is the judge. The state that is instrumental in victimizing also has the authority to reject their "testimony as false," thus turning them into victims, as argued by Lyotard in the excerpt quoted above.

Kashmiri society is seen as conflicted within, and as undergoing complex and tragic changes wrought by the onslaught by the state. Martyrdom

and death stalk this land of beauty and death. Usman Abdullah, a prominent ideologue in the struggle for Azadi but representative of "the folksy, old-world stuff" is threatened, assassinated and finally replaced by the hard-line faction of militants (320). People face a dilemma because while they love the more secular leaders, they fear and respect the hard-liners who are better equipped for and skilled at war. There are strange ironies as when both Usman Abdullah and his assassin are declared martyrs, and are buried in the Martyr's Graveyard. The evolution of the struggle and the society is traced with a deep of loss and grief. Musa, a major protagonist in the novel, gives us highly nuanced and complex insights into the experiences of the Kashmir people. He talks about the inevitability of the war, the need to keep fighting without hope as a fight for dignity, even if the price for that is the terrible loss of their very humanity and complexity as a community. He calls it "stupidification . . . idiotification" of the Kashmiri community as it is forced to simplify, standardize and reduce itself to become an effective fighting force (371). So, in place of passionate intensity, there is steely resolve to continue dying as the last strategy of offence and defence.

Moreover, the war has also become a well-oiled commercial enterprise, and those with vested interests ensure its perpetuation. Major Amrik Singh has a flourishing furniture business that is very well integrated with his army work. Aijaz, the young boy captured by the army tells Naga, the journalist, that the army doesn't want the militancy to end as everybody "on all sides is making money on the bodies of young Kashmiris" (228). On the other hand, Aijaz himself is an example of the passionate, idealistic youth.

The Kashmir story is a crowded, fragmented, multi-faceted tragedy with all its actors seen as victims of one kind or another. The perpetrators of violence against the Kashmiris are themselves vulnerable, small figures battered by social, psychological, political troubles. Soldier S. Murugesan from Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu is very young, away from home for the first time, fascinated by the snow and cold in Kashmir. He is blown up and his body is received with a hero's welcome in his Dalit community in Thanjavur. The upper caste *Vanniyars*, however, would not allow his funeral procession to go past their houses, and they mutilate and behead his statue that is put up in the village to commemorate his valour. Major Amrik Singh, with "opaque, depthless black discs" for eyes, is "a deadly interrogator and a cheery, cold-blooded killer" (334, 336). A chameleon who could "pass himself off as a Hindu, Sikh, or a Punjabi-speaking Pakistani Muslim," he describes himself as the "Government of India's dick" whose job is to "fuck people" (336). Responsible for countless interrogations and

deaths, when finally deprived of the “infrastructure of impunity” provided by the state, he goes “scared and broke,” killing himself and his family in a small town in the US (433).

The story, however, that is not elaborated in any great detail, except in the letter received by Dr. Azad Bhartiya about the birth of the child who “appeared” at Jantar Mantar is that of Revathi and the Maoist guerrillas in the Bastar forests. The chapter entitled “Nativity” presents the “appearance” of the child “on the concrete pavement, in a crib of litter” under the neon lights and surrounded by a thin white horse, a mangy dog, a lizard, two squirrels, and a spider. As the scene broadens, we realize that this child is born in a “shining” new India that is reaping the fruits of liberalization, with its economy growing and the multinationals coming in. The abundance of barely-veiled contemporary references in this chapter would be recognizable to anyone familiar with the goings on in the city of Delhi and around in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and a great deal of irony, sarcasm and humour in this chapter comes from this fictional appropriation of this history. To keep its capital bright and clean, begging is banned and a judge orders the eviction of the city’s poor: the “surplus people,” as the novel calls them (98). Jantar Mantar, New Delhi’s favourite site of protests is shown to be teeming with umpteen causes: an old man with his campaign against corruption, Bhopal Union Carbide gas leak activists, Waste-recyclers Association, Sewage Workers Association, Manipuri Nationalists, Tibetan refugees, Association of Mothers of the Disappeared Kashmiri youth, and of course there is Dr. Azad Bhartiya fasting in support of all possible causes. While the writing deals with these with irony and humour, it is not difficult for the reader to distinguish between the causes the novel takes to its heart and the other ones.

To go back to the child left on the pavement, we learn that she was whisked off and given to Tilo who names her Miss Jebeen the Second after Musa’s dead daughter, and cares for her in her apartment and then takes her along when she moves to Jannat Guest House where the child acquires another mother in Anjum. The circumstances of the child’s birth are narrated by her mother, Revathi in her letter to Dr. Azad Bhartiya that he reads out to all the occupants of Jannat Guest House. Revathi’s story is of a childhood spent in the midst of economic deprivation and caste discrimination and adulthood spent in armed struggle in Bastar forest. Her letter hints at the conditions of *adivasis* in the forest and the treatment they receive at the hands of the state police. In more detail, she describes her torture and rape by six policemen and the sequence of events after the birth of her child leading to her abandoning the child at Jantar Mantar. She talks of her conflicted feelings about the child, whom she wished to kill after her

birth but could not. She names her Udaya because the child was born at sunrise and calls her the daughter of the River and the Forest, giving her a symbolic dimension that is carried forward in the references to her birth as Nativity and of her being a saviour. When Tilo kidnaps the child, she knows that the birth of this baby is the "beginning of something," that there was yet hope for the "Evil Weevil World" because "Miss Jebeen was come" (215). All who hear Revathi's story at Jannat Guest House connect with it, recognizing something of their own stories in it. Miss Udaya Jebeen becomes a child of "six fathers," the six policemen who raped Revathi and "three mothers," Revathi, Tilo and Anjum who the novel says "were stitched together by threads of light" (427). The child's connections with her land of birth and her birth-mother are left hanging as question marks. When she grows into a girl, the narrative asks, would "she get a sudden whiff of the heady scent of ripe Mahua that had infused the forest the day she was born?" (139). Or is that connection broken forever? But what seems certain to Anjum is that Miss Udaya Jebeen's presence in the midst of the community at Jannat Guest House is a promise of a good future, with the novel expressing the optimism that things would turn out right in the end "[b]ecause Miss Jebeen, Miss Udaya Jebeen, was come" (438). It is important to note, however, that the novel makes no attempt to justify this optimism. It is articulated in a mythic language and is left at that.

The novel is the author's apprehension of the victimhood of various constituencies in society. Bearing witness, to use Lyotard's phrase, in language is the only way to resist and break free of the hegemonic structures of the state. The animal in Lyotard, exemplified by the vulture in *The Ministry*, becomes the ultimate victim in its inability to bear witness. Unlike the animal whose victimhood is apprehended in the language provided by the novelist, the human protagonists of the novel must be able to find their own idioms too for their subjectivities in addition to what is brought in by the writer. This centralises the consciousness of language in the novel, making it inherent to the conception of characters. In her essay, "In What Language Does Rain Fall Over Tormented Cities?" Roy makes clear just how innate the understanding of the relationship between language, hegemony, and justice is to the novel:

Perhaps I shouldn't say this, but if a novel can have an enemy, then the enemy of this novel is the idea of "One nation, one religion, one language". As I composed the cover page of my manuscript, in place of the author's name I was tempted to write: "Translated from the original(s) by Arundhati Roy". *The Ministry* is a novel written in English but imagined in several languages . . . And so, in this novel of many languages, it is not only the author, but also

the characters themselves who swim around in an ocean of exquisite imperfection, who constantly translate for and to each other, who constantly speak across languages, and who constantly realize that people who speak the same language are not necessarily the ones who understand each other best (*Azadi* 13).

Injustice is apprehended by characters in myriad languages and communicated with each other in imperfect translations. Roy highlights in the essay the centrality of a linguistic awareness of their identities in the protagonists of the novel. Infant Aftab's complicated anatomy with both the male and the female reproductive organs is perceived by both her parents initially as a linguistic crisis. The mother, Jahanara Begum, faced with this gender confusion in her child's body, wonders if it was "possible to live outside language," because in Urdu, "the only language she knew, all things . . . had a gender" (8). While the narrator jocularly observes that Mulaqat Ali, a man with an Urdu couplet for every occasion, has no suitable couplet when faced with his child, in more serious tones is inserted into the narrative the historical currents of linguistic and religious politics that have determined Mulaqat Ali's marginalized position in modern India. As Roy observes in her essay, "It is when we meet Mulaqat Ali that we get our first hint of the fraught history of language that mirrors the fraught history of the Indian subcontinent" (36). The identification of Urdu as a Muslim language in modern India and its ghettoization is followed in the family history of Mulaqat Ali, who traces his lineage to the Mongol Emperor Changez Khan in thirteenth century. The ascendancy of Hindi and Sanskrit, and the weaponization of language in the Hindu nationalist politics is also brought out in Anjum's experience in the hands of the mob that kills Zakir Mian and leaves her alive because she is a *Hijra* (eunuch), but not before making her chant their slogan, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai! Vande Mataram! . . . Victory to Mother India! Salute the Mother!" (63). Later, in order to protect Zainab, her daughter from any possible mob violence in the future, Anjum teaches her a Sanskrit chant, the *Gayatri Mantra* that would enable them to pass off as Hindus.

Both the novelist and the characters participate in this process of finding idioms for these experiences. Roy also provides a rather dramatic metaphor for the difference in the use of language in her two novels: "I had to throw the language of *The God of Small Things* off a very tall building. And then go down (using the stairs) to gather up the shattered pieces. So was born *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" (32). The shattered pieces of language in *The Ministry* are not to be understood in terms of some syntactical or narrative experimentation by the author. The multiplicity and fragmentation implied by this image relates more meaningfully to

the need by the diverse set of subjects wronged by state to articulate their victimization in their own different tongues, and then to reach out to each other through their imperfect translations to create a sense of community. In order to create space for these multiple marginalized and victimized subjects, the author too needs to speak in these multiple "languages," because it is the imposition of one language which is after all the enemy. The different stories of the novel are of people who belong to different parts of the nation, and literally speak different languages. When Dr. Azad Bhartiya ends his reading of Revathy's letter which she signs off with a "Red Salute! Lal Salaam!" Anjum's "inadvertent, instinctive response" is to reply "Lal Salaam Aleikum," mixing the Marxist and the Urdu greetings into a new incongruous but inclusive one. The narrative sums up the responses of the listeners thus: "Each of the listeners recognized, in their separate ways, something of themselves and their own stories, their own Indo-Pak, in the story of this unknown, faraway woman who was no longer alive" (416). The difference of language is both a reason and a sign of their marginalization in a state that aspires to the condition of a unitary nationalism. The injustices of their lives, however, speak across different languages.

This idea of languages, or in Lyotard's words, "idioms" in which wrongs have to be apprehended, has more to do with form and structure of Roy's novel than with its actual prose. Has Roy been able to bear witness and find the correct idioms for her protagonists? Yes indeed, for how else would such a reading ensue but for the novel having achieved it? Has the work also achieved the perfect form for it? That is a hypothetical question that cannot be answered. But another question that can be asked is if such a form would have been possible for this novel. The very idea of dealing with subjects that do not have an assigned place within the normative structure of society except as victims, is to admit the possibility of "formlessness" in its telling, of any kind of closure in its structure. But in finding the idioms expressing wrongs and the desire to correct those wrongs, the novel succeeds powerfully, and it does so with a great deal of humour, wit, irony, and inventiveness.

As stated in the beginning, the novel tells the tale of diverse characters in different contexts of systemic social and political injustices which they cannot realistically hope to overcome. What justifies their simultaneous presence in the novel is this sense of being victimized by an unjust system. It is this shared sense of exclusion from the dominant structures that unites the protagonists in the novel, and becomes the justification for their coming together to the alternative space of the "paradise" in the graveyard. The creation of this alternative utopian space in the graveyard is a

fiction and while it generates a certain emotion and a sense of community, it only exists in its own fictional plane. Jannat Guest House and its environs are affectionately created as an oasis at the end of the novel. There is a "zoo" with multiple animals, the soil being a "compost pit of ancient provenance" effortlessly springs up a vegetable garden that in turn attracts several varieties of butterflies, and Tilo starts a school (399). So, the narrative concludes that "things were going well in the old graveyard," and Anjum can look back at Jannat Guest House "with a sense of contentment and accomplishment" (400, 438). The optimism sought to be generated at the end of the novel through the redemption promised by the birth of Miss Udaya Jebeen is also rooted in desire rather than any promise of real change.

Duniya, the dystopian world describing the social and political realities of contemporary India and *doosri Duniya*, the wished-for utopia for the victims exist at two different levels in the novel and are conceived and presented in two different registers. The first is based on keen political engagement that Roy also demonstrates in her non-fictional writings and the second is an emotional articulation of the only possible resolution for the protagonists, a paradise in a graveyard, given the total lack of any hope of transformation and change in the real world. So, while the young people making the documentary film on Protest and Resistance at Jantar Mantar ask different people to say for their recording, "Another world is possible (*doosri Duniya mumkin hai*)," Anjum, without any consciousness of irony, says, "We have come from there . . . from the other world (*Hum doosri Duniya se aaye hain*)" (110). There is neither the possibility nor an attempt to connect the two registers, the two contexts of the dystopia and the utopian space in the novel. The fragmentariness of the form of the novel may then be seen to mirror the disparate and fractured worlds of its protagonists, and an honest result of the author's attempt to find their idioms and bear witness to their wrongs.

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Politicizing the Popular and Popularizing the Political: Interrogating the Making and Negotiations of the Neo-liberal Female Subject in Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor*

Aneesha Puri

Abstract:

Feminists' most belligerent battle has been to secure equality with men while choosing, but a dissension seems to have widened between what is predominantly labelled as "academic feminism" and what is glorified and maligned in the same breath as "popular feminism." The patriarchal institutions and their manifold materializations have often re-furbished themselves to address the swift transmogrifications of realities and schools of thought owing to economic liberalisation and cultural globalisation. Therefore, they require resurrected counter-narratives with an even more nuanced understanding that can withstand and oppose the majoritarian ideology accompanying the neo-liberal subject-making in the urban, metropolitan cities of India. This paper purports to focus on the emergence of new paradigms of female subjectivities in what has been touted as one of the most celebrated Indian "chick-lits," Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008) by analysing the discursive discomfort which is inherent in the manufacturing of a heterosexual female subject that simultaneously co-opts and shuns feminism, through an analysis of the representation of the eponymous protagonist as she grapples with complicated and often, contradictory emotions.

Keywords: Heteronormativity; Intertextuality; Matrimania; Popular Feminism; Self-Surveillance.

The urbane and metropolitan cities of India appear to beckon with their razzmatazz of swanky lifestyles, promises of upward social mobility, infinite possibilities and plethora of choices only if one is supposedly gung-ho about them. The female millennials who have been the beneficiaries of

liberal feminist reforms, acknowledge their ever-increasing dependence on the world of the internet where the mind-boggling explosion seemingly diminishes barriers of highbrow and lowbrow culture and consequently, triggers a vast spectrum of conceptual possibilities and scope for critical engagement. While the mass consciousness still appears to be under the tutelage of moral conservatism and traditional hierarchies, a minuscule minority claims to have attained some form of freedom from the -isms (that are generally and stereotypically considered to reside in academic bastions) and prefer to invest their energy and effort to strengthen the pro-choice bandwagon, the quintessential embodiment of it being the 2015 "My Choice" video directed by Homi Adajania for Vogue, starring Deepika Padukone.

Though feminists' most crucial combat has been to secure an equal footing with men while choosing, a schism seems to have opened between what is dominantly understood to be "academic feminism" and what is celebrated and vilified in the same breath as "popular feminism." The patriarchal institutions and their multiple manifestations have often re-invented themselves to cater to rapidly transitioning realities and ideologies in the wake of economic liberalisation and cultural globalisation and therefore, necessitate revamped counter-narratives with an even more nuanced understanding that can resist the majoritarian homogenised worldview with a thrust on neo-liberal subject-making. Keeping the given socio-cultural climate in mind, this paper intends to draw attention to the emergence of new paradigms of female subjectivities in what has been touted as one of the most celebrated Indian "chick-lits", Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008) which has also recently been made into a movie starring the self-proclaimed queen of Indian "chick-flicks" - Sonam Kapoor. The idea is to critically scrutinise the discursive unease that accompanies the construction of the heterosexual female subject that simultaneously incorporates and abandons feminism by analysing the representation of the eponymous protagonist as she often juggles the complicated and contradictory emotions while navigating the labyrinthine terrains that have been made accessible and rendered visible in the wake of a reality that is saturated with media images and popular cultural references.

Many critics have been downright dismissive of the politics of "chick-lits" and contend that characters of "chick-lit" in spite of being in an advantageous position owing to the larger feminist struggles often assume those gains for granted in their retrogressive approaches to femininity (Dowd, 2001). However, as it is now increasingly being foregrounded, such a condescending approach and refusal to engage with the production, consumption and contestation of meanings in the bildungsroman

of the “chick-lit” protagonist(s) generate a very limited conceptualisation of the politics of femininity and feminism and demand new critical tools to grapple with the contemporary socio-economic milieu. Undoubtedly, the “chick-lit” phenomenon cannot be deconstructed by divorcing it from the notion of “choice” predicated on neo-liberal subject-making. A similar sense of self-awareness about the problematics of neo-liberalism and the manner, in which consumerist ideology has become inextricably intertwined with the notion of subject-making, pervades *The Zoya Factor*. As Inderpal Grewal rightly cautions against the blanket debunking of neo-liberalism that lead to “ a utopian search for the pure, uncommodified self or a modernist longing for the uncontaminated Other” (19), the intent in this paper is not to discover a pristine and uncontaminated exteriority vis-a-vis the manufacturing of neoliberal subjects, but to tease out potential avenues of resistances and moments of contradictions that rupture the broader narrative that represents the protagonist, Zoya and charts her romance with the captain of the Indian cricket team, Nikhil Khoda, in a somewhat Bollywood-like manner of the modern-day equivalent of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*.

Working as a mid-level client servicing executive in India’s largest advertising agency, Zoya’s character portrayal is premised upon self-deprecating humour and an ironic self-awareness that are considered very characteristic of the genre of “chick-lit.” She often quips about herself in the novel, “chubby-cheeked, twice-jilted, not-smart-enough-to-crack-the-CAT-status” (Chauhan 124). The first-person confessional tone of the narrative further bolsters the novel’s “chick-lit” credentials by concretely locating it in the spatio-temporal location of contemporary Delhi with an occasional deployment of *Hinglish* and generous popular culture references which are cheekily and self-referentially directed at all-knowing “chick-lit” readers who are assumed to be equally familiar with popular culture and are in a position to understand the inherently interdisciplinary nature of allusions ranging from Shahrukh Khan to Darth Vader, from the cultural capital supposedly inherent in South Delhi and blatantly missing from Karol Bagh, to Gotham City.

The rhetoric of happily-ever-after plays out slightly differently in this narrative compared to the plot of a traditional romance. The female protagonist, Zoya, maintains an ironic distance from love and regards herself as too sophisticated for the cliched plot of romance. She is very careful to disassociate herself from anything that would make her seem, in her own words, “uncool.” But the cynical consciousness that operates here is split between knowledge and desire. There is an awareness of the perils that could ensue as a consequence of too much investment in heteronormative

script that could easily transform into a story of female subordination. This kind of ironic self-awareness gets manifested when she often muses over the odds of Nikhil falling in love with her, "Okay, so I'd been ... 'ogling and Googling' Nikhil Khoda a bit. I'd checked out all his stats on the Net, proving myself to be a masochistic loser who obsessed about people who were super rude to them" (Chauhan 95). The cynical consciousness, however, represses this knowledge in favour of a possibility of heterosexual romance. What eventually gets ridiculed in the dry banter of this novel is the excess of sentiments that is a socio-cultural symptom of "uncultured" middle-class. Sentimentalism is tantamount to an inability to reason with clarity and if taken to its logical extreme, it would imply a lack of self-reflexive consciousness and ironic distance (Ebert 106). While like a typical "chick-lit" protagonist, Zoya, turns to her job to provide meaning and fulfilment, in spite of working at AWB (which is modelled on JWT) and all the glamour it holds, her job is full of drudgery and pays low as she often cribs "two lakh per annum." No wonder, in a moment of reverie and self-indulgence, Zoya muses: "Maybe I really was a Goddess of the pitch. I was born at the stroke of the auspicious hour... Maybe this was my ticket out of the boring, safe, middle-class life I'd lived so far. Maybe this was how I'd become rich and famous, appear on magazine covers, and have lean mean cricketers grovelling at my feet" (Chauhan 124).

The hyper and the over-the-top media obsession about celebrity weddings recently, be it *Virushka*, *DeepVeer* or *NiYanka*, have also significantly foregrounded not only the engrossment with marriages but also the ever-increasing emotional investment in the aspirational fairytale script which speaks volumes about not only gender but class politics. The unprecedented media hype could be labelled as one of the most severe cases in recent history of what has been called "matrimania" (DePaulo). This romanticised reclamation of heterosexual narrative has commercial as well as ideological implications and all of this gets tangled with the emotional economy and crucially affects how women juggle feminism and the gendered subjectivities that have been made accessible in the new millennium. It is important to delve deeper into the socio-economic flux that has enveloped the metropolitan cities recently, to make sense of the character portrayal of Zoya and her cultural resonance. Since the onset of the noughties, the urban middle-class heterosexual woman has suddenly metamorphosed into a hyper visible presence in popular culture. A new subjectivity for women seemed to be gaining cultural prominence in media culture (Taylor1). These women are the beneficiaries of liberal feminist reforms and their participation in the public sphere and capitalist avenues is taken for granted. Hollows and Moseley contend that "most

people become conscious of feminism through the way it is represented in popular culture," and "for many women of our generation, formative understanding of, and identifications with, feminist ideas have been almost exclusively within popular culture" (2). However, a single woman continues to be a source of anxiety but in novel and often, contradictory ways that simultaneously acknowledge and then eschew feminism. Singleness as a gendered form of difference gets manufactured and is then expected to manoeuvre the mainstream milieu through a means of "disciplining" in the Foucauldian sense. The intertextual network of mainstream culture comprises contradictory discourses around women which need to be put under critical scrutiny and laid bare. Hardly ever a single woman in popular culture is represented to be reconciled to her singleness, itself one of the significant ways in which the potential threats she supposedly embodies gets suppressed (Taylor 8-10). For all the revolutionary attempts to move on from the subservient, passive heroines bereft of any complexity and too willing to sacrifice their being at the altar of male affection, women's enfranchisement has barely attained completion in the actual sense. The crisis of navigating between the allure of traditional accoutrements of femininity and buzzwords of agency, constitute the dilemma of this novel's protagonist. Zoya ruminates, "People are always saying *so cute!* when they see me and grabbing my cheeks and squeezing them with gusto, which is okay when you're a moppet in red corduroy dungarees but not so good when you are a working woman ... and twenty-seven years old to boot. By that age, people should be more interested in squeezing your butt, right?" (Chauhan 3).

For a long time, popular feminism was, "dismayed in favour of an authentic feminism which is "elsewhere" (Brunsdon101), it is now becoming pretty obvious that mainstream media culture functions as one of the primary domains that constitutes and propagates feminism by often taking away the "sting" from it and rendering it more "palatable." Zoya is often critical of the institutionalized privileges of hyperfemininity and within the first-person narrative, romance and coupledness are not valorised in a simplistic manner especially when Zoya is juxtaposed with the Miss India-Universe who, unlike her, has mastered the art of investment in the heterosexual ideals of femininity:

So, what I did was, I got into the Miss India-Universe's room (her name was Ritu Raina, and she was heart-stoppingly beautiful: glossy ironed-hair, high-cheekbones and all). ... I did kind of wonder why she'd risked her life and flown Biman air to Dhaka then. 'Because it's another whole trip when he comes back to me all sweaty and flushed with victory,' she said, her eyes shining. 'I

feel like a prize then.' Okay, that was a pretty corny thing to say, but she was only nineteen, after all, and probably did not know any better. So I forgave her (Chauhan 82).

It is possible to recuperate the tensions and fissures from the margins and understand the narrative as a locus where multiple meanings jostle for supremacy. Comedy is strategically exploited to camouflage the protagonist's sloppy and clumsy demeanour during the progression of her life. In fact, humour arises when the ideals of feminism are often juxtaposed with the general vicissitudes and messiness of modern life. Reading *The Zoya Factor*, is equivalent to entering a carefully curated world of dreams and daydreams, with the threat of social blunders hovering around. But the stereotypical expectations associated with the genre of "chick-lit" ensure that the deconstructionist logic does not get too bleak. Of course, eventually a relationship with the captain of the Indian cricket team is foregrounded as a viable and teleological outcome. Though Zoya often indulges in male-bashing and underlines the troubles of modern dating and despite the lack of an overwhelmingly economic motive to marry, the enduring charm of "to be the mistress of Pemberley might be something" gets transformed into its modern equivalent of the fascination of dating the captain of Indian cricket team.

Though Zoya's unmarried status at the age of twenty seven, is not really a cause for celebration among her family and relatives and she is often sent to meet young eligible men from her caste (like a quintessential text seeped in neoliberalism, the novel as a whole is conspicuously silent about caste and obsessed with class), there is no overwhelming panic hovering over her to get married. As Zoya says:

My father likes to believe he's 'broad-minded.' He's kept the same standards for Zoravar and me right through school and college. He's cool with the fact that I'm still not married. He's proud that I'm working. I think he knows I've had boyfriends and stuff, and the policy we've been following since I was about seventeen is that he doesn't ask me about it and I don't tell him about it (Chauhan 137).

However, a new kind of panic assumes prominence in Zoya's life, as critics have highlighted that female subjects embedded in the logic of neoliberalism are inflicted with new kinds of anxiety - singleness (McRobbie 11). Consequently, they often feel the need to actively participate in disciplinary regimes associated with self-grooming and bodily improvements (Gill, 2007; Negra, 2009). Similarly, as a subject always in the process of becoming, Zoya not only wants to remedy her singleness but also her-

self which completely coincides with the neo-liberalist feminist rationale. For instance, she remarks, "That night I had a bad attack of oh-my-God-I-look-ugly-in-whatever-I-wear changed my clothes a million times and didn't get down to gym till twenty past eight" (Chauhan368). But though Zoya fails to completely extricate herself from the constant "self-surveillance," she often critiques the restrictive and gendered grooming that women must do in order to make themselves attractive objects of consumption in the dating market. This is what many critics following Zizek have labelled as an informed involvement in many social performances that position one in a subordinate status even though one is consciously aware of this ideological indoctrination (Dorney13). As Zizek puts it, "they know very well what they are doing, but still they are doing it" (29). This affective investment becomes all the more pronounced in case of discursive formations surrounding the dominant narratives of love and romance. Zoya, like a typical beneficiary of liberalism often questions how fitting domestic ideologies are to her current lifestyle and often wonders about her own ability to live up to the prescribed standard or her ability to achieve those sentiments associated with domesticity when she imagines herself married and leading a typical middle-class lifestyle with a man found by her relatives:

I had a sudden vision of Kattu and me at a honeymoon hotel in Goa, him all cocky and expansive in swimming trunks...And me, with *sindoor* in my hair, a *mangalsutra* dangling demurely, modestly encased in a prim *salwaar kameez*...Later...we would...make a couple of Kattu-like kids. I would feed them every single meal by hand, like a good mother should. Naturally, I would have to give up my job, start wearing long *kurtis* to hide my flabby, scarred -by-a-million-stretch-marks tummy....(Chauhan 130).

She is quick to snap out of this nightmarish vision and announce that "I wanted excitement. I wanted adventure. I wanted out" (Chauhan 130). Educated in the broader tenets of feminism, Zoya is sexually liberated (for instance, when she gazes upon Nikhil Khoda's shirtless chest as a desiring subject and calls it "totally biteable, sculpted toffee, awesome," (Chauhan 47)) and financially independent (even though the job for all its glamour does not pay very well) and seemingly autonomous. Through pedagogy performed by a vast array of socio-cultural apparatuses, women like Zoya are often taught how to perfect the process of becoming a "woman" and this ceaseless act promises opportunities for constantly bettering oneself (Negra 5). The concretisation of consumerism along with thrust on self-presentation exploits the idea of "becoming" a woman for the ever-expanding consumer industries (Gill5). This is often intermeshed with

a tendency to invoke the holy trinity of what is dubbed as neo-feminism - choice, individual agency and consumerism. This highlights a shift from the goal of self-fulfilment propagated by the second-wave of feminism which also placed a lot of onus on social responsibility. Au contraire, the concern of neo-feminism is with the individual woman's self-advancement (Radner9). On multiple occasions, Zoya, in moments of self-introspection mobilises the catchphrases of self-sufficiency and self-respect rather than waiting for male validation. For instance, when she tries to raise her spirits by saying "C'mon, snap out of it, stop brooding, do the bungee. Don't let other people take control over your happiness..." (Chauhan233). However, she frequently finds herself consumed by insecurities and low self-esteem in spite of her intermittent proclamations of happily unmarried status. One minute she proclaims "Life suddenly seemed flat" (Chauhan 214), the very next minute, "Just then my phone beeped and I looked down and saw a message flash...Instantly the world became a better place" (Chauhan216-217). All it takes is a text from her male love interest to undercut the precarity of her seeming agentiality.

The plot deploys the usual cliches of an insecure and a generally well-meaning woman who makes interesting errors due to her inherently bumbling personality (which highlights the dual nature of the protagonist as both exceptional yet ordinary) and traces the trajectory of her encounters with a difficult and elusive man (who in the end turns out to be protecting her in a quintessentially Darcy-like but not in an overbearingly patriarchal manner). Zoya does not overtly practise self-effacement and abnegation like the traditional heroines of romance novels. But it is significant to factor in that only in moments of romantic bliss and male validation, Zoya actually gets an ego-boost and given the narrative logic, the male attention is coming from none other than the captain of the Indian cricket team who literally and metaphorically holds the key to a seemingly long life of uninterrupted luxury and hopefully love too and this becomes overwhelmingly obvious when the novel reaches its closure and he visits her and says "My crores are your crores" (Chauhan508). So even though being comically illiterate in cricket, before meeting Nikhil for the first time for the ad shoot, Zoya thinks of him not as the cricket captain, but as the guy "with a cute butt," Nikhil Khodha's class privilege and considerable wealth and the eventual unfolding of their romance has ideological implications for heterosexual power dynamics.

While the distinctive trait of the narrative trajectory is its ability to make fun of itself, while simultaneously, perpetuating the subject of its mockery, there is a need to re-examine agency in the context of deconstructed identities as well as commodification of feminism. As Gill argues that the

fact that women are “required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct and to present their actions as freely chosen” (Gill and Scharff7) embodies the quintessential subjects of neo-liberalism. Zoya for all her *woke* attitude, is far from the angry voice of female dissent who is trying to turn patriarchy upside down. But the question arises as to how to study the Catch-22s of the contemporary milieu in which feminist tenets have seeped into the mainstream media and are often voiced in potentially paradoxical ways. Thoroughly marked and informed by interdiscursivity and intertextuality, feminism has come to embody a multiplicity of meanings now and it is difficult and not even desirable to pin it down to a narrow definition because the impact of patriarchal institutions varies depending on the location and positionality of the subject in the neo-liberal scheme of things.

In spite of many flaws and risks of co-optation by market logic and commodity culture, what makes *The Zoya Factor* interesting is that it actively, though a bit self-critically, participates in neo-liberal ethos and frequently blurs the boundaries between academia, media and popular culture and highlights both the glories and challenges for contemporary feminist politics. While it is definitely crucial to pay attention to “a shift from an external, male-judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze” (Gill 258), it is also paramount to understand that it is a time for both hope and anxiety as the future manifestations of what one understands by “popular feminism” cannot be predicted in advance and for these very reasons it should not be brushed aside without any critical engagement, especially in a country where violence against women has assumed an unbelievably high magnitude both as an index and consequence of denial of “choice.” The situation demands not an outright dismissal but a widening and diversification of the parameters of “popular feminism” by unpacking the connotative aspects of both the words - “popular” and “feminism” and their intersection. Most importantly, there is an urgent need to understand identities, as a dynamic process in a continuous state of negotiation with their socio-cultural and political environment and always necessarily characterised by ambivalence and contradictory rhythms

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A Study of the New Woman in Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe*

Dipak Giri

Abstract

Among those post modern Indian novelists who deny the role of female subalternity to male hegemony, Anita Nair is the most celebrated name. Akhila, the female protagonist in Nair's *Ladies Coupe* attains the status of new woman rising above the subaltern status of womanhood. However, this change comes over her not in a sudden occurrence of momentary realization but by a long evolutionary process of the self which works when she meets five women of different age, class, and experience in a ladies coupe during the course of her journey from Bangalore to Kanyakumari. The stories of these five women prove eye opener to her. This present paper endeavours to bring into surface the process of transformation taken place in Akhila, the narrator cum protagonist in Nair's *Ladies Coupe* along with her fellow passengers from silent subaltern to strong rebel.

Keywords: Hegemony; Modern; New Woman; Patriarchy; Subaltern; Womanhood.

The term 'New Woman' denotes to that class of women who set themselves free from the conventional image of womanhood to the modern new women. So far as Indian literature is concerned, it had long been confined within the patriarchal image of womanhood and only few years ago the new and modern image of womanhood came to pass due to appearance of new generation of women novelists who took everything under the subject of scrutiny through their writings. Now the old and traditional image of womanhood as conceived down the long ages based on the essentialist point of view that it is socio-culturally constructed and attains its fulfillment, not by the anatomy of body but by the complex process of socio-cultural factors and conditioning as brought upon by the practices and norms of patriarchy, is slowly on a way of being faded out in the main stream literature and in its stead, a wholly transfigured image of modern new woman is on its way bit by bit to be emerged. Endorsing the cause

of womanhood through their writings, these new generations of women novelists have ventured to guide and lead their female characters to a position of distinctiveness through their bit by bit transition and transformation. Among these women novelists of present generation, Anita Nair is the most celebrated name. Instead of being dominated by male value structure, Nair's women characters are completely free and live on their own. They hardly sacrifice anything that comes on their way of freedom. Out of tradition they emerge completely as new and modern women who know how to challenge the male hegemony. In this perspective, Nair's masterpiece *Ladies Coupe* is an interesting study as regards female emancipation from age old stereotypical image to modern new woman.

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* is about an abrupt meeting that has taken place by chance among six women of varied age, class, and experiences - Akhilandeshwari, Margaret Paulraj, Janaki Prabhakar, Praba Devi, Sheela Vasudevan, and Marikolanthu in the Ladies Coupe, a reserve second compartment for women which is generally found at the tail's end of Indian Railways. They tell their stories with an intention to help Akhila, the narrator cum protagonist, in finding an answer for her constant arising question in the upper layer of her mind, always fresh and painful : "Can a woman live by herself" (Nair 21). When the novel starts we get Akhila, the protagonist caught between personal and family interests sacrificing the former for the later. However, she transforms into a changed personality when the novel comes to its closing. Doubts and confusions revolving round her initial question reaches to its solution only at the end. Akhila's train journey appears more than a common journey by a train. It finally turns from common to the evolutionary journey of the self, the end of which offers a certain self-confidence over her confused and doubtful situation and she transforms into a complete changed woman.

Protest for emancipation from their marginalization is very common in almost all the female characters in Nair's *Ladies Coupe*. Akhila, a torn image of typical Indian womanhood, undecided at the initial becomes resolute at the end. The self same tone of Akhila's protest against marginalization is also found among those five characters whom Akhila meets in the ladies coupe and who play a very deciding role in her life. Their stories are eye-opener to her. Though Akhila is the main narrator of the novel, the role of other five characters in the ladies coupe is equally important to the thematic design of the novel. They not only contribute to the development of the novel but also help in transforming the protagonist from passivity to action. Each chapter of the novel is devoted to one of these characters' story. The novel tells us how these women come out from traditional false

belief to hard core reality. "The manner in which Nair relates these transformations," as Geeta Doctor observes in her article "Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe: A brilliant evocation of sisterhood on the move" published in the newspaper "India Today," is in turn revelatory and redeeming" (Doctor).

Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* narrates the story of Akhila's self-discovery. The more the narrative progresses, the more Akhila, the central character reaches to self-realization. Akhila, aged 45, still unmarried, presently working as an income tax clerk is a fragmented character between her personal desire and her duty towards her family. She has been bearing the load of her family since her father's death, as if it has become her final goal in her life beyond which she has no life of her. She is the breadwinner of the family ever since her father's death but still her position in the family is overlooked. She cares for everyone but no one takes a notice to her. Her presence is left unnoticed. Even her identity has become questionable. She is always addressed with "someone else's identity: Chandra's daughter, Narayana's Akka, Priya's aunt, Murthy's sister-in-law" (Nair 201) and her wish to be addressed with her true and real name always remains unfulfilled. Akhila after her brothers have got jobs hopes, "the iron bands around her chest begin to loosen: Dare I breathe again? Dare I dream again? Now that the boys are men, can I start feeling like a woman again?" (Ibid 77) But no change comes over her situation. Both brothers get married but "No one could fault with his choice and there was nothing anyone could say except perhaps - Don't you think you should wait for your elder sister to get married before you think of a wife and a family? But who was to mouth this rebuke?" (Ibid) In spite of her seniority among children of the family and her role as a sole breadwinner of the family, she is neglected and she has no decision of her in the family. She has to wait for permissions from her younger ones for her every decision and when Akhila argues against it, Amma says, "You might be older but you are a woman and they are the men of the family" (Ibid 150). Akhila is against all of these and wishes to live on her own but helpless in her present situation which demands opposite to her wishes.

However, Anita Nair never intends to show her protagonist a subaltern who dares to go against tradition and male hegemony. "Anita Nair refers to the avatar of the Devi Akhilandeswari to insist on the many headed but unitary subjectivity of women" (Myles 128). When Akhila manages a one-way ticket to Kanyakumari, she determines, for the first time in her whole life, to run away from all and everything that her conservative traditional family has shackled her to, she begins coming to her own being. "So this then is Akhila. Forty five years old. Sans rose - coloured spectacles. Sans husband, children, home and family.

Dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching to connect" (Nair 2). This is the exact mark of beginning for a journey towards self-realization which reaches to its culmination when she finishes her journey listening to all the stories told by five women in the ladies coupe from different perspectives. When Akhila gets down at Kanyakumari after finishing her journey from Bangalore, she is completely a changed woman. Shadowy clouds of doubt and confusion have removed from her life and she welcomes the sunny and cheerful day waiting for her. She discovers her lost self and her desire for her own life is strengthened. She restores her lost love Hari and emerges out as a new woman defying patriarchy and subverting all those age old ideals based on it. She becomes completely free to fly in the wide open sky.

Margaret, one of the fellow passengers in the ladies coupe is a representative figure of those women who are forced to lose their self-identity and subordinated to the subaltern status by male hegemony. Margaret, a girl of brilliant academic career wants to do Ph. D. but her husband Ebenezer Plauraj compels her to do B.Ed. Her husband is the final decider of her every action. At the initial stage she bears everything, though she feels a little hurt on her husband's behaviour. But the situation goes beyond her expectation when her husband forces her to abort the baby: "I have spoken to the Doctor at length about this and she said there was nothing to fear. At seven weeks, that thing in your uterus is little more than a zygote" (Ibid 105). Listening to the substitute word zygote used for the baby Margaret looks up in surprise how Paulraj can use scientific terms for their baby. After more debate Margaret agrees for abortion with broken heart. "Men tend to take abortion lightly; they regard it as one of the numerous hazards imposed on women by malignant nature" (Beauvoir 508). She always thinks about her baby day and night during her pregnancy. After abortion, she finds herself unable to forget her baby. The image of her husband starts to appear before her as a criminal. She loses all her faith and love for her husband. "Abortion is considered a revolting crime to which it is indecent even to refer" (Ibid 502). Now Margaret no longer remains a woman to be made dance on her husband tunes. Previously her love for him screened her eyes from all his faults. Although hurt very often, she would say, "He was Ebe. My Ebe. He was right. He was always right" (Nair 109). But now she is completely a changed woman. She hates her husband who has killed her innocent baby cruelly and forces her to share the crime equally. "I hate him. I hate him" (Ibid 131). The crucial point in her life turns up when she observes flotsam golden fish dead. She becomes resolute to live on her own instead of leading a life like a flotsam dead fish. She becomes a vengeful against her husband, the murderer of her baby instead of remaining silent and irresolute. She starts to work

silently over her vengeful design. She avenges cleverly against her husband. She uses her husband's weaknesses for sex and tasty foods as her weapons and makes her husband fatty feeding him rich and tasty stuffs which tell upon his health and make him completely dependent on her wife. A reversal of situation takes place in her life regarding their relationship. Now she shifts from her role of objectivity to subjectivity. Now she no longer seeks her husband's consent about her personal matters. For the second time she becomes pregnant and gives birth a baby girl. Now she is happy as her long cherished desire finally comes true. As Dr.T. Vara Lakshmi observes, "By making him fat...Margaret gains self-esteem by eroding Ebe's self-esteem" (Varalakshmi 69).

The youngest of six women is Sheela Vasudevan, a girl of fourteen years who gathers a hard experience of life before coming to the age of maturity. She is made the object of sexual abuse when one of her friends' fathers seeks opportunity to seduce her. Through the story of Sheela, Anita Nair presents how insecure a girl child in our present society is. What to say an adult woman, even a teenage girl is not beyond the reach of a man's lustful and amorous design. The story of Sheela reveals the darker side of male dominated society which considers a woman, be it child or completely adult nothing but an object to be used only to gratify sexual hunger of men. With a superb art of story-telling Nair sheds light on the sexual abuse commonly faced by girl children by perverse adult men. The hand of male hegemony is so long that it hardly releases a girl just coming into her being from becoming sexually subaltern. However, Sheela is not like an average girl child who would bear injustice silently. After this unforgettable nightmarish incident Sheela ponders over how to save her next time from Nazar's advances. Since then she becomes completely alert about her safety before going to her friend's house. "Thereafter Sheela mopped her face with a hanky each time she entered Hasina's home" (Ibid 66). But when she feels that Nazar is still trying to touch her and her friend Hasina and Hasina's mother, in spite of understanding the whole matter appear as helpless, she stops going to her friend's house. Nair has employed the technique of telling a story within a story to show the destructive result of child abuse through inventing the story of Celine within the story of Sheela. Celine lost her virginity before becoming a complete virgin in the true sense of the term. One of Celine's father's friends made her pregnant before she could have crossed the threshold of girlish stage. To save family from stigma, Celine's father and her family chose a secured place to abort the unwanted pregnancy lest the matter should become a public issue. Nair has brought women of all ages from child to adult, from maiden to married together in a single reserved coupe of a train only to acquaint us that a woman is not free ever since her birth. What Simone De Beauvoir

has said about woman is true to life of both Sheela and Celine: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," (Beauvoir 87), meaning that a woman suffers from identity crisis and her identity as a woman is defined by the society in which she is and is guided by the norms and system completely regulated by the forces of patriarchy. Sheela's story along with giving a message of positivity in the air of negativity that a girl must protest herself from becoming sexual subaltern at the hand of male hegemony, also throws dark light on those men who are beast in the image of man, insensitive to feminine sensibility caring little to spoil a girl child only to gratify their sexual instincts.

The brutal shape of male hegemony over female subalternity is delineated through the story of Marikolanthu. Marikolanthu, a thirty-one years aged old woman and an unwed mother from rural background is the most pathetic figure in the novel. Anita Nair, with a sharp psychological insight, marvelously employs Marikolanthu's narrative to throw commentary on sexual abuse, torture and exploitation of Indian women from rural background. Marikolanthu's story reminds her all chance meetings with men and reaches to the conclusion that almost all men try to seek advantage when they find women undergoing situations like loneliness, ignorance, illiteracy, dependence and frustration. Marikolanthu passes through humiliation and debasement, which brings adverse result in ignoring her son Muthu, one who has got out of many attempts of abortion. He is the product of her forced seduction by Murugesan, one of the Chettiar's sons, a member of the richest families where her mother toils as a cook. She takes the charge of looking after her house when her mother runs errands; later when her mother undergoes serious illness, she is taken to the Chettiar's house to fill the vacant position of her mother. There, she is employed with the task of taking care of a child of Sujata Akka who is the daughter-in-law of Chettiar. There grows a deep and intimate lesbian relationship sooner than later between Marikolanthu, one who is deprived of the society in which she lives and Sujata Akka, other who is deprived of her husband whom she has married. There she becomes the victim of Sujata Akka's husband's sexual exploitation. When Sujata Akka smells the air of this relationship, she pushes Marikolanthu out of her household instead of punishing her husband for his wrong doing to her. Marikolanthu's strong dislike and aversion for the physical torture and brutality forcibly attempted on her gives birth in her an attitude of indifference and hatefulness to her son Muthu. The culminating point in her life turns up only when she notices her son Muthu tending the burning pyre of Murugesan's dead body. She is deeply shocked on realizing that she is responsible for pushing her son to a very low position for hardly any fault of his and she feels deeply ashamed of her aversion for her

son Muthu and decides to care the child with motherly love and affection. Her personality undergoes a radical change. She decides never to marry and fixes her eye only at her son Muthu. She attains the higher status of motherhood and turns her face away from the subaltern status of womanhood opposing the matrimonial tie. Her motherly state truly confirms to Simone De Beauvoir: "Becoming a mother in her turn, the woman in a sense takes the place of her own mother: it means complete emancipation for her" (Ibid 511).

Janaki who is the oldest of all six women coming in contact to each other in the ladiescoupe, is a disciplined daughter, a faithful wife and a doting mother all at a time. She remains subaltern throughout her life from her father's house as a depending daughter to husband's house as a depending wife and then to her son's house as a depending mother. Everywhere her status is considered below men. "First there was my father and brothers; then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son, waiting to take off from where his father left off. A woman like me ends up being fragile. Our men treat us like princess" (Nair 22-23). Her suppressed sparks of discontents transform into violent rage only when she notices the domineering attitude of her husband to her grown up son. She opposes her husband Prabhakar, "You just want to control him. You want to control everybody. You want everyone to do your bidding" (Ibid 30). She changes herself from an unvoiced subaltern image of womanhood to a voiced lady of protest.

Prabha Devi is a typical example of a woman generally seen in Indian household. Through the character portrayal of Prabha, Anita Nair shows how deep the impact of subaltern status of womanhood is. It curses a woman's life giving a life that is not hers. It makes her completely timid and unidentified. Prabha's self has become questionable in her conjugal life and her very self becomes free from timidity and gets recognition and independency only after It is one day, while watching the swimming pool that Prabha settles her mind on regaining self and identity. Learning swimming, "she triumphs over her innate timidity and gains peak experience of supreme content" (Varalakshmi 69). While sliding into the swimming pool, she comes in contact with water that touches her body and for this she feels an exciting experience of liberation. For a long time she has been ignored the bliss of being herself. Prabha Devi is the representative of those women who are confined into the four walls eagerly waiting for the day when their hopes to get liberated come to be realized. Prabha Devi arrives at the self - actualization by acquiring knowledge of swimming on her own out of great longing.

No other character in Nair's *Ladies Coupe* influences Akhila's life as strong-

ly as Akhila's childhood friend Karpagam does to her. The role of Karpagam is necessarily needed to the accomplishment of the thematic design of the novel. She appears, as though she is the mouthpiece of Nair herself. Karpagam, although a widow, puts on kumkum and colourful cloths against age old tradition. She gives stress over her personal choices coming against the code of patriarchy when she asserts, "I don't care what my family or anyone thinks. I am who I am. And I have as much right as anyone else to live as I choose. Tell me didn't we as young girls wear colourful clothes and jewellery and a bottu? It has nothing to do with whether she is married or not and whether her husband is alive or dead. Who made these laws anyway? Some man who couldn't bear the thought that in spite of his death, his wife continued to be attractive to other men" (Ibid 202). Her defiance appears to be almost unequalled to many when she suggests Akhila how a woman should lead her life: "I live alone. I have for many years now. We are strong, Akhi. Whatever you think you want to. Live alone. Build a life for yourself where your needs come first" (Ibid 202).

All these women are opposite to what Spivak asserts in her most celebrated book "Can the subaltern Speak?", "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 271-313). Anita Nair's female protagonist Akhila along with all other five characters in *Ladies Coupe* come out from the shadowy life of subalternity challenging male hegemony. Through reversal role of these female characters in terms of subalternity, Anita Nair forces us to think and reconsider the long run institution of patriarchy and its value structure from rationalistic viewpoint instead of in what form they are actually existing.

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Questioning Victorian Mores in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*

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Abstract

The present paper explores Lewis Carroll's attempt to question the dominant mores of the Victorian era through his books *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). Carroll wrote at a time when the world was changing in the wake of industrialisation and capitalism. Consequently, respect for the relative autonomy of the animal kingdom as well as the tenets of co-existence with them were beginning to diminish. The paper argues that despite living in an era which was widely regarded to be the epitome of correct behaviour, Carroll had the courage to interrogate its very norms.

Keywords: Animal kingdom; Capitalism; Industrialisation; Victorian mores.

As a plural noun, the *Lexico Dictionary* defines the term 'mores' as the "essential or characteristic customs and conventions of a society or community" ("Mores"). On the other hand, Abercrombie et al. are of the view that 'mores' are "traditional, prescriptive standards which maintain the social group by regulating individual behaviour" ("Mores" 255). However, it was American sociologist William Graham Sumner (1840-1910) who coined the term 'mores' in his book *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (1906). Socio-cultural mores go a long way in sculpting the mindsets of children to suit the needs of the dominant power structure. Thus, this paper attempts to critically analyse ways in which Lewis Carroll tries to question the dominant mores of the Victorian era through his books *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*.

Common human needs such as yearnings for affection, hunger and fear

bring individuals to work together in groups, proving to be mutually advantageous. When such a process is carried out in great numbers in order to satisfy larger interests, it appropriates the form of 'folkways'. A characteristic feature of 'folkways', another term coined by Sumner, is that it gets repeated constantly and its occurrence is fairly widespread. Furthermore, 'folkways' develop into 'mores' when two additional ideas are added to them: first, the awareness of right and wrong; and second, the policy of group welfare. "When the elements of truth and right are developed into doctrines of welfare, the folkways are raised to another plane. They then become capable of producing inferences, developing into new forms, and extending their constructive influence over men and society. Then we call them the [*sic*] mores", writes Sumner (30). While breaking a folkway may lead one to becoming an object of ridicule, including punitive action in some form, the repercussions emanating from violating mores are far more severe.

Historically, Sumner argues that the Romans implied the term 'mores' to mean customs in the widest sense containing a wealth of meaning "including the notion that customs served welfare, and had traditional and mystic sanction, so that they were properly authoritative and sacred" (37). Strangely, our modern society has not only "lost these words" but also "the significant suggestions which inhere in them" (Sumner 37). In this context, Sumner also states that the "logic of one age is not that of another", therefore, an important purpose of studying mores is "to learn to discern in them the operation of traditional error, prevailing dogmas, logical fallacy, delusion, and current false estimates of goods worth striving for" (Sumner 33). As circumstances change with time and humankind adapts itself to such changes, folkways also transform. This is how "new philosophies and ethical rules are invented to try to justify the new ways" (Sumner 36). Thus, those mores which have been generated over a period of time to "suit the system of great secular states, world commerce, credit institutions, contract wages and rent, emigration to outlying continents, etc.", eventually, "become the norm for the whole body of usages, manners, ideas, faiths, customs, and institutions which embrace the whole life of a society and characterize [*sic*] an historical epoch" (Sumner 36). As the folkways are repeated, they become "coercive" where everyone is "forced to conform" so as to gain control over society (Sumner 38). These folkways then appear to be true and fair, paving the way for them to give rise to mores as measures of social welfare (in terms of good/bad and right/wrong).

Mores and folkways are taught primarily through socialisation, that is, through interactions within the family, with friends or at school – through the interplay among students, teachers and peers. Children, in a social

setup, are generally treated as receptacles wherein the dominant socio-cultural mores are drilled. Education and other pedagogical tools can be considered as one of the many means to achieve this end. Therefore, this paper shall attempt to study the manner in which Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books critically interrogate the 'mores' of the Victorian era. Moreover, for the purpose of this paper, 'mores' are not delimited to mean just the customs and conventions of a social group in a particular time-period. Rather, they include education, the teaching-learning process, modes of instruction and the canon being produced at the time since the predominant pedagogical ideas of a specific age are adopted with the view of churning out young minds with pre-given paradigms.

The Victorian age was caught at the cusp of 'Doubt and Faith' and 'the Victorian Compromise'. It was a time of great social, cultural, economic, religious and political upheaval. Darwin's (1809-1882) seminal work, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and the spirit of scientific enquiry had been instrumental in upending the age-old belief in the moral authority of the Church. Accomplishments in science, technology and engineering brought about a crisis in the Christian faith. Where, on the one hand, rapid expansion of communications such as the railways, the steamships and the invention of the telegraph system went a long way in propelling England towards economic progress; on the other, the Victorians were undergoing immense socio-psychological and moral strain. Though the British Empire was at its zenith, there were several debilitating factors to contend with at home – a rising population, unemployment, mass migration to the cities, urban squalor, the Irish Famine (1845-49), among other things. This came to be known as the Victorian Compromise. What was perhaps more significant was that, unlike their predecessors, the Victorians had come to the realisation that both doubt and faith could go hand-in-hand, along with deliberation, discussion and debate. In keeping with this spirit and in their efforts "to meet the challenge of their time, the Victorian poets, essayists, and novelists often cut across traditional genres; indeed, they may be regarded as pioneers since they responded to the many problems of their age by forging new, or at least unusual combinations of old, genres" [sic] (Timko 623-24). Where there is Matthew Arnold's (1822-1888) "Dover Beach", highlighting the Victorian loss of spiritual truth; there is also Gerard Manley Hopkins's (1844-1889) "God's Grandeur", filling one with a sense of hope for a better world. The poetry of Tennyson (1809-1892) was a poignant admixture of wistfulness reflecting the crisis of the age. Robert Browning's (1812-1889) unique use of the dramatic monologue called attention to the extent of moral ambivalence prevalent in the Victorian society.

Commenting on the status of children's literature in the Victorian Age, Deborah Thacker claims that the Victorians imagined the Romantic notion of childhood to be more spiritual. Thus, children's books written in the Victorian period often included "multilayered fantasies, which revealed more about the way societies *imagined* childhood, perhaps, than about the reading experiences of *actual* children" [sic] (Thacker 41). The child protagonists were increasingly projected as pure, virtuous and angelic juxtaposed against a wicked society, be it little Oliver in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (serialised 1837-1839; published 1839); young David in Dickens' *David Copperfield* (serialised 1849-1850; published 1850); Jane in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or little Eva in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) – all set up as foils, more or less, to a cruel and callous adult world. It appeared as if the Victorians, through literature, were looking to remedy the ills that plagued their society. "While this might not be true of actual child readers, the need to retain an image of the child as some kind of ideal reader can be seen as a motivating force in much of the classic children's literature of the period", Thacker comments further (42).

Victorian Britain saw a surge in child labour with children as young as eight and a half being made to work in factories or in mines. In the factories, children started as "piecers, standing at the spinning machines repairing breaks in the thread" or as "scavengers, crawling beneath the machinery to clear it of dirt, dust or anything else that might disturb the mechanism" (Griffin "Child Labour"). In coal mines, children began by "minding the trap doors, picking out coals at the pit mouth, or by carrying picks for the miners" (Griffin "Child Labour"). Needless to say, whether in rural or in urban areas, children were made to labour long hours, under miserable, and often dangerous, conditions. The state of their appalling working conditions especially outraged two literary figures of the time – Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) and Charles Dickens (1812-1870). Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and Barrett Browning's famous poem "The Cry of the Children" (1844) responded powerfully to the horrible working conditions of these children which were brought to light by a parliamentary report on child labour in 1843. The combined work of Dickens and Barrett Browning, along with that of others such as Charles Kingsley's (1819-1875) *Water-Babies* (1863), helped raise awareness regarding this prevailing malaise. Consequently, mounting public pressure went a long way in garnering support for Lord Shaftesbury's "Ten Hours Bill" in Parliament, known as the Factory Act of 1847.

Some texts written for children in this period even pandered to the image of the Empire. Writers such as R.M. Ballantyne (1825-1894), H. Rider Haggard (1856-1925) and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) painted a glorious

picture of the British Empire through their quest-narratives and adventure stories, replete with the didactic thread of the Victorian era. Thus, it becomes all the more significant to find writers such as Lewis Carroll, who “logically” disrupt “certain givens, such as time, place and the meaning of language”, belonging to the same epoch and challenging the dominant stereotypes from being reinforced (Webb 63).

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, was born on January 27, 1832 in Daresbury, Cheshire to Reverend Charles Dodgson and his wife, Frances Jane Lutwidge. Upon completing his higher education at Christ Church in Oxford, he was appointed as a lecturer in Mathematics in 1855, a post that he held until 1881. Dodgson was subsequently ordained deacon in 1862. In 1865, his classic, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, saw the light of day, followed by *Through the Looking-Glass And What Alice Found There* (1871). Since both the texts have Alice as their child-protagonist, therefore, they are together referred to as the *Alice* books. In 1881, Dodgson even resigned from his lectureship at Oxford to give more time to his writing. Though he continued to write, nothing could rival the success of his *Alice* books.

By 1862, the time of the famous boating trip down River Thames, which subsequently led to the creation of *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* [sic], Dodgson had been at Christ Church for eleven years, seven of which as a lecturer in mathematics. Although he had already published books, articles and papers relating to his field; for his lesser academic work, Dodgson chose the pen name of ‘Lewis Carroll’ around the year 1856. In this paper, henceforth, Dodgson will be referred to by his pen name, Lewis Carroll.

On July 4, 1862, Carroll, along with a friend, Reverend Robinson Duckworth, was on a picnic with the three daughters of Henry Liddell, the Dean at Christ Church. The idea of the story came to Carroll, while rowing up the Thames, because the girls insisted upon hearing a story from him. Months later, at Alice’s insistence, Carroll strove to recapture the story in all its detail. The result was a hand-written manuscript replete with hand-made sketches, gifted to Alice Liddell for the Christmas of 1864. The lone copy, lying at the Liddells’, was so captivating that Carroll was encouraged to publish the story in a more permanent form. In order to prepare the book for publication, the author spent considerable time re-working certain parts and adding more to the original story. Where *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* consisted of only four chapters, its subsequent version, read the world over, comprised of twelve chapters. The first printed edition of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* came out in 1865. Commenting upon Carroll’s shyness and his skills as a writer, Austin Warren avers that

the author “could speak out, become Carroll, only under the mask of the story-teller” [sic] (337).

Though the gap between the publication of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* was only six years, yet Victorian England was changing continually. By 1871, the country had become more affluent, more extravagantly wasteful and a little more frenzied in pace. Carroll’s interests had also changed. He had become more attuned towards politics and the events occurring around him. It appears as if Carroll, like many of his fellow countrymen, was disillusioned by the failed promise of a contented life through industrial progress. Undoubtedly, though technology did make life more comfortable, but the consequent by-product was loneliness and isolation of the individual. Moreover, humankind was increasingly being alienated from nature and other living beings. These were matters of concern for Carroll and, perhaps, he wished his readers also to be cognisant of such issues.

The next section of the paper attempts to study education and the prevalent mores as found in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* in the context of the Victorian age.

One of the guiding ideas that propelled the Victorian era was the concept of Utilitarianism. It was a philosophical concept widely related to Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), though Hobbes, Locke and Hume can also be regarded as its forerunners. Bentham, in his book, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), states that utility is “that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness ... to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered”, irrespective of whether the concerned ‘party’ is a community or an individual (2). Additionally, he elucidates that the principle of utility is that “which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it, appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question” [sic] (Bentham 2). For each individual, according to Bentham, happiness is equivalent to pleasure and unhappiness to pain. The human endeavour centres round maximising pleasure and minimising pain.

Further, with reference to utilitarianism, Abercrombie et al. claim that “[i]ts main impact on the social sciences has been via its model of social action in which individuals rationally pursue their own self-interests, and its conception of society as the aggregation of atomized [sic] individuals united by self-interest” (“Utilitarianism” 407). The concept has been used

in various disciplines like Economics, Sociology as well as Behavioural Psychology. The "utilitarian approach suggests that it is in the self-interest of all individuals to maintain social order, particularly in complex societies where the DIVISION OF LABOUR is high and the people are interdependent. UTILITARIANISM has had less influence on social than on economic theory..." , opine Abercrombie et al. [*sic*] ("Social Order" 359). In this context, John Stuart Mill writes that the "creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure" (186). Moore and Bruder point out that utilitarianism is where "one ought to seek the greatest pleasure for the greatest number of people over other things" (238).

The early nineteenth century saw important reform movements being pushed by scholars of the time, especially by contemporaries of Bentham – James Mill (1773-1836), father of young John Stuart Mill, and David Ricardo (1772-1823). James Mill strove for reforms in the British parliamentary system of representation and "argued" for "universal male suffrage on utilitarian grounds" (Duignan and West "Utilitarianism"). John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, was a staunch advocate for women's suffrage and "state-supported education for all" (Duignan and West "Utilitarianism"). In fact, Terence Ball refers to the friendship between Jeremy Bentham and James Mill when he writes that "Mill helped to make Bentham's ideas and schemes more palatable and popular than they might otherwise have been" ("James Mill"). Consequently, "[w]ith Mill's energy and Bentham's ideas and financial backing, Utilitarian schemes for legal, political, penal, and educational reform gained an ever wider audience and circle of adherents" (Ball "James Mill"). Thus, utilitarianism became the basis of a movement for radical reforms that would later "test all institutions and policies by the principle of utility" including legal reforms, parliamentary reforms, reforms in education and in economic policies, among others (Duignan and West "Utilitarianism").

In the context of education, the application of the principle of utility as an educational strategy is based on the premise that education can be used as a tool to achieve individual and social well being. Thus, one way of generating happiness for the greatest number of people in a society would mean preparing children from a young age to fit in well into the ways and mores of the world. Or, in other words, to serve as proverbial cogs in the social machine. One of the key objectives of education then becomes readying students, akin to an assembly line, drilling them with facts and encour-

aging rote memorisation, irrespective of their innate abilities or aptitude. In reference to this, John Stuart Mill states that the “[c]apacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures a very tender plant, easily killed, not only by hostile influences, but by mere want of sustenance” (189). He further contends that, in most young people, this capacity “speedily dies away if the occupations to which their position in life has devoted them, and the society into which it has thrown them, are not favourable to keeping that higher capacity in exercise” (Mill 189). The goal of such kind of utilitarian form of education, it seems, is not to nurture the individual talents of the young but rather to mediate and finally co-opt their minds into believing that societal assumptions and norms are to be reinforced and carried forward without any doubts or questions. Robin Gilmour, in this regard, states that “[t]o many Victorians, education was a means of social control; in the face of revolutions on the Continent and unrest at home it became imperative that the people be taught respect for the inevitable community of interest that bound a commercial society together” (213-214).

Here, it would be appropriate to mention what Ronald Reichertz has to say about Alice in his work *The Making of the Alice Books*. Reichertz claims that before the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, informational literature was widely considered as an official form of literature for children. In direct contrast, literature that was imaginative was considered nonsensical and of little value (Reichertz 21). The utilitarian nature of the dominant literature provided “a lively background of combativeness for the rise and consolidation of imaginative literature and, especially, of fantasy” (Reichertz 22). It is within this literary frame of reference that Carroll wrote *Alice in Wonderland* – a significant factor to bear in mind while analysing the texts.

Alice tries hard to bring in her above-ground Victorian sensibilities to each situation that she faces in her new surroundings. She is unable to achieve the desired results because neither in Wonderland nor in the Looking-Glass world is there any “social context” where the prim and proper Victorian era rules can be practised (Gabriele 383). From the very beginning in *Wonderland* till the very end of the *Looking-Glass* world, there is a “rupture of the standard conduct that is intimately wed with the definition of a social context”, which in turn indicates that neither of these worlds abides by any rules (Gabriele 383). This is the chief reason why none of the norms, so well-ingrained into Alice above-ground, work to her satisfaction. Alice dismally fails at her attempts to recall tables of multiplication as well as capitals of different countries: “I’ll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is – oh dear.... let’s try Geogra-

phy. London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome—no, *that's* [*sic*] all wrong, I'm certain'" (*Wonderland* 18-19). This indicates that Alice has had her fair share of informational literature though she is unable to recollect any of the facts once she is in Wonderland.

In the subsequent pages, Alice's encounter with the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle might appear absurd, as does everything in Wonderland, but Carroll again uses it to ridicule the Victorian education system:

MOCK TURTLE. '[W]e went to school in the sea. The master was an old Turtle—we used to call him Tortoise—'

ALICE. 'Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?'

MOCK TURTLE. 'We called him Tortoise because he *taught* us' (*Wonderland* 93-94; emphasis added)

The Mock Turtle blames Alice for being "'very dull'" while the Gryphon tells her "'to be ashamed'" of herself "'for asking such a simple question'" (*Wonderland* 94). The ways of Wonderland are indeed bizarre when the Mock Turtle and Alice discuss their school:

MOCK TURTLE. 'We had the best of education—in fact, we went to school every day—'

ALICE. '*I've* [*sic*] been to a day-school, too.... You needn't be so proud as all that'

MOCK TURTLE. 'With extras?'

ALICE. 'Yes ... we learned French and music'

MOCK TURTLE. 'And washing?' (*Wonderland* 95)

Upon Alice's indignant reply of "'[c]ertainly not!'", the Mock Turtle proudly declares "'Ah! Then yours wasn't a really good school'" (*Wonderland* 95). "'Now, at *ours*, they had, at the end of the bill, 'French, music, and washing—extra [*sic*]'"' claims the Mock Turtle (*Wonderland* 95). Scott Herring explains that the 'washing' listed as 'extra' was not an activity as Alice initially believes but rather the expenses of laundry incurred at boarding schools (Notes 275). Further, the Mock Turtle tells Alice about the "'regular course'" that he took including "'Reeling and Writhing'" accompanied by "'different branches of Arithmetic—Ambition [*sic*], Distraction, Uglification and Derision'" (*Wonderland* 95). The Gryphon is astounded when Alice is unable to understand 'uglification':

GRYPHON. 'Never heard of uglifying.... You know what to beautify is, I suppose?'

ALICE. 'Yes ... it means—to—make—anything—prettier.'

GRYPHON. 'Well, then ... if you don't know what to uglify is, you *are* [*sic*] a simpleton.' (*Wonderland* 95)

Towards the end of this interaction, Alice asks the Mock Turtle about the number of hours they had lessons at school. He wisely replies:

MOCK TURTLE. 'Ten hours the first day ... nine the next, and so on.'

ALICE. 'What a curious plan!'

GRYPHON. 'That's the reason they're called lessons ... because they *lessen* from day to day.' (*Wonderland* 96; emphasis added)

Alice's poor view of education in schools can be gleaned from an observation she makes during her interaction with these two creatures: "[h]ow the creatures order one about, and make one repeat lessons.... I might just as well be at school at once" (*Wonderland* 103). Carroll's novel and ingenious way of perceiving things, via the Mock Turtle and other characters, remains unparalleled. It is as if the author is trying to depict a world filled with different possibilities.

In the *Looking-Glass* world, Haigha introduces Alice as "'a child'" to the Unicorn, stating that "'[w]e only found it to-day [*sic*]. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!" (224). The Unicorn, in turn, asks if "'it'" is "'alive'", for he had always regarded children as "'fabulous monsters!" (*Looking-Glass* 224). Martin Gardner terms this to be a "part of the philosophic dullness of our time that there are millions of rational monsters walking about on their hind legs, observing the world through pairs of flexible little lenses ... who see nothing fabulous whatever about themselves" (Introduction 14-15). Children, deprived of fantasy and imagination, can surely turn into dull, walking 'rational monsters'. Thus, it can be argued that imagination is as essential as any rational faculty to make us truly human.

Victorian mannerisms are so thoroughly ingrained in Alice that even when she finds herself in strange situations, the so-called proper decorum remains instilled in her mind. Jean Webb puts it quite aptly when she comments: "What Alice discovers is that her course of action is inappropriate. The manners she has learnt are inapplicable to her needs in this world, a discovery to be reinforced as she wanders through *Wonderland*" (65). Alice, thus, is neither able to control her circumstances nor is she able to predict them. It seems as if Carroll has juxtaposed rationality with fantasy. The logic of the world in which Alice lives does not match with

that of Wonderland.

This becomes evident when, time and again, Alice ends up committing multiple faux-pas by behaving in Wonderland as she would above-ground. For instance, when she encounters the Mouse, whom she presumes to be French, she quotes the first line that she can recall from her French schoolbook and enquires about her cat (*Wonderland* 22). Asking a mouse about one's cat is bound to frighten it – a phenomenon that Alice is unmindful of. She begins to regale the timid Mouse with the exploits of her pet cat, Dinah: "she's such a capital one for catching mice—oh, I beg your pardon!" (*Wonderland* 22). It is only when she notices the Mouse "bristling all over", does she realise that she has "offended" it (*Wonderland* 22-23). She then begins to talk about dogs, particularly about a terrier in their neighbourhood who is extremely "useful" since "it kills all the rats" (*Wonderland* 23). Alice becomes aware of her gaffe immediately, for she says: "—oh dear.... I'm afraid I've offended it again!" (*Wonderland* 23). A little later, not having learnt her lesson yet, Alice once again commits a similar mistake while conversing with the Lory, a bird: "Dinah's our cat. And she's such a capital one for catching mice, you can't think! And oh, I wish you could see her after the birds! Why, she'll eat a little bird as soon as look at it!" (*Wonderland* 30-31).

Alice's remark causes quite a commotion with birds hurrying off on different pretexts, leaving her alone. She, then, observes: "I wish I hadn't mentioned Dinah!" (*Wonderland* 31). Further on, when Alice meets the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, the pair expound upon the finer points of a Lobster-Quadrille dance. The Mock Turtle tells her about lobsters: "[y]ou may not have lived much under the sea.... And perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster—", when Alice interjects, "I once tasted—", however, she halts mid-sentence and says instead: "No, never'..." (*Wonderland* 97). She is learning, by and by, not to offend the creatures of Wonderland. The culmination, however, occurs towards the end of *Through the Looking-Glass* when, at Queen Alice's feast, she is introduced to her food – a leg of mutton and the pudding. As Alice offers to serve a slice of mutton to the other Queens, the Red Queen rebukes her: "it isn't etiquette to cut any one you've been introduced to" (*Looking-Glass* 257). A similar episode is repeated during the dessert course when the pudding angrily replies: "[w]hat impertinence.... I wonder how you'd like it, if I were to cut a slice out of *you*, you creature!" [sic] (*Looking-Glass* 258). It is clear that Alice is at odds in this world below-ground. It further appears as if the author, through the creation of an absurd world populated with eccentric characters, attempts to bring home the point that objects/animals are also alive and possess ample grey matter.

With reference to the relationship between Alice and the animal world in the *Alice* books, John Berger's (1926-2017) observations in his essay, "Why Look at Animals?" (1977), are quite pertinent in the context of the inevitable change that was on the way. Berger explores the ways in which the relationship between human beings and animals has evolved, especially after the nineteenth century. He claims that in the nineteenth century, the West saw the ushering in of a process which was later to be "completed by 20th century corporate capitalism, by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken. Before this rupture, animals constituted the first circle of what surrounded man. Perhaps that already suggests too great a distance. They were with man at the centre of his world" (Berger 1). A special case in point would be fables with animal characters who come alive at every page of such tales. These fables have been a vital part of children's literature across all cultures imparting valuable lessons to young children for hundreds of years.

However, the nineteenth century witnessed a tectonic shift in the relationship between the human and the animal world. Post-industrialisation, respect for the relative autonomy of the animal kingdom as well as the tenets of co-existence with them began to diminish. "Zoos, realistic animal toys and the widespread commercial diffusion of animal imagery, all began as animals started to be withdrawn from daily life", claims Berger (24). Carroll, living in the tumultuous Victorian era, must have witnessed, first hand, the changing contours of this relationship in the wake of industrialisation and capitalism. The *Alice* books can be regarded as the author's attempt to question this reconfigured connection. Through the perspective of his child protagonist, Carroll created a novel way of looking at the animal world. It can be claimed that in the process, he tried to revive, in the reader, alternate possibilities of learning to live in harmony with nature. It would not be incorrect to say that the *Alice* books were Carroll's attempt to examine the contemporaneous ways of thinking within the broader arc of the Victorian mindset.

There is, of course, no denying the fact that the *Alice* books go *far beyond* the Victorian era. Carroll's Alice is a child who conforms to the Victorian mores above-ground. However, upon entering the imaginary worlds, there emerge two distinct facets of her personality: one, Alice as the innocent child-protagonist who is best trying to cope with the strange situations and quirky characters; second, Alice as a child-protagonist who questions the peculiar eccentricities of these worlds. It is, however, significant to note that it is not so much that Alice challenges the world below-ground, but rather that the author, through his child-protagonist, questions the predominant precepts of Victorian society. Neither in Wonderland nor

in the Looking-Glass world does Alice ever feel threatened or unsafe. Despite their quirky behaviour, the creatures come across as delightful and endearing. As Alice learns the art of survival in both the worlds, Carroll hints at the possibilities of a harmonious co-existence between the animal world and the world of humans.

While analysing the *Alice* texts, it is important to remember that the perennial appeal of these books lies in the fact that Carroll dared to include his own time period in them *also* rather than simply passing over it. Hence, it goes to the credit of Carroll that, despite living in the prim and proper Victorian era, he had the courage as well as the vision to interrogate its customs as also its notions of education. He wrote neither to educate the young nor to inculcate in them a moral code of behaviour. By using a plot that appears to be seemingly nonsensical, he is able to deftly evade being cornered into a tight spot. Furthermore, Carroll has been superbly successful in creating a third space that is neither normative nor pragmatic. A mathematician by profession and holding a teaching position in such a venerable institute, Carroll must have been extremely well-versed in logic. Yet, by depicting an unconventional world, he has tried to allocate a space for what is non-logical, imaginative, innovative and all that can be achieved when we move away from the realm of logic. It is important to remember that what appears as seemingly-nonsensical is perceived so by readers who are situated within the hegemonic and ideological arc of the Victorian viewpoint. That is, it seems nonsensical to us if our frame of reference remains blinkered within the Victorian perspective. Once one steps out of the Victorian frame of reference, this alternative space opens vistas of new understanding and perception for readers young and old.

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Digital Activism for Homeland: Social Media, Politics and the Indian Diaspora

Vijay Kumar Soni & Sadananda Sahoo

Abstract

In one such incident, a Sikh American doctor, Dr. Harmandeep Singh Boparai, returned to Amritsar to serve people suffering from the pandemic. Incidentally, it was not the diaspora alone that had galvanized itself. Their homeland (that is India) mobilized its resources and launched one of the biggest repatriation operations in Indian history. Under *Vande Bharat Mission*, it brought back more than a million members of Indian Diaspora stranded in different parts of the world. This brings centrality to William Safran's theory on diaspora, which highlights their commitment to safety, security and prosperity of homeland and their attempt to relate to its ethno-communal consciousness (Safran, 2018).

Keywords: Activism; Digital Diaspora; Homeland Politics; Social Media.

In addition to diaspora's conscious identification with their country of origin, Safran illustrates many examples of global diaspora when their respective homeland governments exploited them. But it must be admitted that there has been paradigm shift the way diasporas are now looked at from the time Safran propounded his theoretical framework. This is more so in countries receiving huge amount of remittances from them. It also explains why homeland governments have begun nurturing their relationship with their Diasporas.

Now, while the Covid-19 pandemic was raging globally, there was yet another narrative taking shape, which had an indirect relation to Indian diaspora. A section of data analyst felt that it was inflow of Sikh diaspora from the UK in Punjab's Farmers protest that led to spread of second wave of UK variant in India (Narayanan, 2021).

Like all sphere of diasporic life, the pandemic catastrophe was politicised

with one group of the diaspora supporting the Modi-led Indian government, while the other critical of 'inefficient' handling of the situation. Here lies the paradox of policy, politics and diaspora engagement as they get entwined with each other. Thus, making Indian diaspora a peripheral part of Indian politics as they continue to influence global opinion. There were two more events in recent times that brought diaspora-homeland relation to limelight – Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and Indian Farmers protests. Both these events witnessed unprecedented involvement of Indian diaspora and divided them on ideological, religious and political grounds. While some of them were supporters, there were others who were dissidents and organised global protest and demonstration.

Digital Diaspora Activism

Unlike most diasporas, Indian diaspora is deeply divided on the lines of caste, religion and regional-linguistic lines, they frame their own identity politics and negotiate their needs with political powers of their home country. They make this possible by being part of digital diaspora who use new media technologies to remain connected with Indian politics. They are known to use micro-blogging sites like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to campaign, canvas, collect funds and mobilize public opinion in favour of political parties. The role of new media in politics however was at the centre of controversy recently when they were asked to follow guidelines related to regulation of contents (Times of India, June 5, 2021).

These controversies notwithstanding, digital activism has brought a significant shift in diasporic political communication. "It is by mobilising shared values as culture, national identity and community awareness that the online expatriate build up a virtual community" (Gabriel, 1992). It is this virtual community with a sense of cultural continuity that plays in mobilizing public opinion, be it political, social or economic change. The virtual community, which in fact is a reflection of the aspiration of real people, re-imagines its role by mobilizing and renegotiating the public discourse (Anderson, 1991).

As a result, digital diaspora "re-create identities, share opportunities, spread their culture, influence homeland and host-land policy, or create debate about common interest issues by means of electronic devices. But "Digital Diasporas" differ from virtual communities and nations because in digital Diasporas there are strong ties with the real nations before creating or re-creating the digital community, thus differing in some ways from Licklider and Taylors' ideas of a virtual community. On the Inter-

net, all of us are 'immigrants' who simultaneously share a common space called cyberspace" (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010).

The role of technology in migration and diaspora formation and its sustenance is well attested. It has "facilitated both population movements and the formation of diasporas" and the new era of Internet has offered deterritorialised space in the cyberspace. "It connects, maintains, create and re-create social ties and network with both their homeland and other co-dispersed communities" (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010).

Digital activism through Internet-enabled devices has impacted the governance model of democracy more than migration and the diaspora formation because it covers a much larger tectonic area. "Internet has been associated with major political developments, ranging from the empowerment of citizens, the winning of elections, the rise of political movements, and the reform of political institutions, to the collapse of regimes." (Dutton, 2014)

Now, cell phones are ""used in the effort to change regimes, as happened in the Philippines, where President Joseph Estrada was peacefully overthrown in January 2001, or to alter national opinion, as in Spain after the March 11, 2004 or to bypass government control over media and censorship, as happened during the so-called Green Revolution in Iran in January 2009" (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010). The traditional model of Web 1.0 democracy has been supplanted by Web 2.0 democracy, where participation, engagement, discourse and discussion between people and democratic leaders are fundamental values of reciprocal relationship. The Tele-democracy, which was coined in 1970s in the US to mean electronically aided, rapid, two-way political communication has been replaced by Web 2.0 democracy.

Reimagining Diasporic Media

Digital activism and new media are much more than a tool of communication as Peter Mandaville (2001) points out, "Diasporic Media should be seen as spaces of communication in which the identity, meaning and boundaries of diasporic community are continually constructed, debated and reimagined." Social Media and electronic form of communication have now occupied a central role in diaspora's life as they are "characterized by a double dependency on communication and the media, depending on mediation between diasporic subjects as a group in the host land on the one hand, and on the communication of groups thus defined with their land of 'origin' on the other" (Stierstorfer and Wilson, 2018)

For the diaspora, identity is of paramount importance as it provides them a sense of belonging and security. With the emergence of digital activism, their sense of belonging and participation in the home country activities have found a new expression. But unlike the traditional media, digital activism is providing them an unlimited landscape of two-way, free-flowing information and ideas between the Diaspora and the home country. "The extensive use of diasporic groups of online services like the Internet Relay Chat, e-mail, Usenet, Listserv and the World Wide Web is allowing for relatively easy connections for members of communities residing in various continents" (Karim, 2003). "Online media are superior to traditional printed media in two aspects in addition to global access and speed. First, it's quite cost-effective, unlike the print publishing, which requires not only a large sum of money but also involves high degree of economic risk. And second, the cost of establishing and maintaining online publishing can be very low." (Reddick, King, 1997)

Apart from the aspect of cost-effectiveness, digital activism provides a differential advantage of forming new social and political groups. "The greatest benefit of the online media is not that they facilitate communication among already connected individuals and groups, but rather they provide a medium for the formation and cultivation of new relationships by providing virtually instantaneous access to thousands of potential contacts who share similar interests and experience" (McLaughlin, 1995).

Digital activism has strengthened participatory democracy and has given a voice to disagree, dissent and in the process has become a medium of expression for the marginalized. In fact, transformation of national politics and sovereignty are arising not only from the mobility of population but also from new modes of communication (Bernal, 2014), to which digital media is a significant contributor. Social media "testify to a renewed desire to participate in political decisions and in collective action that can be read as a positive reaction"

But it is equally important to define these publics who take part in politics. Not all publics who are in social media participate in these activities. Angel Adams Parham has classified these Internet-mediated Publics into three groups called the representation publics, a network public and vertical public. While the first two groups are nominal and un-committed, it is the vertical public who are active to political causes. "It is the vertical public which has access to political resources. In addition to facilitating political discussion, some of the groups raise large sums of money for home countries and have demonstrated capability to mobilize significant resources with social and political commitment."

As a result of Internet-mediated interaction, India Diaspora is no longer seen as "margins of the state" but an integral part of the political process. They contribute to "political remittances" by way of their geographic mobility and "Internet is facilitating new forms of political agency and giving rise to new transnational public sphere where struggles over meaning, resources, and power are mobilized" (Bernal, 2014). As Anderson (2003) said, "the combination of new media and new contributors...feed into new senses of a public space that is discursive, performative and participative, and not confined to formal institutions recognized by state authorities."

Transnationalisation of Digital Space

Digital activism has played a significant role in building transnational networks of political communication amongst Indian diaspora. As the workforce move from one country to another, especially the diplomats, IT professionals and businessmen, digital activism provides them a constant and permanent thread of connectivity with their home country. The earlier concept of 'transnationalisation' seems to have now been replaced by internationalization, where the whole globe has become one unified point of reference for migration" (Karim, 2003)

In fact, Indian Diaspora's participation in the electoral politics of their home country is a new and unique phenomenon that has emerged during the last one decade. Incidentally their active political participation corresponds with the rise of digital, especially social media, in the political landscape. There are studies that attest to correlation between the rise of social media and increased people's participation in democratic process, but involvement of diaspora, a 'non-state actor', is altogether a new occurrence that warrants explanation which this paper has tried to explore.

Diasporas have traditionally participated in long-distance nationalism across the world. The process has been further intensified with the rise of Web 2.0, which has the capacity in facilitating political communication between the transnational, dispersed expatriates and political parties. In fact, a diaspora's participation in home country's politic is as old as diaspora itself.

The process of globalization, emergence of new media, transnational movement of workforce and the resultant exchange of ideas, culture and technology have further strengthened the relationship between the diaspora and their homeland (Anderson, 1991). The role of race and ethnicity in mobilizing people for political action (Jain, 2010) has found a renewed expression in diasporic participation as well.

It is no wonder that political relationship of a diasporic group with home and host country is often determined by a sense of identity, belonging and vested interests. Diasporas have become "political actors with local and transnational agendas" and differ from the traditional sense for carrying "multiple national identities and loyalties that are interlinked across the globe." Sometimes, as in the case of Mexican Diaspora, the home politics becomes an extension in the host country. The Mexican expatriates wield considerable influence in the voting pattern of their kith and kin, especially when they send remittances to their home country. They impact polity in their home nation by way of financial contribution to political parties and candidates. Sometimes, they become driving force in transporting liberal social and political values to home country. "Diasporas teach their extended families and friends about democratic practices, such as how to vote for local government and to develop gender equality norms – a process termed a transfer of 'social remittances'" (Koinova, 2010, 154)

As studies have pointed out, transnationalism does not necessarily work in opposition to nations but can support nations and strengthen nationalism, which is not far from truth in the Indian case. "Today much evidence attests to the continued force of nation-states in the world, globalization and transnationalism notwithstanding. Increasingly, diasporas are being enfranchised and included in various ways as nationals in their state of origin and enjoy "diasporic citizenship" with legal rights. (Bernal, 2005)

Earlier it was presumed that homeland nationalism of the diaspora was a consequence of their failure to identify with the host society because of low level of assimilation. It was asserted that preoccupation with the country of origin is greatest among those immigrants who intend to return (e.g. political exiles and migrant laborers) and least among those who have made a long-term commitment to the host society (e.g. professionals and immigrant entrepreneurs) (Portes, 1997). However, it has been argued that ethnic identity could be salient even among professionals if they experience discrimination.

Another view argues that loss of status is a driving force behind diasporic transnational political activity. Latino males face a greater loss of status compared to Latino female in the US and are likely to participate in transnational political activities. Likewise, studies have shown that "British women of Pakistani origin have greater earning power in comparison to their Pakistani husbands, thus upending traditional roles. In some cases, extremism among some members of the UK-based Pakistani diaspora may stem in part from male."

Post-globalization and liberalization provided the much vigour and impetus to strengthening Indian diaspora-homeland links. To overcome the economic crisis and to meet the need of hard currency, India tapped its 'strategy asset' of diaspora during early 1990s. The emergence of Indian IT industry and the offshore site for Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) further accelerated the process of skilled manpower dispersion and the consequent engagement in India's economic polity. Countries like the US, the UK, Australia, Canada who have sizable chunk of affluent Non-Resident Indians, played an active role in bilateral business association that were mutually beneficial to each other.

Empowering Democracy

The Web 2.0 democracy, in addition to facilitating Indian diaspora has also empowered political parties. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which made its debut in 2012, mobilized

its overseas supporters through its Overseas Chapters in various countries. It was probably the first of its kind incidents when expatriates, using digital communication tools and their own money and resources, came to their home country to campaign for a political party. In fact, Indian diaspora, using digital activism, played an important role in election campaigns to bring Arvind Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, to power in 2013, 2015 and again in 2020. It is interesting to note that majority of these expatriates shared a political understanding of their native space.

Mayank Gandhi, an activist who played a key role in India Against Corruption and was a member of National Executive of AAP who later resigned from the post documented the spirit of the time. "What was even more extraordinary was that we had NRIs trooping in from across the world, hoping to contribute to this people's party. I received hundreds of inquiry calls from the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada; each wished to assist AAP. Unknown faces became friends, stayed at the homes of volunteers, and assisted in every way they could. Together we created a tsunami of a campaign." (Gandhi, 2018)

New media turned out to be a potent tool in election campaigns. Arvind Kejriwal won 67 out of 70 seats in 2015 Delhi Assembly elections. Thousands of Non-Resident Indians, largely from the US came to India to support him. It was the same group who had worked for India Against Corruption (IAC) launched by Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal earlier. Well equipped with the knowledge of latest communication technology, thousands of NRIs jumped into provide backend and front-end campaigning

support to AAP. The unprecedented support helped the party in reaching out to voters and win the election with massive margin.

Involving Indian diaspora in electoral politics was first of its political experiment in Indian history. Using telecom-enabled services, including email, SMS, phone calling, the Indian diaspora was able to reach out to a large number of voters. The overseas chapters of the party, dispersed across the globe, had adopted Delhi constituencies amongst themselves to provide strategic feedback and back-end inputs to AAP candidates. Those with expertise in IT managed the party's regular newsletters, Google hangout, social media, helpline support and telephonic calling services to donors and voters alike. With major presence in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Qatar, UK, UAE and Italy, the AAP overseas volunteers, according to one estimate made over 10.8 lakh calls from the US alone. (Narula, 2015)

Online donation by Indian diaspora and Indians was another key attraction, which was first of its kind to bring in transparency in political funding of elections. Most of the online donation and transaction were recorded and put on the party's website to instill a sense of fair play in electoral politics. It was therefore not surprising that it found maximum support in its fight against corruption. According to AAP estimate, 25 per cent of party donation came from the Indian diaspora, which also happens to be its biggest overseas support base.

For the elections in Punjab and Goa in 2017, the party geared its diaspora wing and started organizing overseas events to win the support of NRIs. A massive campaign of 'Chal Punjab 2017' was organized in Canada at Surrey and Toronto, which was participated by over three lakh Punjabi expatriates. Canada's Punjabi Diaspora groups had plans to send over 1.17 lakh Sikh migrants to Punjab to help the party in campaigns. (Bhandari, 2017)

In view of the rising influence of the Indian Diaspora in election campaigning, other political parties, including the Congress, also tried to win their support. Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh attempted to organize political rallies in Canada but was denied permission by the Canadian authority by invoking 'Global Affairs Canada' (GAC) policy that forbids "foreign governments to conduct election campaigns in Canada or establish foreign political parties and movements in Canada" (Goyal, 2016).

The AAP may have been the first political party to use Indian diaspora and digital activism on a large scale for political campaign, but it was for-

mer Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who for the first time laid the foundation of positive engagement with Indian expatriates. He drew a long-term strategy of 'partnership among all children of Mother India' so that India could emerge as a major global player. It was during his time that the concept of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was conceived and executed. Today, most political parties have foreign extensions including the AAP and the BJP, with presence in more than 30 countries.

The Overseas Friends of BJP (OFBJP) have formed very strong links and massive following with the overseas Indians. It was the OFBJP who mobilized the Indian diaspora for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rallies at Madison Square in New York and at Wembley Stadium, London (Roy, 2016). The OFBJP made use of digital activism through Google hangouts and live-stream conferences to discuss political issues during such occasions. The importance of Indian expatriates have been so central to the BJP's vision that the party appointed Vijay Chauthaiwale as a global convener to lead the organization's foreign affairs department. Chauthaiwale was responsible for organizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's overseas events (Marlow, 2016). Later, the Howdy Modi event in the US was another landmark of Indian diaspora mobilization.

The whirlwind tour of Narendra Modi across continents further helped in cementing the bonds between the diaspora and the homeland India. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted to 'make the diaspora an integral part of India's development journey', the diaspora on the other hand look up to India for recognition and identity and also for starting business enterprises in their homeland. According to a Harvard study, 50 per cent of NRIs are returning to India for entrepreneurial and business reasons and the government often favours them with better interest rates and investment opportunities. The opportunity of getting politically associated with India has further strengthened the symbiotic relationship between the diaspora and the homeland (Wadhwa, 2007).

Another feature of Narendra Modi's overseas visits has been the organizational abilities of Indian diaspora and the use of digital activism. It should be borne in mind that it was not the Government of India that organized these events but the Indian diaspora themselves. The Europe India Forum organized the Wembley Stadium event while the one at Sydney's Olympic Park was organised by the Indian Australian Community Foundation (IACF) and the Indian American Community Foundation (IACF) had organized the event at Madison Square. It was Indian diaspora groups that funded these events, which goes to show their influence, affluence and the organizational abilities.

The homeland politics have also been seen to have adverse ramifications on the diasporic population as was evident in the case of Telugu expatriates. The Telugu diaspora in the US and Canada have been affluent and powerful community since 1970s. According to one estimate, most members of the 10 lakh-strong-community are in high-paying jobs and business enterprises (Vadlapatla, 2015).

Conclusion & Recommendations

These events also heralded a new beginning in diaspora's engagement with the home politics. The relationships between the diaspora and politics however, at times have proved tenuous. As Narendra Modi pointed out in one of his addresses that "some communities with real grievances, like the Tamils and Sikhs, have been vulnerable to manipulation by extremist groups." In the case of Khalistan movement after the Operation Blue Star, a section of Canadian Sikh supported the creation of an independent nation for Sikhs by using armed violence and extremism. It gave birth to organizations like Babbar Khalsa, Khalistan Terror Force (KTF), Sikhs For Justice" (SFJ), International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) which publicly and openly supported the secessionist movement in Canada and UK.

The killing of Canada-based Sikh journalist Tara Singh Hayer and bombing of Air India flight 182 are linked to such terror acts launched by Sikh groups. In recent times, a new term 'Khalistan 2.0' has received the coinage of resurfacing of terror support in Canada and other countries. The Khalistan movement had more relevance to Canada as it has the highest population of Sikh diaspora in the world (Jakobsh, 2014).

The demand for the creation of Khalistan and Tamil Eelam by Indian diaspora in their host countries indicates a very delicate balance between their numerical strength in the host country and political volatility in their homeland. An event in the homeland, as in the case of Punjab, was seen to have far-reaching consequence in another country, whereby disturbing the social equilibrium in their host country.

With the rise of new technology and CMC and digital media, there is far more danger of such secessionist movements gaining momentum. If such situations are not handled carefully with sensitivity, it carries within it the inherent danger of mass human displacement. It also indicates that people living in globalized world, can fall easy prey to ulterior interest groups more than ever before.

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Commentary and/or Catharsis: Literary Responses to Unprecedented Challenges

Shubhangi Bhatnagar & Rimika Singhvi

Abstract

The shift in narrativization - as a result of the pandemic and epidemic-outbreaks over the ages - compels one to re-examine those as humanitarian crises and also the writers' pre-occupation with such themes as illness, madness, suffering, absurdity, catastrophe and existential crisis. Their representation in literature dwells not only on cultural configurations and the discourse of disease (i.e. the relationship between literature and medicine and how do we 'read' disease?) but also on fear, denial, memory and the biomedical paradigm. Within such literature, there seems to be an increasing interest in feelings of senselessness, distrust, and the dwindling meaningful connections in a world that is growing - and falling apart - exponentially. The question, therefore, is how do the characteristic tools of the humanities - viz. historical reflection, critical inquiry and attention to feeling and justice - help us make sense of what we are experiencing. And, what can encountering an epidemic (and its global correlate, the pandemic) in fiction afford us? The chapter will probe these questions through a detailed analysis of Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) and Ling Ma's satirical science fiction entitled *Severance* (2018), both of which are set against the backdrop of devastating biomedical disasters, viz. a fictional swine flu pandemic and the Shen Fever, respectively.

Keywords: Biopolitical regime; Collective-memory; Globalisation; Late-stage capitalism; Pandemic; Post-apocalyptic literature.

Pandemics, epidemics and outbreaks have ravaged human civilization for centuries, yet the twenty-first century experiences these biomedical-apocalypses with its unprecedented challenges. Some of the most prolific art and literature have borne out of these plagued times, having stripped the society of its pretences and laying bare the warts that could no longer be brushed under the carpet. It afforded a much-needed reflection for the

society to examine its follies. Human-resilience, art and memory have pulled the human-race out of these catastrophic times in the past. With human-contact being likened to a contagion, the collective consciousness became stronger. In spite of the sense of dread, madness, suffering and absurdity, the ties within the community became stronger with longing desperation for connection and hope. Interestingly, over the ages, there has been a shift in this narrativization of pandemic and epidemic-outbreaks. No longer are these narratives centred around a sense of community and hope. On the contrary, there seems to be an increasing interest in feelings of senselessness, distrust, and dwindling meaningful connections. The shift can mainly be attributed to the unique situation of the twenty-first century: globalisation and late-stage capitalism. Globalization becomes a crucial aspect to consider in the discourse around human relationships and pandemics. Rather than acting as a unifying force to create a feeling of unity, it surprisingly seems to be adding to the growing sense of absurdity and loss of meaning. At a time when the world is growing smaller, human connection is diminishing. An apocalyptic future, in a world that is growing - and falling apart - exponentially, has gained popularity not only in philosophy but also within popular fiction.

Severance by Ling Ma (2018) is an audacious satirical commentary on the society, with the backdrop of the devastating Shen-Fever pandemic. Those who fall prey to the Shen-Fever follow mindless routines repeatedly, until they die of exhaustion. The ominous tale opens with the orphaned Candace Chen, who is working an unfulfilling job. Candace drifts through New York feeling alienated within the throngs of people that surround her. The New York City is seen as the epitome of global cosmopolitan. Collapse of one part of the world quickly results in a collapse of another part, miles away. But, with the growing sense of connectivity, there is also an underlying sense of alienation, and a disregard of the human-condition, itself. Soon Candace's alienated-self is reflected through deserted surroundings of the abandoned streets of New York. She joins a group of survivors who are the last ones to make their way to 'the Facility'. The group is led by the domineering Bob, who turns to religious extremism in the disastrous times. 'The Facility' turns out to be an abandoned mall, a site most characteristic of capitalism. The novel ferociously, yet humorously comments on the consumerist society, through symbolism and satire.

In Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), a fictional swine flu pandemic - the 'Georgian flu' - leads to a complete societal collapse. The novel is mostly concerned with post-apocalyptic struggle for survival, and does not spare the readers from the terror and misery of humanity by offering

the comfort of a hopeful future. Its opening shocks the readers with the death of a celebrated stage actor collapsing in the middle of a play. The novel then moves back and forth into time following the members of the acting troupe in the opening scene, and their struggle to preserve the art-form of story-telling. Museums, comic-books and dramas are frequently employed throughout the narrative, emphasising their role in human-survival. It focuses on society's dependence on art and story-telling for preserving collective-memory and sanity of the civilization. It also offers commentary on religion as crutch to tide over catastrophic circumstances. Most of all, it is a critique on how little technology plays a part in dire times, yet it continues to dictate our lives in the most elementary way; a commentary on society's misplaced priorities.

The French philosopher, Jean Luc-Nancy, in his provocative work, *The Creation of the World, or Globalisation* (2002), famously analysed the process of globalisation not as the creation of the world, but as the decay of the world. As the world draws closer with connectivity through techno-science, Nancy points out that it is also leading to a growing sense of uncertainty. Even though the world has become smaller, the identity of the world has never been more ambiguous and muddled to man. It is the first time in history that the world is not lead by any concrete faith or values. Rather than moving towards an inclusive, homogenous future of humanity, there seems to be an ever growing divide. Globalisation has led to unprecedented increase in injustices, which are politico-moral, socio-economical and ideological in nature. A predominantly Western endeavour, it has led to a profound sense of existentialism and nihilism. The cause for this senselessness is that globalisation has reached everywhere; it is now everywhere and anywhere. There is nothing more to be discovered, yet more to be globalised. The senselessness also stems from the increasing reliance towards technology, and diminishing reliance on God. Absence of God reflects an absence of an external point of reference, which ultimately leads to the questioning of the existence of this world.

According to Nancy, the world does not need any reason or justification, it simply exists. Despite the nature of the world, the capitalist society tries to relate our existence to enjoyment, or profit. It is the cycle of infinite accumulation, reproduction, excesses and exploitation that leads to the alienation of man. Soon, what was considered the motive of existence, that is enjoyment, becomes the motive of its obliteration. Man is no longer empathetic towards the human-condition, as it chases after the ultimate good: profit. Globalisation, hence, fosters alienation over connection, and growth ultimately leads to a sense of displacement rather than closeness.

Increased technological prevalence has caused humanity to be inundated with information, invariably leading to increased anxiety. An imaginary apocalypse permits people to construct scenarios where they can fight a distinct enemy, rather than stand up to abstract evils. Essentially, we yearn for simpler times. We crave for a post-apocalyptic scenario, in order to exist without post-modern constraints. Anne Washburn concurs that our fundamental inclinations are revealed through post-apocalyptic literature. Nevertheless, she suspects that it is not merely our desire for simplicity (Nataraj, "Survival," 12). She, in fact, contends that it is due to our craving for adventure which remains lacking in modern world. Disastrous situations only remain interesting until we haven't been forced to live them yet, or as long as they remain unpredictable. Human beings are not constrained through reality; they are capable enough to imagine the absurdist stories, and satisfy their desire to explore and wander (ibid).

At the same time, theorists such as Nirmala Nataraj and Brian Mc Donald tend to lean towards the idea that we already live in a post-apocalyptic world, and post-apocalyptic literature is simply a mirror to our reality. Such literature, in that sense, helps to unpack the trauma of catastrophic contemporary times. Nataraj expresses in "After Armageddon: Apocalyptic Fiction through the Ages" that "depictions of the end of the world are usually just as dependent on destabilizing actual events as they are on fantastical ones" (29). By the same token, contemporary depictions of apocalypse and the repercussions are firmly planted in fiction as they may be in fact. In the same vein, McDonald in "The Final Word on Entertainment: Mimetic and Monstrous Art in 'The Hunger Games'" adopts Aristotle's theory of artistic mimesis. Based on this theory, he contends that literature tends to hyperbolize the vices of the society. Literature becomes the channel through which reader and writes sublimate their reality into fiction.

Mandel's *Station Eleven* begins twenty years post the Collapse, when majority of the world's population had been wiped out through a mutation of the swine flu virus, called the Georgian Flu. In the wake of a world reeling under the ecological disaster, Mandel focuses on the role of art in the preservation of human bond though the continuum of space and time. Especially through the comics by Miranda called *Doctor Eleven* in the novel, the readers truly realize the potential of art to sustain and bring together humanity in the most hopeless of circumstances. Miranda too employs the comics as a way of wish fulfilment, as well as a coping mechanism by exaggerating her current reality. But the resonance of the comics moves beyond Miranda and her personal experiences. Even when years later Kirsten reads the same narrative written during an immensely unlike time, the power of literature is able to transcend all boundaries and brings

her a similar comfort: "I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth" (105). The lines evoke ache and emptiness of homelessness or loss, all the same. Both Miranda and Kirsten seek refuge for completely unrelated dilemmas in life, yet the emotions evoked through the comics appeal to their human condition.

The Travelling Symphony within the novel, in fact, proves the fact that it is the bonding over shared trauma that brings together human civilization, by exclusively performing Shakespearean plays in a post-Collapse world. Dieter comments, "Shakespeare... lived in a plague-ridden society with no electricity and so [does] the Traveling Symphony" (288). The Symphony doesn't feel the need to provide any commentary the sixteenth-century play, as they feel there is nothing they feel that Shakespeare hasn't portrayed in his play already. It is the relatability that connects the audience to the playwright due to similar experiences. Mandel through the work tries to deliver the over-arching theme that our modern times so closely resemble a catastrophe that the readers are enabled to find much needed comfort, and tools to cope with their reality within post-apocalyptic narratives. Mandel builds the Georgian flu as a mutated form of the swine flu, taking inspiration from the 2009 swine flu pandemic. The suggestion here is what could have happened had the swine flu virus spread much more rapidly and aggressively. To support this argument, Nataraj argues that "actual destabilizing events" form the foundation of catastrophes in literature (29).

In contrast, the novel also presents how apocalyptic fiction can become a source of wish fulfilment. With a complete power-grid failure, all technology is wiped out from the post-modern world, which is heavily depended on technology for its existence. Ironically, Charles, although successful in his career as a corporate coach, notices that he is merely a "sleepwalker in the world of "iPhone zombies" and "corporate ghosts" (160-63). Surrounded by high-functioning corporate officials, it dawns on Clark that along with them he might have reached the heights of corporate ladder, yet they remain deeply unfulfilled. After reeling from the immense shock of the Collapse, Clark finds himself renewed and finally has a fresh perspective towards life. He feels grateful for small miracles he had always taken for granted such as air travel. It is this realization that puts him in touch with himself again, and he begins to curate for the Museum of Civilization (249). The characters not only turn to art in the unprecedented times as source of comfort, but also to reunite their expression of rebellion. Kirsten's tattoos engraved on her body serve as a mode of memory-keeping that keeps her connected to her roots, reminding her of the reason for a rebellion. In instances of extreme distress, art also provides humans

a source for inspiration and keeps them connected. Thus, the notion of memory-keeping and sustaining a collective-memory become political during apocalyptic times.

In *Severance* by Ling Ma, the Shen Fever slowly enters the public consciousness. Candace recollects it being “in the news through the summer...like a West Nile thing” during an office-wide meeting (19). Only to know that it is not the West Nile virus; they are informed that Shen Fever is fungal not viral, and it travels through aerial spores rather than human contact or mosquitoes. The fungus initially spreads through Shenzhen, also known for its rapid economic growth and being the first Chinese Special Economic Zone. As the pandemic gradually begins to spread internationally, the U.S. Congress passes a travel ban to prohibit travel from Asian countries.

The western world seems afraid not essentially of the Asian bodies, but of the chance of acquiring a part of Asianness. While the disease is racially indiscriminate, nevertheless, the precarity attached with race is only intensified with terror and revulsion associated with a disease. An inherently compulsive anxiety builds around bodies and where they have geographically been. This forces individuals to carefully govern their movement and interaction; for example, Candace rushes to instinctively wash her face when sneezed upon by her colleague, Ashley. In an already fear-laden environment such as a pandemic, it becomes easier to channel the build-up of frustration and vitriol onto certain bodies that come to be associated with the origin of a disease. Race becomes an easy and tangible signifier of a disease that is nearly impossible to locate, that is, in the air. Conveniently, a frustrated population subverts an invisible air-borne virus on tangible racialized bodies. Hence, in more ways than one, the novel calls attention to the *social* body (Foucault 66). A biopolitical state is suitably created as the illness traffics through risk, suffering, and illness. This also creates a perfect scenario for the government to exercise its power to “make live” and “let die” when the masses become dependent on them for survival (Foucault 73).

However, the most incisive and piercing critique of *Severance* is brought out when the globalised labour trade is intermingled with a racialized panic of the disease. The Fever especially begins to multiply within “factory conditions of manufacturing areas . . . where spores fed off the highly specific mixture of chemicals” (210). Undoubtedly, transnational capitalism becomes the reason behind the catastrophe. Asian bodies are put at stake to deliver the cheapest manufacturing rates to the Western counterpart, the USA. Not only is it commentary against exploitative practices of racialized globalisation, but it also comment on the infectious, itinerant

quality of productivity within late-stage capitalism.

The novel tends to employ characteristics that Asian migrant labourers have come to be associated with in traditional media, effectively working as yet another critique of racialized globalisation: "For the most part, from what we had seen...the fevered were creatures of habit, mimicking old routines and gestures they must have inhabited for years, decades" (28). It is the routines of infected bodies that becomes especially significant; the mechanic repetitive routines of a capitalised environment. The endless loops of the fevered only cease when all life is extracted out of their bodies as they perform the mechanical tasks. The Fevered bring the Marxist theory of alienation to its culmination, when all sense of autonomy effectively leaves the infected bodies, and only hollow and obedient subject are left behind to achieve maximum productivity. However, the novel does not fail to point out how the mechanised tasks are unproductive and useless altogether, as the bodies do not possess the agency to exercise their minds anymore, hence, becoming entirely disconnected from the object of their production.

Soon after joining Bob's group of survivors, Candace finds herself conducting "stalks" in nondescript neighbourhoods. Under the guise of gathering supplies, Bob's main motive behind these stalks is to keep the fevered under control. As vigilantes, the surviving group barge into houses armed with guns, and ready to execute any living fevered. On her first instance of finding living fevered in the Gower household, Candace is visibly shaken by the unnecessary cruelty of the ritual: "They don't attack us or try to eat us. They don't do anything to us. If anything, we do more harm to them." (29) Rather than pointing out any potential threat from the fevered, Bob only argues that there is no harm in execution of the fevered. "They aren't really alive. And one way we have of knowing this is that they don't take a long time to die" (28). With this thought-process, the group attempts to bring some sanctity to their existence in a tremendously chaotic world. According to Bob, they must preserve the "purity" of their kind by keeping strict distinction within the humans and the fevered. His argument echoes Foucault's description of how racism operates within biopolitical regimes (77). «Race works to fragment, to create caesuras within the biological continuum," Foucault asserts, which helps the State to clearly identify the Othered bodies that could potentially violate the "health and/ or "purity" of the Dominant kind (77-78). Candace must then prove her loyalty towards her kind and is forced to kill one of the fevered. Emotionally exhausted by the cruelty and meaninglessness of these rituals, Candace gradually shifts her loyalties towards the fevered. Subsequently, this results in Bob's distrust towards her, hinting

at her expulsion from the troupe. The Fever firmly establishes, as well as, problematizes racial distinctions.

In an anti-climactic reveal towards the end, Bob discloses that the 'Facility' that the surviving troupe had been thinking of as their lease of a new life, is nothing but a shopping mall - the ultimate site of capitalism: "In the end, we have come to the Facility to work." (221) Traces of neoliberalism and its muted violence can be felt by the other survivors, who must become Bob's "subjects". The entire incident is haunted by the rhetoric of disciplining often employed by a liberal democracy: "For individuals to be recognized and afforded rights *as human*, they must be registered as subjects; to be humanized is to also be subjected" (Agamben 27). Bearing the colossal loss of their entire civilization, the member of the group cannot so easily be coerced into suppression. Steady eruptions of rebellion lead to Bob's execution at the hands of Candace. Finally, the protagonist finds herself liberated from all forms, literal and symbolical, of biopolitical regime.

According to Aristotle's theory of artistic mimesis, the creators tend to exaggerate their painful reality into apocalyptic situations as a coping mechanism, as pointed out by Mc Donald. Nataraj also support the theory that real-life catastrophes are what the fictional catastrophes are based on. Both the novels tend to exaggerate the globalised realities of late-stage capitalism where human beings have already turned into zombies. The novels also act as a form of escape from the anxiety-ridden complex lives of the twenty-first century. Human beings often lead meaningless yet anxiety-inducing lives. An apocalypse, under such unprecedented circumstances, almost becomes a welcome outcome when reality seems to simulate an apocalypse, already. A devastating pandemic which wipes out most of the humanity presents itself as a blank slate to lead a more simple existence. Both the narratives highlight the absence of technology in the post-apocalyptic era. This can be analysed through the lens of the theory of apocalyptic narratives acting as a source of wish-fulfilment. No part of today's globalised world, realistically, can remain untainted by technology. While one may wish to unplug every once in a while, and step away from the chaos of the modern world, the debilitating need to remain productive in the ruthless capitalist society can only be escaped by a handful. Hence the only way possible to fulfil the said fantasy would be the collapse of civilization as a whole, wherein technological structures are forced to be wiped out as a whole. The twenty-first century reader and writer begin to turn towards post-apocalyptic fiction as a form of commentary on the contemporary world, and - eventually - for a feeling of catharsis.

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Intertextual Connections between Franz Kafka's *Before the Law* and Thomas Bernhard's *The Dictator*

Rosy Singh

Abstract

This paper seeks to compare and contrast Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989) and Franz Kafka (1883-1924) on the basis of their two texts "Der Diktator" and "Vor dem Gesetz". The intertextual connections between Bernhard's "Der Diktator" and Kafka's well known doorkeeper legend "Vor dem Gesetz" the text that precedes Bernhard's text by around 50 years, are too striking to be taken as a coincidence. In terms of form, genre, narrative techniques and the content there are lots of parallels. The fairy tale structure, absurd and grotesque elements, tragicomic technique of narration, motifs of death and futility of a happy end bind the two. The beginnings are somewhat similar. Yet the two texts proceed to tell different stories because the protagonists may be in similar situation but they respond to it differently. Both show two different possibilities of existence. The moot point is that the reader's awareness of the intertextual linkages could contribute to a better understanding of Bernhard's narrative. His familiarity with Kafka's conceptual world, specifically with the narrative text "Before the Law" written in 1915 is crucial to a better analysis of Bernhard's narrative.

Keywords: Absurd; Intertextuality; Man from the countryside.

Every creative work be it in art, literature, music, philosophy, films, advertising, fashion, architecture etcetera contains invariably traces of borrowing - in bits and pieces, in a fragmentary kind of way - a phenomenon that is now commonly referred to in literary criticism as intertextuality, a term coined in the sixties by the Bulgarian-French semiotician Julia Kristeva. (refer to Kristeva 1969) Around the same time, Claude Lévi-Strauss gave it an anthropological turn in the domain of mythical thought terming the phenomenon intellectual *bricolage*, a French word for a reconstruction

from whatever is available, the prior, the secondhand material and the one who carries it out (in opposition to a specialist like the engineer or the scientist) is the *bricoleur*:

And in our own time the 'bricoleur' is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman. The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual 'bricolage' – which explains the relation which can be perceived between the two.¹ (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 11)

In his *The Art of the Novel* (1988), a book which the Czech-French novelist Milan Kundera describes as "the reflections of a practitioner", Kundera elucidates that "the novel's spirit is the spirit of continuity. Each work is an answer to preceding ones. Each work contains all the previous experience of the novel." (Kundera 2005: 18-19) And elsewhere he augments his position:

To my mind, great works can only be born within the history of their art and as *participants* in that history. It is only inside history that we can see what is new and what is repetitive, what is discovery and what is imitation. (Kundera 1995: 18)

All these propositions have a common bottom line that ideas received from the past enter into new narrative-discourses, consciously or unconsciously, the old signifiers combining with the new ones to create new formal and conceptual constructs. Informally it has also been called rehashing, appropriation, assimilation, inspiration, influence or simply mixing. There are no hard and fast rules. On the one hand the motifs of the past are loaded with meaning; on the other hand the redistribution, realignment and remixing of the same motifs in a different time and space emancipate them, not completely but to some extent, from the old contexts and meanings and invariably they end up generating new or partially new significations keeping in mind the unity of the new text as a whole, for the meaning in not to be found in the isolated signifiers but in their relations to others, in what Levi Strauss terms the "bundle of relations". In semiotic studies it is always emphasized that there can be no fixed, eternal and *a priori* interpretation of any signifier. Rather signifiers tend to shift in

1 *The 'bricoleur' has no precise equivalent in English. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man, but, as the text makes clear, he is of a different standing from, for instance, the English 'odd job man' or handyman (trans. note).

their signification. This is not to say that they are not stable. The play with motifs lends new layers of meanings to the old, a kind of symbiotic understanding, one enriching the other and vice versa. The biblical parable of the Prodigal Son for example has been reinvented by so many writers including those by Rilke, Kafka and Gide. The same goes for the ancient Greek myths. The apples with which the father hits his son Gregor Samsa who finds himself transformed into a cockroach in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* do not have the same signification as the apples in *Snowwhite and the seven Dwarfs* or the fruit in the Original Sin. In each of these texts the signifier 'apple' produces an altogether different order of signification.

The extensive scholarship on Franz Kafka (1883-1924) compares Kafka's writing with that of many writers, some who wrote before him or his contemporaries or those who came after him. Fyoder Dostoevsky and Nikolai Gogol are two writers who share similarities in motifs and narrative techniques with Kafka. One only has to think of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Kafka's *The Trial* or Gogol's *The Nose* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. (Struc 1971: 135-154) Kafka has also been compared with writers, particularly French existentialists who came after him like Samuel Beckett, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Maurice Blanchot. (Sartre 1955: 41-60) In fact Kafka is often considered as a literary precursor of the French existentialism. This paper seeks to compare and contrast Kafka with the Austrian author Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989), a post-War writer on the basis of their two texts *Vor dem Gesetz* and *Der Diktator*. Some scholars like Gerald A. Fetz explored affinities and differences between Kafka and Bernhard way back in the eighties when Bernhard was still alive. He compares Kafka's story *Der Bau* (1923/24, *The Burrow*) with Bernhard's novel *Korrektur* (1975, *Correction*) taking into account motifs such as illness and disease, aging and death, hearing and seeing, and threshold situations. (A. Fetz 1988: 217-241) Much of the comparison is based on similar biographical details that is the hallmark of the positivistic approach. This study is more of a Close Reading of two other shorter narratives of Kafka and Bernhard.

The intertextual connections between Bernhard's *Der Diktator* (Bernhard 1994: 58-59) and Kafka's well known doorkeeper legend *Vor dem Gesetz* (Kafka 2006: 162-163) - the text that precedes Bernhard's text by around 50 years - are too compelling to be taken as a coincidence. In terms of form, genre, narrative techniques and the content there are striking parallels. The penchant for miniature forms of narration, fairy tale structure, absurd and grotesque elements, tragicomic technique of narration, motifs of death and futility of a happy end bind the two. The beginnings are somewhat similar. Yet the two texts proceed to tell different stories because the

protagonists may be in a similar situation but they respond to it differently. Both show two different possibilities of existence. The moot point is that the reader's awareness of the intertextual linkages could contribute to a better understanding of Bernhard's narrative. His familiarity with Kafka's world and universe, specifically the text *Before the Law* written in 1919 is crucial to a better analysis of Bernhard's narrative text.

Vor Dem Gesetz ('Before the Law')

Turn-of-the-century Prague, a provincial city overshadowed by vibrant European cities like Paris, Berlin and Vienna was home to a writer who led an "aesthetic revolution" (Kundera 2005: 81) in literature that however went unnoticed in a Europe caught up in world wars. Kafka died in 1924 more or less an unknown writer who was not published by any big publisher of his time, who never received literary awards or any recognition of sorts. Apart from the wars, another reason could also be the bias that existed in the beginning of the 20th century against the German spoken in Prague and surrounding areas cut off from the mainstream German. This regional German was considered somewhat retarded in vocabulary, lacking in talent and not taken as seriously as that from German majority areas. Kafka himself called Prague German in his characteristic laconic style *Zigeuner Deutsch* (Gypsy German).

Drawing on Kafka's reflections in his diary entry of 25. Dec, 1911 on what he called *kleine Literaturen*,² (Kafka 1976: 154) the French theoreticians Deleuze and Guattari coined and popularized the somewhat controversial term "minor literatures" (Deleuze, Guattari 1986) which is actually not really what Kafka intended. Besides Kafka's Jewish background did not exactly make publishing easy in an increasingly anti-Semitic Europe. It were the American and French translations of Kafka's works that first introduced Kafka in the non-German speaking world and his reputation as a writer burgeoned only when he was *discovered* by the existentialists and the absurdists in France and today Kafka, who in a moment of frustration dismissed his own writing as *Gekritzel* (scribbling), has joined the ranks of major or world literatures. Recognition and rehabilitation in his hometown Prague, lost behind the Iron Curtain of Communism till 1989, where the so called bourgeois artists like him were *persona non grata*, how-

2 Kafka was referring to Czech literature in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire where German was the official language and also to Jewish-Polish literatures. One of the important points Kafka makes is that "small" literatures enjoyed a certain kind of freedom as they do not develop under the shadow of big names; there was hence no reverence and no compulsion to imitate. Kafka goes into the essence of "small" literatures. Deleuze's post-colonial ideological position regarding marginalization of languages is not how Kafka intended it.

ever came much later with the collapse of communism. Lastly it took some time for the Czechs to acknowledge and make peace with their German past when they were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Today Kafka has a cult following in intellectual circles in Prague as well as in other parts of the world.

One of his most popular works is a short but dense narrative *Before the Law* (first published 1915, i.e. during the lifetime of Kafka and also part of his novel *The Trial*) that provokes multiple interpretations of all orders. It has two protagonists, a man from the countryside and a doorkeeper. A man from the countryside arrives before an imposing structure, the Law and seeks permission from the doorkeeper to enter. The doorkeeper throws a spanner with a cryptic reply "not now", perhaps "later":

Aber der Türhüter sagt, daß er ihm *jetzt* den Eintritt nicht gewähren könne. Der Mann überlegt und fragt dann, ob er also später werde eintreten dürfen. „Es ist möglich“, sagt der Türhüter, „*jetzt* aber nicht.“ (Kafka 2006: 162)

Er macht viele Versuche, eingelassen zu werden, und ermüdet den Türhüter durch seine Bitten. Der Türhüter stellt öfters kleine Verhöre mit ihm an, fragt ihn über seine Heimat aus und nach vielem andern, es sind aber teilnahmslose Fragen, wie sie große Herren stellen, und zum Schlusse sagt er ihm immer wieder, daß er ihn *noch nicht* einlassen könne. (ibid)

But the doorkeeper says that he cannot grant admittance *at the moment*. The man thinks it over and then asks if he will be allowed in later. "It is possible," says the doorkeeper, "but *not at the moment*." (Kafka 1988: 3)

He makes many attempts to be admitted, and wearies the doorkeeper with his importunity. The doorkeeper frequently has little interviews with him, asking him questions about his home and many other things, but the questions are put indifferently, as great lords put them, and always finish with the statement that he *cannot be let in yet*. (ibid)

The doorkeeper also warns him about other, more menacing doorkeepers inside. The man from the countryside is taken aback. He hesitates. He had not expected such obstacles. He decides to play it safe and wait. Over the course of time he makes several attempts to access the Law, appealing, pleading to the fleas in his overcoat that feed as parasites on him, bribing the doorkeeper with his modest assets, engaging with him in idle talk, all along trying to maintain his dignity. The doorkeeper neither turns him

away nor does he give him a clear go ahead. Like *große Herren* he does not really pay much heed to him and carries on with his work. The man from the countryside feels unsure, confused and lost, but he does not give up. Undeterred he waits patiently “days and years”, practically all his life, at the entrance of the Law. Despite the existential impasse, his faith in the Law is unwavering. As he grows old and nears his end, he turns quirky and childish, mumbling to himself. The burly doorkeeper, who does not seem to have aged correspondingly, bends down to the shriveled, dying man and roars in his ear that the door was meant only for him and he is going to shut it “now”. The man from the countryside, almost deaf and blind, dies without ever having set foot inside the door of the Law. It is left to the reader to decide whether the doorkeeper was exhibiting *Schadenfreude* or fulfilling the last wish of the man or simply responding nonchalantly to a query addressed to him. Whether the doorkeeper is a stickler for rules or he plays on the fear generated by the guardians of the Law is another point that can be debated endlessly. What is certain is that the wait was in vain. It is as if the light from inside the mysterious Law were mocking the man. The ubiquitous Law which Goethe’s Mephistopheles in *Faust* disdainfully dismisses as “*ew’ge Krankheit*” (eternal or congenial disease) (Goethe 1976: 86) remains as pristine as ever.

“Waiting” is an important motif in Kafka’s writing which some critics, obsessed with Kafka’s Jewish background, triumphantly pinpoint as the eternal Jewish wait for the Messiah. Max Brod, the highly respectable Kafka critic in America Heinz Politzer and Hannah Arendt e.g. go down this path. So do many others. What they do not realise is that although Kafka often draws on mythological elements, be it the Greek, the Christian or the Jewish mythology, he invariably transforms them. What matters is how the mythical and religious motifs enter into new combinations with other signifiers within a given text to create a new discourse where the old signifiers get reorganized and reconstituted acquiring new significations in the process. Kafka is not just another Jew. He is a writer with his specific conceptual world and universe and there is also a specificity of how he articulates this universe in German. (Singh 2003: 233-248) Kafka’s short prose *Heimkehr* (*Homecoming*, first published 1936) draws on the biblical story of the Prodigal Son who leave home and then returns after many years to reconcile with his father who welcomes him with open arms. In Kafka, the estranged son returns but he ends up “waiting” at the doorstep of his father’s farm, stricken by threshold-Angst. Joseph K. and K. also keep waiting or are kept waiting indefinitely by the courts and the castle respectively. Waiting often turns into a modern existential experience in Kafka’s works.

DER DIKTATOR ('The Dictator')

Since the end of the Second World War, the two figures who have risen above the welter of competitions for attention in Austrian fiction remain Peter Handke and Thomas Bernhard. (Dowden 2002: 51)

Ereignisse (Events), a collection of extremely short literary pieces, 31 texts altogether, was written by Bernhard around 1957 and published first in parts in 1963 and then complete in 1969 with *Der Diktator* at number 25. This book is counted among his early works. "Events" is a neutral term that refers to an unbiased narration without taking sides as in a newspaper report or a protocol. Bernhard's text begins with the word in caps DER DIKTATOR which is also taken as the title of the text. The dictator selects out of a hundred odd applicants the *einfacher Mann vom Lande* (simple-minded man from the countryside), assigning him the singular task of polishing his boots and shoes daily. Both the dictator and the man from the countryside are introduced with the definite article. Shoes are an indicator of one's social status and it goes without saying that a dictator must be seen with polished shoes. It is an old practice in inns and hotels that guests leave their shoes outside the door of their room and next day they get polished shoes. The shoe shiner is accordingly assigned a vantage position "before" the door of the dictator.

Sitting and sleeping outside the door, the man adapts to the new surroundings and work. In no time the shoe shiner starts to gain weight developing the same fat nose and the same kind of hair loss as the dictator. He begins to resemble his boss. One reason for the uncanny resemblance could be that both eat the same diet. The shoe shiner transforms literally and metaphorically into the *Doppelgänger* of the dictator. The fantastic elements typical of fairy tales are self-evident here. The gain in weight is allegorical to the gain in all kind of confidential knowledge related to the dictator. All ministers and advisors of the dictator begin to fear him. In the evenings after his work is over, he plays a musical instrument. The supplicant transforms into the *Türhüter*, the door guard, the bodyguard who is aware of all the little details in the dictator's life. The man from the countryside turned shoe shiner is *tatsächlich* (actually) the person closest to the dictator, physically and otherwise. The dictator remains behind the door, shrouded in mystery and the narrative gives no indication what happens behind closed doors. One day when the man from the countryside feels confident and prepared, he enters into the dictator's chamber killing him with a single powerful blow. Quickly he slips into clothes of the dead man. Satisfied with his reflection as he stands "before" the mir-

ror in the robes of the dictator, that he *tatsächlich* (actually) looks like the dictator, he decides that it is time for the big announcement. He storms out confidently, dashes into the passage and shouts that the shoe shiner attacked him. He declares that in self-defense he killed the shoe shiner. Instructions are issued that the shoe-shiner's body be disposed of and his family be informed.

'Before the Law' and 'The Dictator'

The common signifier "the man from the countryside" functions in both texts as a proper noun, as a semiotic sign that is evocative for the very reason that one is likely to criticize it, namely that it is clichéd. It works even better than a name or half a name like Joseph K. (*The Trial*) or a name in the form of just an alphabet K. (*The Castle*). Bernhard's man from the countryside is initially selected for the job because his profile as a villager is perfect for the job. Attributes such as simplicity, gullibility and transparency associated with villagers make him a suitable candidate for the job. He is supposed to be someone not familiar with the ways of the world which renders him harmless in the world of politics and power. Training him in shoe polishing is no big deal. The dialectics of "before" and "behind" the door dominates both texts. The world "behind" the door is opaque and mysterious, unknown and unknowable, abstract to the extent of being metaphysical. So far the two narratives proceed more or less on similar lines. That is where Kafka and Bernhard converge before parting ways. Kafka's protagonist remains steadfast in his character. He remains till the end what his name suggests, literally and metaphorically, the man from the countryside, simple-minded and naïve.

The resemblance to Fyoder Dostoevsky's idiot (*The Idiot*, 1868), "a good man", some would insultingly call him a country bumpkin or simply meek, is striking. In contrast, Bernhard's man from the countryside undergoes a transformation. Literally living in the corridors of power, Bernhard's protagonist quickly learns the rules of the game. Gaining weight, losing hair and developing a fat nose over the years help him acquire the looks of the dictator. Unlike Kafka's protagonist, Bernhard's protagonist feels no threshold angst. Taking advantage of his proximity to the dictator, he one day enters his room and kills him. But this is not to demolish the hierarchical power structures and democratize them. He gets rid of the dictator only to take his place. Seizing power, he ensures the continuity of the tyranny. Power changes hands as the master-servant constellation is inverted but the structures of power remain firmly intact as everyone is on the same side of the power. The differences between the dictator

and the suppressed, the perpetrator and the victim, have and have nots, the benefactor and the supplicant disappear because all are power-hungry and all seek power. They are attracted to and seduced by power. No wonder revolutions often end up replacing one form of dictatorship with another. Although both Kafka and Bernhard often pose in their writing the eternal questions of power structures and power dynamics and both can be highly political and provocative, the two absurdists have their own distinct conceptual worlds, alike yet diverse.

The seriousness with which writers like Brecht, Böll etc presented the power relations between the powerful and the powerless are very different from the humorous-grotesque, tragicomic worlds of Kafka and Bernhard. Moral judgment is suspended as both narratives eschew the traditional victory of good over evil. It is often said that Bernhard disliked Austria's indifference or silence over the Nazi crimes, its bureaucracy, provincialism etc. Kafka scholarship similarly reduces his work to the Jewish context, the father-son constellation and the Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy. But both transcend temporal-historical spaces to a universality of the human condition that anyone in any part of the world can relate to. Bernhard deliberately evokes Kafka's famous parable, pays in this manner Kafka a literary homage and then moves on to unfold his own universe. Both the protagonists are faced with choices: one chooses to wait at the threshold and the other chooses to cross the threshold taking matters in his own hands. It is all about the decisions and choices people make in life. In that sense, both are highly charged existential narratives.

Form and Narrative Techniques

The two seminal narratives demonstrate a characteristic and peculiar kind of writing, the Kafkaesque and Bernhardian, two adjectives followed by nouns. In terms of motifs there are similarities that have already been pointed out. In terms of form and narrative techniques too there are so many similarities be it the fondness for miniature texts, a peculiar kind of dark humour, the grotesque, the repetitions and exaggerations, the seamless fusion of the real and the fantastic. The Kafka and the Bernhardian worlds are like two circles that intersect with a large area of intersection. The overall impression is that of aesthetic affinity. Let me elaborate it with an example of the structure. In their novels, both writers prefer a sweeping architectonic structure without speed breakers like paragraphs and punctuation. Bernhard even avoids making chapters. According to Milan Kundera, who has done commendable research on Kafka:

[the] Kafkan imagination runs like a river, a dreamlike river that

finds no respite till a chapter's end. That long breath of imagination is reflected in the nature of the syntax. (. . .) The texts are divided into very few paragraphs. This *tendency to minimize the articulation* few paragraphs, few strong pauses (on rereading a manuscript, Kafka often even changed periods to commas), few markers emphasizing the text's logical organization (colons, semicolons) is consubstantial with Kafka's style; at the same time it is a perpetual attack on "good German style" (as well as on the "good style" of all the languages into which Kafka is translated). (Kundera 2015: 116)

You can see the long, intoxicating flight of Kafka's prose in the text's typographical appearance, which is often a single "endless" paragraph, over pages, enfolding even long passages of dialogue. (ibid: 117)

Similarly their short narratives, shorter than a short story, a more appropriate term would be miniatures or micro fiction, are marked by one uninterrupted piece of writing: a single long paragraph with long but few sentences and few punctuation marks, hyperbolic condensed forms like one solid rock. These miniature narratives are marked by absence of historiography, lengthy character sketches and reflections philosophical in nature. Rather they tend to follow the style of a factual report or protocol, devoid of sentimentality of sorts and are marked by brevity of narrative space. It is as if the authors were saying that "less is more". *Before the Law* and *The Dictator* are good examples of the same.

Bernhard's prose books *Ereignisse* (Events) and *Der Stimmenimitator* (The Voice Imitator) contain short narratives of a page or little more than a page with no title, no paragraphs, a couple of long sentences, no or very few punctuation marks and deliberate repetition in vocabulary, truly minimalistic writing. E.g. Bernhard repeats conjunctions like "und" (and) as in the below cited sentence:

Das bekommt dem einfachen Mann vom Land, *und* er nimmt rasch an Gewicht zu *und* gleicht seinem Vorgesetzten *und* nur dem Diktator ist er unterstellt mit den Jahren um ein Haar. (italics by the present author) (Bernhard 1994: 58-59)

... daß der Schuhputzer *dieselbe* Kost ißt wie der Diktator. [. . .] Er hat bald *dieselbe* dicke Nase und, nachdem er seine Haare verloren hat, auch *denselben* Schädel. (italics by the present author) (ibid: 58)

Humour

The literary critic Mikkel Frantzen mentions, in addition to the three kinds of laughter that Bernhard explores, namely the bitter laugh, the hollow laugh and the mirthful laugh, "the demonic laughter" associated with despair in the Kierkegaardian sense. (Frantzen 2018: 89) The Bernhard critic Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler explains Bernhardian humour in terms of its combination with the tragic to create the tragicomic genre, a term that was earlier restricted to drama:

The opposites of comedy and tragedy exist alongside rather than in mutually exclusive terms. Bernhard's virtuosity reveals itself in that he gives the reader the opportunity to re-enact this constant crossing of borders between the two genres. He appears to be a tap-dancer who, with the speed of lightning, dances on the border between the comic and the tragic. (Schmidt-Dengler 2002: 107)

In his speech on the occasion of receiving the prestigious Georg-Büchner award, Bernhard elaborates the same when he talks about life as theatre:

Es ist absolut ein Theater der Körper in zweiter Linie der Geistesangst und also der Todesangst . . . wir wissen nicht, handelt es sich um die Tragödie um der Komödie oder um die Komödie der Tragödie willen . . . aber alles handelt von Fürchtbarkeit, von Erbärmlichkeit, von Unzurechnungsfähigkeit . . . (Bernhard 2010: 124)

It is absolutely a theatre of the bodies then of the existential Angst and the Angst of death . . . we do not know, is it a tragedy for the sake of a comedy or a comedy for the sake of a tragedy . . . but everything revolves around fear, misery, insanity . . . (my translation)

The same is true of Kafka. According to the literary critic Roman S. Struc who undertakes a comparative study of Kafka with Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), the Ukrainian-Russian writer who belonged to the generation before him, Kafka's works display a "macabre humour" developed with the help of the grotesque:

The grotesque thrives on the vacillation between the ludicrous and the terrifying, on associating incompatible entities, on shuttling between the trivial and the impossible and, most of all, on the exploitation of diverse emotional responses in the face of that essential incongruity of world tainted by the grotesque imagination. (Struc 1971: 140)

Recent research on Kafka is also gradually but reluctantly acknowledging Kafka's pure humour. In the first volume of his monumental Kafka-biography *Kafka. Die Jahre der Entscheidungen* (2002), Reiner Stach highlights Kafka's slapstick comedy citing anecdotes from *The Trial*. (Stach 2014: 555) He concludes: "*Furchtbar ist das Ganze, komisch sind die Details*". (The whole of it is terrible, what is funny are the details.) (ibid: 554) Both Struc and Stach are right in their own way and both these kinds of laughter exist in Kafka's world. In an interview to the *Zeit Literatur*, the Nobel laureate Peter Handke, an avid reader of Kafka, however refutes the argument that Kafka could be funny. For Handke, it is the bitter truth in Kafka that evokes laughter:

Kafka war nicht komisch. Es wird immer erzählt, Kafkas Zuhörer hätten gelacht, weil seine Prosa so humorvoll gewesen sei. Nein, sie haben nicht über den Witz gelacht, sondern über die Wahrheit. (...) Kafkas Kunst ist so rein, dass sie wahr ist. Darüber muss man lachen. (Handke 2010: 5-6)

Kafka was not funny. It is always said that Kafka's audience would laugh, because his prose writing was so humorous. No, they laughed not at the joke, rather at the truth of it. (...) Kafka's art is so pure, that it is true. That is what makes one laugh. (my translation)

The Kafkan and Bernhardian worlds explore existential themes through comic and grotesque modes of presentation. Gallows humour is a term that would appropriately fit both the oeuvres. Bernhard's malicious glee at the turn of events to the point of turning it into a horror story and Kafka's dry humour at the hopelessness of the situation are close cousins. The grotesque imagination is at its best when horror and terror are presented with an exaggerated dark humour. It can appear in the fusion of real and the surreal but cannot be part of a typically exclusive realistic mode of presentation.

Conclusion

Bernhard's parody of Kafka's famous parable is so refined and subtle that only readers who do a close and attentive reading of narratives would recognize it. Bernhard starts with Kafka and then subverts the Kafkaesk motif to a chilling end. This intertextual comparison is not historical for history and historicity take a backseat in both these narratives as the motifs strive to be more universal than specific to time and space. Neither are the two writers contemporaries. The comparison is in that sense more structural than historical.

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La traduction en tant qu'un engagement politique et idéologique en Inde

Rupam Datta

Abstract:

The power of translation has much greater implication, which goes far beyond the sphere of reader and the author. Translation has traditionally been view as the noble task of bridging the gap between peoples of different cultures and languages. Even in the biblical legend of the tower of Babel symbolize not just the origin of the translation but also the quintessential humanistic role of breaking the language barrier which the translation is deemed to carry out. This paper will attempt to show that how translation in India took on an entirely different political implication when translations occurred in the powered relation that existed between a coloniser and colonised people. The aim of this paper is to find out how over the course of Indian history the role of translation has changed according to the ideology and politics of the time.

Keywords: History; Ideology; Politics; Translation.

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society.

Introduction

La traduction a été traditionnellement considérée comme un lien qui sert à combler l'écart linguistique entre les peuples de différentes cultures et langues. Mais dans l'ère du colonialisme, la traduction a pris son ampleur et elle est devenue une entité dynamique.

Comme Edward Saïd a montré dans son livre *Orientalisme*, la tra-

duction a aussi été utilisée comme un instrument de perpétuation de la domination coloniale des siècles 18^{ème} et 19^{ème} siècles par les empires coloniaux français et britannique. L'Empire britannique, afin de «découvrir» leur colonie indienne et sa richesse littéraire a commencé la traduction de textes sanskrits en anglais pourtant en dehors de la langue sanskrite, il n'y avait pratiquement pas de traduction à partir d'autres langues indiennes. Ainsi, la diversité culturelle et linguistique de l'Inde est perdue dans cette vision fragmentée qui était représentée par les œuvres de Charles Trevelyan, William Jones, William Carey et bien d'autres.

Dans ce contexte, Tejaswini Niranjana remarque :

Influential translations (from Sanskrit and Persian into English in the eighteenth century, for example) interpellated colonial subjects, legitimizing or authorizing certain versions of the Oriental, versions that came to acquire the status of "truths" even in the countries where :original works were produced.

Dans notre article, nous allons postuler qu'en Inde au fil de l'histoire la traduction n'était pas un acte innocent et un texte à traduire était toujours choisi pour des idéologiques spécifiques. Bref, en Inde la traduction a servi d'instrument de manipulation à des fins politiques et idéologiques.

En analysant la tendance historique de la traduction en Inde nous allons démontrer comment l'acte de traduction et le rôle de traducteur ont évolué et que au cours de l'histoire, la traduction est utilisée comme un outil de manipulation de la part du traducteur à des fins politiques et idéologiques.

Traduction en époque précoloniale en Inde

De l'antiquité à nos jours, la traduction en Inde, est considérée comme une réécriture, elle est *création et littérature* au même titre que le texte que le traducteur traduit. En Inde les traducteurs ont joui d'une certaine liberté créative. Une bonne traduction doit être censé de préserver le sens global du texte source en langue cible. Par conséquent, parfois, l'adaptation, la paraphrase et « la transcréation » entrent dans la catégorie générale de la traduction dans la tradition indienne. En tenant compte de cette norme, un traducteur devrait essayer de recréer les caractéristiques linguistiques, mais avant tout, il devrait restaurer le contenu sémantique (contenu et forme / structure) du texte source.

Si le traducteur suit efficacement ces paramètres, la traduction sera considérée comme créative et le traducteur deviendra un «co-créateur ».

L'histoire de la traduction en Inde - plus en termes d'évolution de la traduction que de ce qui a été traduit - peut être considérée comme relevant de trois grands domaines, à savoir la traduction précoloniale, coloniale et postcoloniale.

Dans le contexte indien le mot traduction est signifié par plusieurs termes selon les langues et les régions. Sujit Mukherjee en explique:

Rupantar (meaning 'change in form') and anuvad ('speaking after' or 'following') are the commonly understood senses of translation in India, and neither term demands fidelity to the original.

Le terme '*rupantar*' signifie qu'il y a un changement de forme, et le mot '*anuvaad*' veut dire parler après, ou suivre quelque chose. A cela, il ajoute le terme ourdou · *tarjuma* pour signifier la traduction, mais il peut aussi signifier paraphraser, et pas nécessairement dans une autre langue. Un autre mot en hindi, c'est *chaya*, qui veut dire ombre. L. S. Deshpande le définit comme une Image qui suggère la similitude et non l'identité avec l'original. C'est une variation au lieu d'une imitation.

Anuvaad (Anuvaada) est l'équivalent accepté du mot anglais « Translation » en hindi. Il vient du mot sanskrit *Anuvaadah* qui signifie littéralement « Répétition en usage normal; Répétition pour soutenir, illustrer ou expliquer; Répétition explicative ou mention du discours qui a été déjà indiqué

La tradition d'*Anuvaad* est caractérisée par diverses théories et techniques. Dans la tradition religieuse et philosophique en Inde, les érudits ont le recours de la *teekaa* intralingue et interlingual qui étaient l'interprétation ou bien explication ou un commentaire du difficile et inintelligible partie du texte original.

Selon Sujit Mukherjee la traduction en Inde est pratiquée depuis longtemps sans lui donner le nom ou le style de traductologie.» Il estime que la traduction en Inde a commencé à partir du récit ou de l'écriture de compositions littéraires d'une langue à une autre. D'habitude le texte source était la langue principale, le sanscrit, et les textes cibles étaient *bhaashaas* - langues modernes comme l'hindi, l'asamiya, le bengalie et le gujrati.

Contrairement à la tradition de traduction biblique en Occident, les textes sources n'étaient pas principalement des écritures religieuses comme les *Vedas* ou les *Upanishad*, mais *Kavya* (œuvres poétiques) telles que le *Ramayana*, les *Purana* telles que le *Srimad-Bhagavad* et les *itihahasa-purana* telles que le *Mahabharata*.

Un *purana* est un texte appartenant à un vaste genre de la littérature in-

dienne, traitant d'une grande gamme de sujets. Composés entre 400 et 1 000 de l'ère, ces récits élaborés pour tous étaient préférentiellement destinés aux femmes qui n'avaient pas accès aux Védas. Ils sont généralement écrits en sanskrit. *Ramcharitmaanasa* (1575-1577) de Tulasi Das est le meilleur exemple de cette tradition. Il s'agit d'une version / adaptation / traduction poétique du *Ramayana* de Valmiki en hindi de Sanskrit. Compte tenu de cette phénomène, Sujit Mukherjee raisonne:

"...this telling or writing, "can only loosely be regarded as translation, because, while the basic story remained same, some of it was left out and a lot of new writing [was] done to fill it out again"

Le concept de création d'un nouveau texte à partir de l'ancien est très évident dans les nombreuses versions indiennes des épopées. Les poètes du mouvement Bhakti, vulgarisaient le savoir védique et d'autres écrits du Sanscrit au langage de l'homme commun, peuvent également être considérés librement comme des traducteurs.

Avadhesh Kumar Singh remarque

The period from 1100 to 1700 was marked by the lokabhashikaran of knowledge in Sanskrit. The Bhakti poets namely Nanak, Kabir, Sur, Tulsi, Narsinh, Mira, Gyaneshvar democratized the knowledge in Sanskrit, by transferring it into dialects and lokbhashas (languages of ordinary people).

Cette période est aussi marquée par la traduction du *Ramayana* et du *Mahabharata* dans les langues indiennes. *Ramcharitmanas* de Tulsidas, *Ramayana* tamoul de Kamba, *Adhyatma Ramayanam* en Malayalam d'Ezhuthachchan, *Sarala Mahabharata* en oriya de Sarala Das, etc. ont tous été composés au cours de cette période. Il convient de noter à nouveau que toutes ces transcréations étaient destinées pour les lecteurs cibles d'une région et une culture particulière indienne.

Il nous apparaît donc clairement que la traduction dans l'époque précoloniale a joué un rôle important dans la vulgarisation des textes écrits en sanskrit et aussi a engendré la notion de la traduction comme réécriture.

Epoque coloniale: Empire moghol et britannique

La fondation de l'Empire moghol à Delhi a été marquée par l'entrée du persan et le déclin progressif de l'influence sanscrite. Le célèbre voyageur et écrivain Alberuni déjà traduisait les classiques du sanscrit en arabe. L'Inde sous le règne moghol d'Akbar est célèbre pour son syncrétisme hindou-musulman. L'une des meilleures preuves en est la tra-

duction en persan des épopées hindoues, le *Ramayana* et le *Razmnama*, dont les miniatures viennent illustrer le multiculturalisme encouragé par l'empereur. Devenu synonyme d'un esprit de tolérance, l'empereur Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar met en œuvre de nombreuses initiatives favorisant le syncrétisme religieux qu'il souhaitait voir régner à travers la vaste étendue de son empire.

À cette fin, Akbar a établi un bureau impérial de traduction dans son cours. Les textes traduits étaient des ouvrages religieux hindous écrits en sanscrit. L'arrière-pensée d'un tel projet de traduction était de mieux comprendre les indiens ce qui les permet ensuite de mieux gouverner leur empire.

Dans ce contexte Audrey Truschke dit

Engaging with Sanskrit was not an obvious move for the Mughal dynasty. The Mughals came to India from Central Asia, were Muslims, and spoke Persian. India's vast learned traditions, written largely in Sanskrit, were no doubt intriguing, but the Mughals had several learned traditions (e.g., those in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish) that they could more seamlessly claim as their own. So why were the Mughals so interested in Sanskrit? [...] To put it succinctly, the Mughals understood power, in part, as an aesthetic practice, and they wanted to think about themselves as an Indian empire. They turned to Sanskrit to figure out what it meant for them to be sovereigns of the subcontinent.

Les textes traduits comprenaient le *Ramayana*, le *Mahabharata* et le *Yoga-vashishta*. Fils aîné de l'empereur moghol Shah Jahan Dara Shikoh était lui-même un érudit et était intéressé par la philosophie des *Upanishads*. Il favorisait la tolérance religieuse et la coexistence entre Hindous et Musulmans. À cette fin, il traduisit les *Upaniads* du sanscrit en persan, afin qu'elles soient accessibles aux lettrés musulmans. Sa traduction visait à mieux comprendre la philosophie hindoue et à trouver un terrain d'entente pour la philosophie islamique et hindoue.

Comme d'autres rois moghols, Firoz Shah Tughlaq a fait traduire des œuvres religieuses sanscrites en persan. Ces traductions ont été réalisées dans le but spécifique de comprendre une autre religion et d'explorer les moyens d'améliorer la coopération avec une autre religion. Ainsi, la traduction jouait un rôle majeur dans les domaines social et politique de cette époque

La Traduction durant l'Empire Britannique

L'histoire de la traduction en Inde pendant la période coloniale est caractérisée par un grand dynamisme. En effet, la traduction a joué un rôle capital dans les échanges et la communication avec l'Empire britannique. Les Britanniques entre autres, avec leurs politiques et pratiques expansionnistes, ont bien compris l'importance d'étudier ces langues et savent mettre à profit ces connaissances. La traduction des langues indiennes (en particulier le sanskrit) vers les langues européennes a connu un essor avec l'avènement de la Compagnie britannique des Indes orientales en Inde. Après 1757, la Compagnie britannique des Indes orientales s'était intéressée à consolider le pouvoir qu'elle avait établi en Inde. La création de la Société Asiatique à Kolkata en 1784 par Sir William Jones marque un tournant important de cette époque. C'est la phase orientaliste où les Britanniques manifestent un intérêt remarquable pour les anciens classiques du sanskrit et d'autres textes non littéraires.

Le corpus littéraire indien de l'époque est essentiellement persan et sanskrit, et dans une moindre mesure arabe. Seuls deux orientalistes semblent connaître suffisamment bien le sanskrit pour publier des traductions dans cette langue et il s'agit de Charles Wilkins et de William Jones. Cette situation s'explique par la formation orientaliste proposée à l'époque en arabe et en persan pour ceux qui se destinent à une carrière dans la Compagnie des Indes Orientales, et par la situation politique en Inde où la langue de l'administration reste le persan jusqu'aux années 1830. Aussi les langues vernaculaires, essentiellement l'ourdou, l'hindi, le bengali, et la langue sanscrite ne font qu'une entrée tardive dans le corpus littéraire indien tel qu'il est connu en Angleterre. Il suffit pour s'en rendre compte d'observer l'évolution des publications des ouvrages indiens traduits en anglais. Les orientalistes publient d'abord des spécimens regroupés en anthologie. Si les *Asiatic Researches* publiés par la Asiatic Society regroupent essentiellement des essais écrits par les orientalistes eux-mêmes, le *Asiatic Miscellany* (1787), le *New Asiatic Miscellany* (1789), et les *Oriental Collections* (1798-1800) ont pour vocation de publier des extraits de « littérature indienne », c'est-à-dire recopiés et recueillis en Inde, car en réalité les anthologies contiennent principalement des extraits de littérature persane.

Les années suivantes ont marqué par une pléthore de traduction qui comprenait les traductions de textes aussi divers qu'*Abhinjanasakuntalam* et *Manusmriti*.

Les premières traductions séparées du sanskrit ont fait par Wilkins. Il a traduit *The Bhagvat-Geeta, Or Dialogues of Kreeshma and Arjoon* en 1785 dont

lequel Warren Hastings a écrit la préface, *les Heetopades of Veeshnoo-Sarma* en 1787, *The Story of Dooshwanta and Sakoontala*, un extrait de *Mahabharata* en 1795 ; Jones a publié *Sacontala, Or the Fatal Ring ; an Indian Drama by Calidas* en 1789 et *The Seasons: a Descriptive Poem*, by Calidas en 1792.

Ces activités ne doivent pas être considérées comme de simples exercices intellectuels. Dans un contexte de conquêtes territoriales et d'élargissement de l'empire britannique en Inde, la découverte des littératures indiennes (essentiellement en persan et peu à peu en sanscrit), la collecte de manuscrits et les traductions ont pour but d'effectuer des rapprochements au niveau culturel, de familiariser le public anglais à la présence indienne dans l'espace littéraire métropolitain, ce qui permet ensuite d'en justifier l'appropriation et l'intégration. La connaissance culturelle était un moyen de subordination pour l'Empire Britannique pour contrôler les peuples. Sous le règne de la Compagnie des Indes orientales, cette tradition de traduction a également donné lieu à l'Indologie.

G. N. Devy a mis en évidence comment ces indologues ont seulement mis l'accent sur les anciens textes sanscrits et ont ignoré la richesse de la littérature ou d'autres connaissances culturelles de l'Inde médiévale. Selon lui, il s'agissait d'un stratagème délibéré des Anglais visant à souligner que le pays qu'ils avaient colonisé, avait un passé magnifique mais qu'il avait ensuite dégénéré pour devenir une région plongée dans la superstition et d'autres formes d'ignorance. Cet engouement des indologues avec les textes anciens a un prix – celui de l'exclusion des langues et littératures contemporaines et vernaculaires, de la création d'une Inde monolithique et enfermée dans un âge d'or passé, car la littérature indienne est réinterprétée en appliquant les outils et les catégories de la rhétorique et de l'esthétique classiques occidentales.

En 1800, le Fort William College de Kolkata a été fondée pour enseigner les langues et la culture indiennes aux écrivains de la Compagnie des Indes et aussi pour former les administrateurs britanniques. Il servit à la fois la curiosité des savants et linguistes de la fin du XIX^e siècle, et l'intérêt du colonisateur à maîtriser les divers langues et dialectes en disposant de petits corpus imprimés issus du répertoire littéraire d'hindi, ourdou, bengali et de marathi. Cette institution joua un rôle pionnier dans la traduction anglaise de textes qui ne circulaient jusqu'alors que de manière orale ou se trouvaient consignés dans des copies manuscrites. Bien que le but de cet apprentissage ne soit pas académique mais commercial, il a sans doute contribué à la tradition de traduction de *bhaashaas* c'est-à-dire les langues vernaculaires à anglais. Cependant, jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^{ème} et au XIX^{ème} siècle, la langue source pour la traduction de la littérature indienne

en anglais était encore essentiellement sanskrit et ces traductions étaient généralement réalisées par des érudits britanniques et américains.

On peut se résumer par ces mots de Rita Kothari :

The translations initiated in the period of British Orientalism in India provide an enduring account of the construction of knowledge and relationships integral to colonial rule. The period from 1772 to 1840 witnessed multiple systems of knowledge constructed by the British and translations were one outcome of this knowledge-creating enterprise. A series of translations of ancient Indian texts undertaken by the British after 1770, has served for generations (among Indians and Europeans) as an 'authentic' account of India. The Orient was 'translated' and made available for self-definition not only to the Europeans, but also to the Orientals themselves.

D'autre part, dans le même temps beaucoup d'œuvres européennes, y compris la Bible ont été traduits en langues indiennes. William Carey et ses compagnons ont réussi à traduire la Bible en totalité ou en partie en 36 langues parlées en Inde. C'est une forme de colonisation culturelle qui a entraîné l'écrasement des langues et littératures vernaculaires.

Dans le domaine de la traduction, cette hégémonie culturelle peut se résumer par ces mots de Tejaswini Niranjana :

Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism. What is at stake here is the representation of the colonized, who need to be produced in such a manner as to justify colonial domination, and to beg for the English book by themselves.

Ironiquement, ces traductions ont également contribué à la prise de conscience nationaliste chez les Indiens. L'Inde de cette époque était une victime de fléau sociale comme l'oppression des femmes et l'injustice du système de castes. La littérature européenne traduite dans les langues indiennes a créé un nouveau courant de pensée en Inde. Ce contact avec la littérature européenne a ouvert la voie de remettre en cause de nombreux rites et coutumes qui avaient été acceptés pour faire partie de la culture indienne. Rabindranath Tagore a lui-même avoué qu'il a été ébahi par la littérature européenne :

The spirit of this bacchanalian revelry of Europe found entrance into our demurely well-behaved social world, woke us up, and made us lively. We were dazzled by the glow of unfettered life,

which fell, upon our custom-smothered heart, pining for an opportunity to disclose itself.

There was another such day in English literature when the slow-measure of Pope's common time gave place to the dance-rhythm of the French revolution. This had Byron for its poet. And the impetuosity of his passion also moved our veiled heart-bride in the seclusion of her corner.

In this wise did the excitement of the pursuit of English literature come to sway the heart of the youth of our time, and at mine the waves of this excitement kept beating from every side. The first awakening is the time for the play of energy, not its repression. That is why in this literature we find such poignant, such exuberant, such unbridled expression.

Les réformateurs sociaux tels que Raja Rammohan Roy ont été influencés par la pensée occidentale pour lutter contre les fléaux sociaux et forger la conscience nationaliste. La langue et la culture du colonisateur ont été appropriées par les indiens et utilisées pour renforcer une prise de conscience politique des indiens qui encore restaient passives. Sri Aurobindo est peut-être le meilleur exemple de cas. Il a eu une enfance typiquement anglophile. Son père anglophile, le Dr K.D. Ghose, l'a baptisé Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose à la naissance. À l'âge de cinq ans, Aurobindo a été admis à l'école du couvent Loreto à Darjeeling. À l'âge de sept ans, il est envoyé à la St. Paul's School de Londres, puis au King's College de Cambridge avec une bourse d'études classiques. Brillant académiquement, il maîtrisa rapidement l'anglais, le grec, le latin et le français, ainsi que l'allemand, l'italien et l'espagnol. Ainsi, il s'est nourri d'une aspiration très britannique. Mais son éducation et son contact à la pensée européenne, associées à des expériences en Inde, l'a convaincu de la nécessité de lutte contre l'impérialisme britannique en Inde. La deuxième moitié du 19^{ème} siècle et le début du 20^{ème} siècle, marquées par un mouvement nationaliste de plus en plus violent au Bengale qui étaient souvent dirigée par Aurobindo. Dans cette période il a fait beaucoup de traductions des œuvres indiens en anglais. Il a traduit *Anandamath* de Bankim Chandra Chatterjee et grâce à lui, le slogan « Vande Mataram » est devenu très populaire. C'était une incitation ouverte à la révolte. Ainsi la traduction est devenue un vecteur de diffusion du sentiment nationaliste en Inde.

La traduction comme un acte subversif

Ce changement radical dans le ton et la teneur de la traduction en langues indiennes s'est fait au même rythme que la croissance et la dynamique du

mouvement national indien. C'est un changement que nous constatons après l'année 1857. La traduction est devenue un acte politique de défi pour des écrivains et traducteurs indiens contre l'hégémonie de l'empire britannique. La lutte pour l'indépendance a été attisée par la traduction de la littérature militante nationaliste

Pendant la période coloniale, le lecteur indien n'avait pas de moyens de lire des auteurs étrangers mais certains traducteurs indiens ont choisi avec un but spécifique des œuvres des auteurs étrangers comme Molière, Goethe, Tolstoï, Dumas, Anatole France, Hugo, Maupassant et ainsi de suite. La plupart des traductions vers l'hindi ont été faites par l'intermédiaire de l'anglais, la langue filtre.

Ici, le choix d'un texte étranger à traduire n'était pas un acte naïf. Ce type de traductions nous est parvenu pendant un état difficile de la période de l'histoire coloniale de l'Inde et a servi à nous fournir un cadre littéraire différent, qui s'est tourné vers la libération de la littérature hindi du tutelage de l'anglais, langue maître imposée, par les colonisateurs britanniques.

À titre d'exemple, nous pouvons citer le cas des œuvres hindis traduites du français dans lesquelles on peut sentir la voix de la résistance contre les coloniaux, ainsi *La tulipe noire* (1850) d'Alexandre Dumas, *Quatre-vingt-treize* (1874) de Victor Hugo, *Thais* (1890) d'Anatole France ne sont que quelques exemples des œuvres françaises qui ont été choisies par les traducteurs indiens.

Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi a traduit *Quatre-vingt-treize* en hindi et son œuvre s'intitule *Balidaan*. Étant associé étroitement avec le mouvement de l'indépendance de l'Inde, le traducteur était très fasciné par la révolution française. Dans la préface de son œuvre, nous remarquons qu'il a donné une présentation brève de l'auteur, et une très longue note sur la révolution française. Dans l'essai *Cultural transmission through translation*, Shantha Ramakrishna explique:

But, looking beyond the colonizer's language, Indian translators scanned other literary pastures – French and Spanish, for example – and sought inspiration from other freedom movements. A case in point is Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi's translation of Victor Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize* [Ninety-three], Vidyarthi (1890-1931), an outstanding journalist and author of editorials, essays and novels, was closely associated with the freedom movement in India and emphasized the need to give due importance to the role of tradition and culture in the struggle for independence.

Dans ce contexte nous pouvons aussi citer le choix de Premchand pour traduire *Thais*, est aussi un choix politique qui contribué à changer le terme de la transmission culturelle en Inde pendant la période coloniale vers la fin du 19^{ème} siècle et le début du 20^{ème} siècle. C'est un meilleur exemple qui nous montre comment les traducteurs indiens sont parvenus à redéfinir l'espace littéraire, occupé par la littérature anglaise pendant l'époque coloniale sur l'horizon de la mentalité indienne.

Ainsi le choix de Premchand pour traduire des œuvres françaises est un meilleur exemple qui nous montre comment les traducteurs indiens sont parvenus à redéfinir l'espace occupé par la littérature anglaise sur l'horizon de la mentalité indienne, pendant la période coloniale. Harish Trivedi a dit:

A French text has been used by a Hindi Translator as a kind of stick with which to beat English literature.

En Bengali, Michael Madhusudan Dutt a traduit en anglais la pièce de théâtre *Neel Darpan* écrit par Deenbandhu Mitra en 1858, qui s'intitule *The Indigo-planting Mirror*.

La pièce de théâtre *Nildurpan* est document socio-historique des planteurs d'indigo au Bengale. Ce livre bengali est publié en 1860. Moins de sept mois après sa publication, *Nildurpan* a été traduit en anglais et a été envoyé en Angleterre. Les exemplaires de la traduction anglaise étaient destinés aux Européens qui avaient, selon Rev. J Long, exprimé le désir de lire la pièce en anglais. Comme il atteste dans l'introduction du livre

The original Bengali of this Drama—the Nil Durpan, or Indigo Planting Mirror—having excited considerable interest, a wish was expressed by various Europeans to see a translation of it. This has been made by a Native ; both the original and translation are *bona fide* Native productions and depict the Indigo Planting System as viewed by Natives at large.

Dans un procès célèbre, le révérend James Long a été condamné à l'emprisonnement pour avoir publié *Nildarpan* et presque toutes les personnes associées à la traduction anglaise de la pièce ont été pénalisées. La pièce de théâtre a fait une grande polémique parce qu'il s'agissait l'histoire d'une famille paysanne et les misères qu'ils subissent aux mains de planteurs d'Indigo anglais, La pièce de théâtre aborde l'exploitation raciale par les britanniques dans les années 1850, lorsque les indiens commençaient à dénoncer la domination britannique.

Mahatma Gandhi, qui était Gujarati, est devenu plus accessibles au grand

public par le biais de la traduction. Ses pensées et sa philosophie qui faisaient partie intégrante de sa politique sur le nationalisme, ont influencées le mouvement d'indépendance indienne. Sa philosophie est répandue au niveau local de pays grâce aux traductions de ses livres dans diverses langues indiennes réalisées par des traducteurs inconnus. Ainsi, dans cette époque la traduction a renforcé la solidarité collective, la conscience nationale.

Conclusion

Au cours de notre article, nous avons remarqué qu'on ne traduit pas un texte n'importe où, n'importe comment, n'importe quand. Il y a toujours une politique derrière tout choix d'un texte. La traduction soit c'est sous forme de transcription, soit c'est la réécriture, elle reflète toujours une certaine idéologie et la poétique du traducteur de son temps. Depuis toujours, la traduction a fait une partie intégrante de la culture littéraire indienne, même lorsque le mot «traduction» ou l'un de ses équivalents en langue indienne - *anuvad*, *tarjuma*, *bhasantar* ou *vivartanam* - n'est pas été conçu.

À la lumière de ce qui précède, il est évident que la traduction comme une tradition indigène peut prendre une dimension politique entièrement différente lorsque les traductions se produisent dans une relation entre colonisateur et colonisé. Alors dans le cas de l'Inde, on constate que les traducteurs ont joué un rôle important comme médiateurs culturels dans la construction d'une certaine idéologie qui n'a pas seulement servi les intérêts des colonisateurs mais aussi a donné la parole aux opprimés.

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The Unbecoming of a Postcolonial Subject in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Bubble*

Bhargavi Jha

Abstract

The eerie texture of self, being and identity formation has always been at the locus of all philosophies. Plethora of philosophical dialogues and discourses has been intertwined to understand the rubrics of self and being since time immemorial. Contemporary and Postmodern era encompasses a fractured and hybrid self which is to be explored through the process of formation of a subject. The paper underscores a classical western genre of *Bildungsroman* to explain the process of formation. In postcolonial era, formation of self subsumes class, cast and gender as paramount factors. The paper analyze those factors in detail which are responsible for the development of a postcolonial protagonist in contemporary India. The classical genre of *bildung* formation does not justify the contemporary Indian subject in totality, thus the paper suggests a Dissensual *Bildungsroman*, as a new perspective to the genre.

Key Words: Bildungsroman; Dissensual; Identity; Postcolonial; Self, Subjectivity.

Since pre-Socratic era, ontological realities and process of epistemology has been a medium to understand self, subject, subjectivity and human existence. Literary criticism, literary theories and genres too explore the ways to decode the complex rubrics of self, being and human existence. The reality of the contemporary modern world underlines a fracture, aporia and rupture within the discourse of self and subjectivity. India as a third world country with its colonial history and cultural differences records unique and unparalleled plot of self and subjectivity. I propose that postcolonial life narrative renders a new form of individual development which has not been much recognized in the contemporary world. Postcolonial life writing records the quest of self-making and desire of identity which in some cases, is smothered under the conservative and orthodox social sys-

tem. Here, identity is pre-determined with no authority and agency to intervene in between.

Post-Colonial narratives has made an attempt to recuperate the pre-colonial language, traditions and knowledge system from the shadow of colonial sponsored literature. All post-colonial writings have some thematic commonality such as use of allegories, celebrating the struggle, magic realism, discontinuous narratives and exile (in some case, specifically in black community). Post-colonial narrative is an attempt to 'decolonize' the established cultural, political and social conventions. Althusser in '*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*' (1970) argues that colonizer, through apparatuses, construct the ideology of a colonial subject. Structuralist has a different stand point, as Said exposes the aspect of textuality, where concept of 'Europe and Other' is entertained. Post-structuralist explores a contemporary idea of 'free play' where no culture and tradition is considered to be original, only a hybrid form of culture and language is prominent which is supported by Homi J. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak.

Postcolonial writing includes dialectics of modernism and Anglo-Indian writers conflates western knowledge and eastern form. Pre independent themes of colonial India were more engrossed in nationalism, industrialization, Gandhian ideology and poverty but post-independence a shift was witnessed from social realism to psycho-social themes. , R.K Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk raj Anand are the trio stalwart modernist Indian writers. Mulk Raj Anand is a writer who witnessed both lives of colonial and post-colonial India. S.C. Harris claims in *Indian and Western Writings in Dialogues* (1982) that dominant motives of Anglo-Indian writings were imbricated with conflict between the traditional self and modern ego, between Indian absolutist interpretation of cosmos and relativist interpretation of scientific Marxism, between ideals of submission and social justice. Anand's approach is considered to be Humanist Marxism. He does not glorifies psychosocial life of India vigorously rather K. Nagrajan cites, Anand "sees life in raw and expose it mercilessly". He pre-eminently exposes the outcast tradition, cast system, patriarchic in Hindus, place of woman in the society. His writings like *Untouchables* and *Coolie* has been appreciated worldwide, wherein the hardships of subjugated is expressed. His *Series of Seven Ages of Man*, have autobiographical elements which provides us with an incisive understanding of psychological journey of the writer.

Cast system, erroneous ideology of Brahman society, discourse of untouchables are the pre-eminent concerns of Mulk Raj Anand. In illuminating the obfuscating and horrifying spaces that define the destiny of cast-out people, Anand, K.D. Varma asserts, challenges the moral conscience of the upper-caste Hindus for castigating and subjugating a segment of community.

World had encountered many movements but Indian revolution for freedom was unparalleled, it was 'neither a bloody revolution nor an armed struggle for power. But it certainly demanded of all Indians a radically new approach to life. It was an emotional as well as an ideological experience spread over a much longer period of time than any other nationalist revolution in world history. Mostly the Gandhian ideology had been the prime mover'. Gandhi reoccurs in these novels as he being the most potent force behind the entire movement, but presented and used in different ways, according to the writer, sometimes as an idea, a symbol, as tangible reality, and benevolent human being. For instance, Mulk Raj Anand never idealized Gandhi.

A post-colonial subject encompasses a fractured and hybrid self with the baggage of cast, class, religion and a colonial history. These factors leads to the subjectification of a subject and only making choices and decisions with due course of time would lead the development of self in an Individual, this process of unbecoming is exemplified in Euro-American text categorized as *Bildungsroman*. The plot of *Bildungsroman* portrays a young man going through the world experiencing tribulations which further helps in his development of self. Pramod K. Nayar suggests that the postcolonial life writing genre can discern the functional equivalent of the *Bildungsroman*.

Bildungsroman deals with the process of education, growth, development and maturity of the protagonist .The study intends to examine how the change in the factors determining the process of formation as far as some modern novels of India are concerned. Further, how the protagonist attains the sense of self and subjectivity and constitutes his or her identity and finally gets interpellated into a subject. There are three variants of *Bildungsroman*; *Entwicklungsroman*, *Erziehungsroman*, *Kunstlerroman*. *Entwicklungsroman* as Jerome H Buckley in his book *Seasons of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (1970) asserts that "it is the chronicles of a young man's general growth rather than his specific quest for self-culture" (25). An individual as a mere product of the social and cultural apparatuses without any desire and quest of finding one's own self. The second is *Erziehungsroman*, Buckley expounds that "it emphasizes on youth's training and formal education" (13). In this second form the individual finds its identity in relation to the society, culture, religion etc. He/ She understand the rubrics of structure and order. The confinement of structure leads the individual to a rebellious attitude. The third form is *Kunstlerroman*, where the *Bildungsheld* drops its self and a universal artist take shape.

The Bubble is an odyssey of Krishna who tries to establish himself as a writer on a foreign land, London. Autobiographical element in the novel *The Bubble* draws it towards the classical genre, *Bildungsroman*, a journey and a process of self-acculturation. Krishna Chandra is the *bildungsheld* in the

text. The significant features of *Bildungsroman*, a modernist genre, subsumes a rebellious attitude against the dominating norms and figures (in India, specifically father), exile from home, alienation in foreign land, more than two love affairs, in a search for self-acculturation, attaining of the aesthetic self or 'desired image' according to Anand. The text is written in series of letters addressed to Noor, a friend in India.

Mulk Raj Anand influenced by western structure of thought renders a Freudian and Marxist structure to the text. Krishna's father becomes the pre-eminent reason to leave house. His fathers too much inclination towards British people, wanted his son's life also devoted to British Raj. Anand's turbulent childhood, anguish against atrocious British rule contrived his childhood and adolescence. 'Child is the father of man' which contrives the adulthood and an anti-empirical streak in Anand's writings. Western conceptualization of *Bildungsroman* subsumes to move out of community to find oneself, in a contrast, in Indian context protagonist becomes inextricably attached to his/her community. Krishna's connection with his Indian community makes him alone and terrified, on the foreign land. Krishna in his letters addressing Noor, expresses:

Oh, Noor, Noor, My Beloved Friend- Why did I have to leave you all and come away.' The answer emerges faintly in my callow soul: "Krishna you wanted to come and find out what life is all about. You have come on a philosophical quest. But exile is kind of death of oneself and other people! I feel every one you have died somehow.(3)

Krishna gets influenced by western philosophy but also endeavors to find 'I-am-ness' in those philosophies. Western philosophy of life is accepted by the protagonist but like an Island surrounded by the water of nostalgia and inextricable memories of native place and culture..Iqbal's concept of self and Rumi's coming over of life-chaos through loving, Christian believe of Judgement day which superseded Iqbal's idea of everyday being a judgement day. Krishna find himself in a conflict and flux, as eastern and western philosophies of life are very much different.

Frank Moretti notes that a tension between self-determination and social integration are key to classical *Bildungsroman*. A *bildungsheld* who's internal development is linked to the social requirements. Moretti also describes that many obstacles in the way of *bildungsheld* are incorporated to ruse his personality. But in many cases the narratives of growing up holds an integration but does not fulfilling the ideals of traditional *Bildungsroman* as Slaughter suggests. Gregory Castle argues in *Reading the*

Modernist Bildungsroman, the failure of traditional notions of *Bildungsroman* proves to be the new form of *bildung* in postcolonial narratives. This, Nayar articulates, 'Dissensual *Bildungsroman* portrays a self that has not been allowed to grow due to the social contexts it finds itself mired in'. Dissensual *Bildungsroman* projects the dissonance between self-determination and integration. Classical *Bildungsroman* celebrates trials and circumstances as an opportunity to shape the self and subjectivity whereas on the contrary, postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in Indian context cast, class, gender, and other forms of structural inequality creates the lacuna where identities are pre-determined with no agency to intervene in the process.

Dissensual *Bildungsroman* maps the obstacles in the journey of a *bildungsheld* which refuse any integration to the social context by refusing any sense of self and subjectivity and this dissonance itself leads the making of a subject. The social integration, central to traditional *Bildungsroman*, incorporates the commonality of suffering and shared history of colonization and social injustice.

The novel is stretched in nine parts such as The Exile (letters to Noor), the Ascent of Mount Snowdon, Babes in the wood, Thieves of Fire (Dairy of journey to Paris and back), Conversation in Bloomsbury, Dublin Dairy (paly boy of western world and Deidre), Journal to Irene, A Letter from Father, A Letter to Father, A Letter to Irene.

In postcolonial narratives childhood experiences are taken into consideration for the formation of a subject. *The Exile* contains Krishna's encounter with the foreign world where he found himself in an unfamiliar world. The feeling of being away from his native land and community had uncovered the questioned of identity. On his journey to find his philosophical self, on foreign land, now strives for the lost sense of identity. Krishna in his letter to Noor expresses his feeling of shrinking: 'Oh Noor, Noor, My Beloved friend- why did I have to leave you all and come away'.

Classical *Bildungsroman* only depicts the journey of a young individual whereas Postcolonial narrative inculcates childhood memories of the *bildungsheld*. The agonies and pain from a colonial master becomes an inseparable part of *bildungsheld* memories. In an odyssey of subject formation Krishna notes his intrinsic fear from the white masters, Krishna on his way to find his friend Tochi's address encounters a white policeman, the childhood fear erupts, he says

I bowed to him, the old fear of the exalted white sahebs in India creeping up from my frightened soul before this burly constable, who unlike the Tommies smiled under his brief moustache'. 'In my childhood in the

cantonments I had once been threatened with a cane by Captain Cunningham, adjutant of my father's regiment, for staring at him. (6)

Dissensual *bildungsheld* does not recommend the universal idea of self and subjectivity, his colonial history which has ruse his childhood and youth, the only identity he prefers is in connectedness rather than oneness. Krishna comes across flux between his Identity which has a colonial past and history of torture.

Krishna's meeting with Indians in London, now a brown Englishmen, Indian students whose identity as an Indian were considered to be inferior and the fear made them 'tight mouthed and remote, even though Krishna addressed them in Hindustani'. Professor Dicks, under whom Krishna would pursue his PhD, behaviour towards Krishna was insulting, the professor consider Indians as incorrigible and Indian Culture as Mumbo-jumbo which had smothered Krishna's sense of Self. Eventually he manages to get enrolled under Professor Dicks. Anand in the first part purports Krishna's dissonance towards the English culture and his struggles with an Indian Identity, to find a rented room. Krishna's 'I-am-ness' as an Indian and Hindu is reflected in every understanding of western philosophies of Descartes, Hegel, Carlyle.

Anand very astutely draws out the growth of a subjects through the consecutive parts of the novel. The 'immanent critic' takes a close observation to his subaltern identity. Krishna goes out of India, becomes an exile to test himself but his connectedness to the colonial subject of India transformed his search of 'I' into 'we'.

The second part *The Ascent of Mount Snowdon*, the setting is of North Wales. The rural atmosphere makes him remind his own country, and he found some space to re-discover the irreconcilability of eastern and western philosophies, he too found western philosophy as pale, except that of 'Descartes I think therefor I am', but his assertion about exigency of human will prompts him to include 'I am therefore I think'. He realizes freedom of choice can help him in the process of 'becoming'.

His encounter with Lucy gray in North Wales, a pure and innocent woman but her adoration of Budhha irks him. Budhha symbolizes escape and negation according to Krishna and he believes in struggle for liberation and endeavored to make an authentic existence. The third part of the novel describes the importance of body in formation of a personality. The body according to Krishna is, on which the mind rationality is based upon. This part records Krishna association with Irene, an independent soul. Her company strengthen his quest towards reality principle of phi-

osophy and pleasure principle of poetry. Though her body attracted him but wasn't a hindrance in his journey on attaining self. The fourth part of the novel describes his journey to Paris and back. The fifth part records his encounter and interaction with many luminaries. This interaction made him realize the hullabaloo of Indian thinkers is Bloomsbury group which was devoid of any real problems of India. Meanwhile the Irish struggle for their country fires his spirit and a longing for his native county and the citizen.

The sixth chapter of the novel incorporates Krishna's engagement in self-realization. He says:

Somehow my narrative is creating a kind of recognition of personal identity from among my many selves, and the fire from within is lighting up the seven colours of the rainbow, of my imagination as an eight colour. Strange how putting something down some of the conversations I have had in London had revealed to me how some of these how some of these words become sparks. Our ancients said man becomes Isvara, God, and thus burn out the deadness. I have found that since I began to enter the intimacies of inner feelings, writing has become a fire which is destroying the falsities and lighting up the mind as though through my meditations on paper. (467)

Irene's affection towards her country and her active participation in the Irish revolution spurts enthusiasm into Krishna about his own colonized country people. Irish revolution created a sense of responsibility and reality, in Krishna, regarding suppressed and subjugated. His creation of Bakha, an insulted and injured, made him see beyond the philosophies, propagating self-attaining as a universal phenomenon. This part records Irene going to jail and Krishna left in the state of delirium. The following part records his confessions to Irene in a form of Journal. Part eight and nine records series of letters Krishna received and sent to his father. This part renders sentimental contradictories between father and son. The last part records his last letter to Irene and his journey back to India.

Classical *Bildungsroman* celebrates engagement of individual to the society and father figure, or any authority becomes a bridge to this relationship. On the contrary postcolonial *Bildungsroman* rejects any established authority. Development in postcolonial *bildungsheld* is hindered by these authority and father figures. Colonial injustice to the Indian citizen ruse the personality of the individual. Subject formation in *bildungsheld* of the novel is attained with his realization of his identity and community which

is tortured by the British Empire. *Terra firma* of subject formation in post-colonial context is shared agony and pain. The choice of identification with the fellow- victims of colonization made Krishna discover his subject-hood. He mentions the Jaliawala mass murder repeatedly which explains his agony against the British Empire.

The classical notion of *Bildungsroman* cherish integration which is partly achieved by the education, but education in colonial India was sponsored by the British to produce more brown English. The education system becomes an apparatus of suppression and slavery. British -Indian universities subsumed most of the western oriented knowledge. The education found him no ground for his development of subjectivity. Krishna believed his coming to London will provide him an understanding of his self but the aloofness of British people only made him aware of his difference as an Indian. In postcolonial *Bildungsroman* the theme of education invokes 'knowing subaltern'. The sense of dignity, freedom, humanism are not conceived through formal education rather it is nurtured by Gandhian idea of freedom. So, I propose that education in postcolonial narratives is merely a 'discourse of compensation' as supported by Pramod. K. Nayar. Leading ideology of Gandhi and active participation in revolutions carve the journey of a postcolonial *bildungsheld*. Krishna found western philosophies imbricated with idea of harmony and universality, which lacks sense of reality.

Knowing subalternity is the key element in postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, where the *bildungsheld* becomes conscious agent. Nayar puts it, in knowing subalternity, 'the emphasis is on the historical consciousness, political awareness, advocacy, self-reflexivity and self-critique among the victims of disfranchised'. Knowing subalternity carves the citizen-subject. A citizen-subject is the one who escapes the subjectification to others but still not a sovereign subject. A citizen-subject is not a subject reduced to slavery but still he/she is deprived of freedom to choose an imagined life plot. The citizen-subject realizes him/her being a part of the community and knowing subalternity is the emergence of sense of community which illuminates the voice of protest within the *bildungsheld*.

The Dissensual *Bildungsroman* represents the lacuna between the proposed law of equality by the state and its actual experience in the society by the victims. Anand represents this disparity through Krishna's agony as an Indian surrounded by white who believe themselves to be very humane and appreciators of freedom to all human beings.

I propose that India is a country with layers of identity, only one mode of identi-

ty cannot survive the varieties Indian society projects. Traditional mode of aesthetic attainment does not entertain the interpellation of subjectivity in Indian context with its colonial history and cast, class, cultural and gender differences. Dissensual *Bildungsroman* records these disparities and various forms of suppression which defines the personality of an individual. We see Krishna as emerging citizen-subject as becoming the part of the process of protest.

Eighth part *A letter from Father* to son Krishna reveals that Krishna's friend Noor to whom he sent letter, died of T.B. Krishna's father believes his letter to Noor made Noor to dream and worry about something he can not have as a confectioner's son, as Imperial Forest service was only for rich kids. Postcolonial *Bildungsheld* has a rebellious attitude towards any authority specially the father figure. The letter from his father only projected his anger towards Krishna and his modern thinking. His father's picture of a son was to get married to a girl not educated much (arranged by parents) and son having a job under the British Sarkar.

The following part *A Letter to Father* of the novel, is about letters Krishna send to his father. The letters clearly shows his suffocation from the cultural norms which has been forced upon him. He rejects to surrender to his father's conservative and orthodox beliefs. He informs him about his thesis submission and his decision to join Gandhi and write a novel on Bakha an untouchable. He says:

in my confession I am trying to discover my lost innocence, the flow of love for everything in life, all that choked our breadth as children, the don'ts imposed by our elders and Dharma bugs.
(588)

He justifies his participation in the freedom revolutions and slams his father to become the kind of man who looked only to the honours offered by Sarkar. He describes physical torture as reason of him being a rebellion. Where classical *Bildungsroman* negotiates the epistemological transformation, postcolonial *Bildungsroman* represents an ontological realities and experiences which ruse the process of subject formation.

This part also reveals his encounter with his true nature of non-violence, he confesses that the torture of British rule inculcate the feeling of revenge but his mother's teaching made him realize his true nature. The society with White as masters, the colonized *bildungsheld* only incurs insult as "black men who squat on the ground".

The postcolonial narrative has a sense of collectivity and narrator acquire a position of citizen-subject who advocates reform. P.K. Nayar suggests that "where we see the post colonial's knowing subalternity as the condition in which the political conscious advocate of social change and the

claimant for the human and communitarian cultural rights emerge".(109)

The connectedness to the native caters a sense of self in a Postcolonial *bildungsheld* which is quit contrary to the traditional conventions of the genre. Krishna continues his journey as a poet to the unheard and unvoiced. Krishna conceives a sense of self in connectedness to the victims and natives, he asserts

when the self becomes too much with you try the following recipe. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man you have seen, and ask your self, if the step you contemplate is going to be any use to him...than you will find yourself and your doubts will melt away. (594)

The autobiographical elements emphasizes its validity as a *Bildungsroman* Novel. Mulk Raj Anand got his Ph.D. degree from Cambridge university in London and after wards came back to India. His other writings include *Untouchables* and *Coolie* which narrates the story of a subaltern. Moreover *The Bubble* is a part of his autobiographical journey entitled *Seven Ages of Man*.

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Evolution of Postmodernism from Genre to Mode: A Reading of Three American Postmodern Novels

Shubham Dabas

Abstract

This paper is an application of contemporary genre theory to two generations of American postmodern novelists -- Kurt Vonnegut as one of the early pioneers of American postmodernism and Don DeLillo and Bret Easton Ellis as the second generation of postmodern writers in America -- in order to better understand the contested category of literary postmodernism. The paper argues that between these three writers postmodernism evolves from functioning at the level of genre to the level of mode. In order to illustrate this thesis the most well known and representative novel of each of these three writers has been selected -- Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, DeLillo's *White Noise* and Ellis' *American Psycho*.

Keywords: Genre theory; Mode; Postmodernism.

Introduction

Defining Genre and Mode

First let us try to define some of the terms that we will be using. It is easier to understand the difference between genre and mode using historical examples. *Elegy*, for example, in classical literature was any poem composed of elegiac distichs. It had a clearly defined formal structure. However since the 16th century it has come to mean a "poem of mourning for an individual or a lament for some tragic event" (Cuddon). The defining feature changed from formal to thematic. In the first sense *Elegy* is a genre while in the second sense it becomes a mode. Modes are used as adjectives while genres are not. *Pastoral* had specific generic features like the *georgic* or the *eclogue*, but used adjectivally, as a mode, it can be applied to any

genre that deals with idealised country life.

Another example would be that of the three most recurrent categories in Western literary theory since Aristotle -- epic, drama and lyric. These three terms, at different times, have been used as both genres and modes. Interestingly, as modes, they have also been theorised as philosophical systems. For example, for Hegel, "the epic mode is the vehicle of an objective disclosure of the exterior universe, and it corresponds to the childhood of human race; lyric is the subjective disclosure of the inner world of particularised individuals, and it has to do with the separation of the personal self from the community; and drama is the synthesis of the two, the objectification of subjectivities in dialogue and action" (cited in Frow 60). Here, used as mode, the three terms are larger than the individual genres of epic, drama and lyric proper. It is in this adjectival sense that genres become mode. Therefore we can speak of something like dramatic lyric (Browning's dramatic monologues) or dramatic epic (*A Tale of Two Cities*) or lyrical drama (*The Tempest*). Following John Frow we would like to define genre as a "specific organisation of texts with thematic, rhetoric and formal dimensions," (67) and mode as, "extensions of certain genres beyond specific and time-bound formal structures to a broader specification of 'tone' [...] modes therefore start their life as genres but over time take on a more general force which is detached from particular structural embodiments." (65).

Defining Postmodernism

Now let us come to postmodernism. The term has three derivatives -- postmodernity, postmodern and postmodernism. All are very interrelated terms and it is often counterproductive to quibble over their minor differences, but just to get it out of the way, postmodernity refers to a particular historical period, postmodern refers to the cultural styles, techniques or attitudes emerging out of those historical conditions and postmodernism refers to theoretical or philosophical account of both the historical as well as cultural aspects just mentioned. The term is very hard to define since it has a broad usage across a variety of disciplines. One way to look at it, in the realm of philosophy, is to see it as a coming to self-consciousness of modernity. As one critic has put it, "modern thought typically opposes the authority of tradition in the name of universal reason. Postmodernism begins with the insight that the sociohistorical context of tradition and its authority is inevitable, even in modernity. Modernity can no longer take itself for granted when it recognizes itself as a tradition that is opposed to traditions" (Cary). This coming to self-consciousness

of modernity is the moment of postmodern insight. It is the response to this insight, either by admitting the inevitability of irrationality or by locating diverse forms of rationality in various traditions, that constitutes postmodernism proper.

This narrative of postmodernism in philosophy cannot be applied as-it-is to postmodernism in literary and cultural realm, partly because modernism has a much narrower meaning in literary and art history than it does in philosophy and history of thought. Nevertheless these two usages of the term are also not entirely different. Self-consciousness remains the defining characteristic of literary postmodernism. A postmodern text is conscious of its status as a text and acknowledges its constructed nature by foregrounding its frames.

Postmodernism as Genre

Postmodernism, it would appear, resists generic classifications since it lays so much emphasis on formal experimentation. This is a misunderstanding which emerges partly from an older understanding of genre as a prescriptive taxonomy and thus a constraint on textual energy, and partly from confusing postmodernism with avant-garde. The generic features of postmodernism can easily be codified. At the heart of postmodern culture lies self-reflexivity or ironic knowingness (Nicol 13), with metafiction and intertextuality being some of the strategies used to represent this self-reflexivity in literary texts. Let us look at Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a well known postmodern text, and see how postmodernism is situated at the generic level.

Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*

The novel emerges from the author's own experiences in the second World War. He had witnessed the often underreported bombings of the East German city of Dresden by Allied forces. In the first chapter he tells us that he had thought, "it would be easy for me to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do would be to report what I had seen." But by the end of the chapter he confesses that the novel turned out to be so, "short and jumbled and jangled [...] because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead [...] Everything is supposed to be quiet after a massacre." And the novel indeed is very jumbled and jangled. It is about two incongruous events in the protagonist's life -- his experiences at Dresden and his kidnapping by aliens from the planet of Tralfamadore. Along with this, protagonist Billy Pilgrim also comes unstuck in time, meaning that he stops experiencing

time in a linear order and starts jumping back and forth to different periods of his life at random. This leads to a very convoluted narrative in which Billy's experience at war is continuously interrupted by his later life as well as by the time he spent at Tralfamadore. These jumps in time are sometimes very frequent and justify the author's blurb on the cover, "this is a novel somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore". This anti-realist narrative technique is further explained in the novel when Billy asks the Tralfamadoreans about their novels. They say:

We Tralfamadoreans read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time.

It is this experience of "all at once, and not one after the other," that the author seeks to recreate as we get to experience all the aspects of Billy's life almost simultaneously. There are also some hints in the novel to suggest that all this coming unstuck in time and being kidnapped by aliens is nothing but the deranged imagination of man traumatized by the war.

Non-linear narrative is a very common feature of the postmodern novel but it is neither unique nor essential to it. Modernist novel had already started drawing upon the non-linear subjective experience as opposed to the objective perspective of the realist novel. What makes this novel truly postmodern is its self-reflexivity. The first chapter is very important in this regard. It is basically about how the author came to write the novel. He tells us how he plans the novel on a roll of toilet paper in multicoloured pens, how he meets an old war friend in an attempt to recall some incidents, his conversation with his editor etc. He also tells us how he came upon the subtitle and the epigraph of the book. This entire chapter is therefore metafictional, which can be defined as fiction about fiction (or about the fictional/constructed nature of fiction). Chapter two begins with the story of Billy Pilgrim, whom we assume to be the authorial substitute because there is no mention of the author for a long time. This seems to cast a doubt over the metafictional nature of the narrative as the first chapter can now be explained away as a substitute preface. But in the third chapter, when we are being told of the death of an old colonel, we are hit with this line, "I was there. So was my old war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare." These authorial intrusions then become frequent. We find the

author at the margins of the main events, often a part of the crowd. One particularly humorous intrusion occurs when everyone in the group but Billy suffer from diarrhea:

An American near Billy wailed that he had excreted everything but his brains. Moments later he said, 'There they go, there they go.' He meant his brains. That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book.

This sudden breaking of frame is a common trope in postmodern novels. In his French *Lieutenant's Woman* John Fowles, after having spent twelve chapters portraying a detailed world in a realist style breaks the illusion by informing the reader that the story is all in his imagination. Similarly B.S. Johnson, near the end of his 1966 *Albert Angelo*, having begun in a conventional narrative style, "Albert lazed at his drawingboard before the great window. Nearly seven weeks' summer holiday lay ahead of him ..." breaks down, "--oh, fuck all this LYING!" (quoted in Nicol 22). This technique bares the mechanism of the novel and renders the text self-conscious. The novel is shown to be constructed rather than inscribed.

Another common feature of the postmodern novel is intertextuality. Modernist writers often also use an intertext, for example Homer's *Odyssey* was the intertext to Joyce's *Ulysses*. These intertexts served as key, often providing some sort of meaning or structure to the text. But postmodern texts offer the reader an abundance of intertextual references and illusions without any of them necessarily contributing to the meaning or understanding of the text. In this novel one of the main tasks for the author is to make sense of an event which is extremely devastating and entirely unnecessary. In the very beginning of the book the author's friend's wife compares the senselessness of the war and the immaturity of its participants to the *Children's Crusade* (a crusade in 13th century by tens of thousands of children, most of whom never reached their destination and were sold into slavery). The author then mentions a book about the crusade and cites a few paragraphs. He mentions many other books and historical documents, either about Dresden or about war in general, and cites passages from them. At one point he looks through the Bible, "for tales of great destruction," and cites the passage on destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These intertexts not only help interpret the central event of the novel but also reveal its constructed nature by making overt the neighbouring discourses that go into the construction of any particular text.

We have done a standard generic analysis of this novel and shown how postmodernism functions here as a genre. Now let us take another novel which lacks all of these generic features and is still considered postmodern.

Postmodernism as Mode : DeLillo's *White Noise*

White Noise was first published in 1984. This novel lacks all the formal experimental techniques characteristic of previous generation of postmodern writers. It is a straightforward first person narrative of one year in the family life of a professor of Hitler studies in a small town college in America. The central plot event is a chemical spillage in a nearby area due to which all the residents of the town of Blacksmith have to evacuate their homes for nine days. It is not the formal features but the incidental details which make this novel postmodern. While in the previous example the constructed nature of the text was made evident by the use of formal techniques, here it is the constructed nature of the world that is being made evident through incidental details. The tone is set from the very first chapter of the novel where the narrator describes his house:

Babette and I and our children by previous marriages live at the end of a quiet street in what was once a wooded area with deep ravines. There is an expressway beyond the backyard now, and at night as we settle into our brass bed the sparse traffic washes past, a remote and steady murmur around our sleep, as of dead souls babbling at the edge of a dream.

The murmur of the expressway acts as a substitute for the apparently more real but absent murmur of the ravine. The world of *White Noise* is one of hyperreality. Two humourous incidents in particular stand out and drive this idea home. The first one is about a tourist destination called 'the most photographed barn in America' visited by the protagonist and his friend. They come across five signs announcing 'THE MOST PHOTOGRAPHED BARN IN AMERICA' before they reach the site. At the site they find cars and tour buses and a special place designated for viewing and photographing filled with people carrying cameras; but no one sees the barn. The narrator's friend, a professor in culture studies, explains to the narrator:

No one sees the barn, [...] once you've seen the signs about the barn, it becomes impossible to see the barn. [...] We're not here to capture an image, we're here to maintain one. Every photograph reinforces the aura.

The viewers' response to the barn is conditioned by the signs surrounding it. A similar episode occurs when the narrator and his family have evacuated their homes and are staying in temporary camps. The rescuers come from a group called SIMUVAC which stands for simulated evacuation. When the narrator points out that the evacuation they are carrying out isn't simulated but real, he tells him that they'll be using the real event in order to rehearse the simulation. He further explains:

The insertion curve isn't as smooth as we would like. There's a probability excess. Plus which we don't have our victims laid out where we'd want them if this was an actual simulation. In other words we're forced to take our victims as we find them. We didn't get a jump on computer traffic. Suddenly it just spilled out, three-dimensionally, all over the landscape. You have to make allowances for the fact that everything we see tonight is real. There's a lot of polishing we still have to do. But that's what this exercise is all about.

Here it is not just that the real is mediated by its representation but is totally taken over by it. One of the narrator's daughter starts getting symptoms of the infection as they're described on the radio. But her symptoms keep on changing as the people on radio update their list of symptoms based on new findings. At one point the girl is told that she is running behind and ought to be throwing up instead of having sweaty palms.

This thesis of the real being replaced by its representations has commonly been put forward by theorists of postmodernism like Baudrillard. Other common ideas about postmodernism include the death of affect, intrusion of technology and media into the private lives of individuals, an overabundance of information, an ironic participation in popular culture and capitalist consumption etc. Novels like *White Noise* create what can be called a postmodern environment or mood. Postmodern here is an adjective describing contemporary reality, as understood not only in academic theories but also in the popular imagination. It is this environment that writers like DeLillo evoke in their novels. This is substantially different from a lot of major writers writing in the 50s and 60s who performed their postmodernism in the formal structure of their novels.

So far the distinction that we have been trying to create risks being reduced to a distinction between form and content. But this should not be the case. Just like generic features can also be thematic, mode can also function at the level of style. Let us take the example of another novel to prove this point.

Ellis' American Psycho

Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* was first published in 1991. It is written as a monologue of a Wall Street corporate executive Patrick Bateman, who also happens to be a serial killer. Unlike *White Noise* the novel does have some metafictional elements but they are barely noticeable. Bateman bases his and other people's self worth entirely on the products they use and the goods they consume. Consequently, whenever a character appears he

describes in great detail how they look and the clothes they are wearing. Here is one example:

Scott Montgomery walks over to our booth wearing a double-breasted navy blue blazer with mock-tortoiseshell buttons, a prewashed wrinkled-cotton striped dress shirt with red accent stitching, a red, white and blue fireworks-print silk tie by Hugo Boss and plum washed-wool trousers with a quadruple-pleated front and slashed pockets by Lazo. He's holding a glass of champagne and hands it to the girl he's with – definite model type, thin, okay tits, no ass, high heels – and she's wearing a wool-crepe skirt and a wool and cashmere velour jacket and draped over her arm is a wool and cashmere velour coat, all by Louis Dell'Olio. High-heeled shoes by Susan Bennis Warren Edwards. Sunglasses by Alain Mikli. Pressed-leather bag from Hermès.

This is not an exaggerated example, this style of describing characters continues throughout the novel. All this careful listing of different brands and attention to minute details produce an effect opposite to the realist technique of accumulation of details. These descriptions do not differentiate the characters but ends up making them appear similar. Infact the narrator continuously misidentifies people throughout the novel. There is no idea of depth here -- that of some unique inner personality type, only an abundance of meaningless surface level differences. This kind of style is described by one critic as brochure-speak (Young 101).

Another interesting stylistic element in Ellis is how he writes his sex scenes. All his sex scenes are written in a delebrative pornographic register with all the usual tropes associated with pornography. The only sense that is evoked in these scenes is the visual. The simulation of pornography has replaced the supposedly real of intimate and affective lives. Therefore unlike explicit statements, as in *White Noise*, here it is the style which evokes the postmodern.

Conclusion

The difference between the two generations of postmodern writers can best be understood as functioning of postmodernism at two different levels -- that of genre and mode. As a genre postmodernism has some very specific techniques and tropes. As a mode it has come to attain a more broad and diffuse meaning. This meaning is based on popular and philosophical perceptions of the everyday realities and experiences under post-modernity.

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Man's Creation Surplants God's Technology: An Ecocritical Reading of Selected Poems

Christina Mary Georgy

Abstract

Literature often echoes manifold clashes related to man and environment. Such apprehensions on landscape and its exploitation, as a consequence of the multifaceted activities of man, gain colour through the multifarious genres of literatures, mainly poetry, which further facilitates ecological as well as cultural consciousness among the readers. Eco-poetry concentrates on the inevitability of equitable balance between man and nature. An anthropocentric perspective of the same assumes much significance in this contemporary epoch of rapid modernisation where the technologically advanced man destructs the natural environmental conditions. In the broader perspective of ecofeminism, over the years, Mother Earth has been subjected to multidimensional utilisation and exploitation at the hands of the scientifically driven man. This paper is organized from an eco-conscious perspective with the effective aid of concepts such as eco-poetics, ecocriticism and ecofeminism to make an eloquent appraisal of select poems across diverse cultures, with special reference to Ted Walter's *Spurned Goddess* and O.N.V Kurup's *Bhoomikkoru Charamageetham* translated as *A Requiem to Mother Earth*, among others.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism; Ecocriticism; Ecofeminism; Ecology; Eco-poetics.

Introduction

In the contemporary scenario of continual natural disasters and climatic changes, it is imperative to delve deep into the literary discourses for an enhanced comprehension of 'nature'. What we apprehend of 'nature' from the legendary manuscripts coupled with unembellished historic substantiation of recurrent exploitation and disregard for nature and natural

resources may oblige an introspective reading of how man has conceived of agencies that are not human. The non-human agencies and man's constant interaction with them are steadily becoming the matter of deliberations that interest environmental enthusiasts, theorists and literary scholars across the world. In the light of large scale environmental catastrophes, species extinctions and identity altering advancements in science and technology, an anthropocentric world view is neither sustainable nor defensible. Escalating the intellectual inquest on 'nature' opens up a plethora of possibilities. The paper seeks to explore some of these possibilities vis-à-vis the non-human agencies in literary texts and human interaction with them.

Language plays a critical role in our understanding of nature and eloquently resonates the reverence and prominence that man attribute to nature and its ample resources. Hence it is imperative to evaluate, recreate and synchronise the balance of nature, man and culture; to help pave a pathway for an organic, sustainable and tranquil future on Earth. This paper attempts to respond to the figurative capacity of language in mediating our relationship with nature and the world around us by using the expedient perceptions of ecopoetics, ecocriticism as well as ecofeminism to study and escalate the ecological consciousness in select poems across diverse cultures, with special reference to 'the policeman poet' Ted Walter's acclaimed poem *Spurned Goddess* and the prominent Malayalam writer and poet O.N.V Kurup's scoloosally celebrated poem *Bhoomikkoru Charamageetham* translated into English language as *A Requiem to Mother Earth*.

The origin of the term, 'ecocriticism' can be traced back to the Greek words 'oikos' and 'kritis'. Cheryll Glotfelthy, the pioneering ecocritic in USA, defines ecocriticism in his seminal collection, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, co-edited with Harold Fromm as, "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" and involves "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature". *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*" (2000), the collection of essays by Laurence Coupe is often considered as having equal status in UK to that of Glotfelthy and Fromm in USA. "The publication of Ecocritical works began in the late 70s and during the mid-80s, collaborative projects came up. The MLA (Modern Language Association) conference on Ecocriticism lead to the Greening of Literary Studies hence eco criticism became prominent in the literary scenario" (Georgy 2).

Ecopoems are poems, with robust environmental prominence, emerged

as a consequence of direct knowledge and acquaintance of nature and the natural world. They frequently embellished the jeopardies of modern world by concentrating on the revolution from egologic to eco logic. The environmental studies theorist, William Rueckart put forward two ways to read poetry- First, the necessity to asks questions and second the inevitability to appreciate literature within an ecological imaginary. Nature-oriented poetry or poetry with ecological concerns had its primary exponents in Jonathan Skinner and Christopher Arigo. The word 'ecopoetics' was propagated by Jonathan Skinner through a journal by J. Scott Bryson titled, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (2002). The emphasis was bestowed on therequisite to find equitability between the human and nature, to restore the human and nonhuman nature relationship". The most extensively read ecopoems include, Peter Abbs's *Earth Songs* (2002), Alice Oswald's *The Thunder Mutters* (2005), Neil Astley's *Earth Shattering: Eco poems* (2007), Jay Ramsay's *Soul of the Earth* (2011), and many others.

The title of the paper is a very significant line, "Man's Creation Surplants God's Technology" (lines 7-9), taken from the eco poem *Sunset on Portage* by the Canadian aboriginal poet George Kenny, which employs the technique of subversion in the usual association of God with creation and man with technology. The perception, that creation of man surplants the technology of god, becomes central to the theme of the poem. As a result of the creative subversion employed, the roles are reversed and as a consequence, man becomes the creator. The irony involved here is that man becomes both the creator and destroyer of his own future. The advancement accomplished by man is inferior to the one accomplished by environment. Consequently, it is high time that man cultivate the capability to recognize with the myriad forms of life to gaze beyond the utility angle. The word "surplant" is crucial to the reading of the poem. The natural landscape, wildlife and forestry are disrupted with the artificial advancement, resulting in a very materialistic society.

Penitence, published in the 1997 collection titled *A Normal Skin*, by well acclaimed environmentalist John Burnside explores the fundamental spiritual & ecological issues about the nature of living on earth. "The poem evokes a mood of guilt & penitence as it depicts the conflict between man & nature, epitomized by an accident that takes place as the poet drives through the woods in the dark and hits a deer. The poet effectively addresses the issue of road kill in the poem. Road ecology is a highly significant area of study, especially in the contemporary industrialized scenario where the ecological effects of roads results in noise pollution, air pollution, degradation of ecosystem and water pollution. It can also lead to habitat frag-

mentation & destruction" (Georgy 4). The insignificance and callousness of man and modernity towards the landscape and environment becomes a key concern in the poem.

The reading detects the ways in which the environment is depicted in select poems; the connection between the feminine and the landscape, their commodification and objectification, and the effect it has on the viewers, among other facets. Primarily referred to as the third wave of feminism, 'ecofeminism' as a movement, emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nevertheless the word 'ecofeminism' was first used in *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), by the French feminist Françoise D' Eaubonne and it became widespread only in the backdrop of numerous disputes and activities counter to ecological devastation, sparked-off primarily by frequent ecological catastrophes. To consider how gender and nature operate as social constructs in subverting the 'androcentric' approach of environmentalism, ecofeminism rests on the belief that environment is a feminist issue. Ecofeminists employ parallels concerning the subjugation of nature and the harassment of women as a method to accentuate the notion that both must be understood in order to suitably identify how they are connected. These parallels embrace but are not restricted to seeing women and nature as property, seeing men as the custodians of culture and women as the custodians of nature, and how men dominate women and humans dominate landscape.

Ted Walter's *The Spurned Goddess* can be considered as a quintessential specimen of poetry that echoes ecofeminist undertones. The title 'The Spurned Goddess' itself is of great importance. This title is employed as a figurative representation of nature with a negative connotation as the term 'spurned' is customarily deliberated as a word of contempt. Earth is personified by attributing the feminine traits and her glory and grandeur are celebrated, over the years, by many versatile poets like Wordsworth by the title 'Mother Earth'. On the contrary, Ted Walter addresses nature not as 'Mother Goddess' but as the 'Spurned Goddess' thereby projecting man's impertinence towards Mother Earth. "Let us consider Earth, explore the ache", becomes a refrain throughout the poem as he tries to recognize with the "ache" that originates from the conflict of man and nature.

Ted Walter eloquently advocates that it took fifteen billion years to make "the Earth from star-stuff but rarely do man offer much reverence to the legacy and grandeur of Earth. Despite conserving environment in its purity and splendour, man exploits nature through manifold means thereby rescinding the natural resources, the forestry, landscape, causes destruc-

tion in the food chains and food webs which even lead to extinction of species. Such a transformation is irretrievable as we cannot fake a species. In a sense Ted Walter ridicules the hostile endeavours of the technologically driven modern civilization. He also raises the question "will our children learn to speak her name in hope, honour her return?" which is quite significant in the present-day ecological state. This poem serves as the poet's dirge at the deplorable predicament of nature. It serves as a lament on the destruction of the environment. Ted Walter also exemplifies the insignificance of man when compared to the majesty and grandeur of Mother Earth. Ted Walter's *Spurned Goddess* reminds the readers the well acclaimed poem *A Requiem to Mother Earth* by O.N.V.Kurup.

"This song I inscribe in my heart today is a requiem to you and to me!" (lines 8-9) articulates the Jnanpith Award winning poet and lyricist O.N.V. Kurup, in his widely celebrated poem *Bhoomikooru Charamageetham* translated into English with the title *Requiem to Mother Earth*. This is yet another significant eco poem that can be easily subjected to an ecofeminist analysis. The title of the poem is very significant to two paramount explanations. Firstly, the association of the term 'Mother' with Earth whereby Earth gets personified as a departed mother, abused and abandoned by her sons. Secondly, due to the use of the word requiem which means a funeral song for Mother Earth. The verse "in the imminence of your death, may your soul rest in peace!" (lines 6-7) becomes a powerful refrain in the poem.

The poet persistently addresses Earth as "Mother!" throughout the poem. The story of Mother Earth is not different from the present day stories we hear about the mothers who give

birth to children who exploit their resources to their maximum to attain stability and later displays insolence and gradually abandon them without much care or concern for the poor souls. In his most renowned poem, *A Requiem to Mother Earth*, O.N.V. Kurup eloquently portrays the helplessness of a mother who "bore countless children who cannot live in amity!" (lines 25-26) who had to shed unseen silent tear witnessing her children eating one another. The poet addresses "Mother" Earth as the "favourite bride of the sun" (line 41) who has lost her nuptial apparel. This denotes her devastated state as a consequence of the brutal irreverent deeds of her children who clawed at her bare body and "feasted on the gushing blood! The rhythm of death resounds everywhere, as they swirl in their frenzied dance!" (lines 45-49).

Remarkably, the poet brings in traces of intertextuality with the "story of the

Young Greek who unwittingly married his mother" (lines 50-51) and presents "the children of the Mother who strip her naked" (lines 52-53) as a subversion of the old story. Furthermore the mention of the wheels of the chariot of life reminds the readers of the chariot of death that Emily Dickinson has portrayed in her poem, *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*. There appears repeated personifications of nature throughout the poem. The phrases such as "the eyes of the blazing sun" (line 60), "June clouds hunt for drinking water" (line 62), "Decemberevenings hunt for cold", (line 63) "April dawns hunt for a tiny flower" (line 64), "sylvan rivers hunt for swirling currents(line 65)" and others exemplify the fact that "the rhythm of creation is shattered" (line 66) due to the continual reckless and ruthless interference of man and modernity.

In the course of the poem, O.N.V. articulates that he has always marvelled at her "magic of catching an infant sun in a dew-drop" (lines 81-83). He continues to acknowledge the virtues of his devoted Mother quite eloquently. "Mother! I see you in myriad forms" (line 93) he exclaims and explains how she deck the trees with verdant hues, how she scare him with the screeching of the owl, how she comfort him with the cuckoo's song, how she dips the dusks in gold, how she carries the eventide and disappear into the woods, how she returns with the dawn on her shoulders, how she wakes him up and feeds him the nectar of poetry. "I know all this, you fill in me, O Mother! What remains immortal in me are your memories!" (lines 117-119) exclaims the poet. Gradually he describe the present condition of the poor lady brutally abused by her sons. Mother Earth is portrayed as a "trudge along the solar highway an outcast with tonsured head shouldering the bundle of shame" (lines 127-129).

The poet concludes by affirming that "Mother Earth, not yet dead! This is your requiem! This song I inscribe in my heart today is a requiem to you and to me" (lines 135-138). The arresting verse "I won't be here to moisten your dead lips with my tears, to mourn your death" (lines 139-141) is very significant as it exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between man and nature. It is high time for man to have an epiphany regarding the ultimate truth of human existence- without nature there is no possible existence for man. By causing destruction the natural resources and the various flora and fauna, man is digging his own grave. The universal message ingrained in those evocative lines of poetry epitomizes the poet's vision of equitability. The concluding part "O Mother Earth, not yet dead, in the imminence of your death, May your soul rest in peace! in eternal peace!" (lines 144-147) caution the readers of the impending catastrophe that is soon to cause the extermination of man..

These evocative eco-poem are poignant illustrations of merciless commodification and vicious objectification of Mother Earth in the postmodern era. Such ruthless exploitation of the landscape, obliteration of wildlife and attenuation of forest cover may result in radical penalties that comprises climate change, scarcity of water, depletion of natural resources and many more ecological perils that pose risk to both man and Earth to the extent of the complete eradication of life on Earth. Man must learn not just to protect and conserve but also to respect the Mother Earth.

Conclusion

To foster an ecological consciousness, a perception of our spiritual, cultural and ecological dimensions of traditions and practices, is critical. The analysis of the proficiency with which the literary theorists respond to the ecological dilapidation and its material effects endowed in literature can aid us realize how aspects like race, gender and caste facilitate in the interfaces between humans and the natural world. On a close reading, the selected poems for analysis render a reiteration of the existing anthropocentric beliefs and as a consequence there develops a questioning stand which pronounces that the progress attained by man is always secondary to the one attained by nature. Therefore, it is high time that man develop the ability to identify with all forms of life to look beyond the utility angle. It is highly important to preserve nature and its resources for maintaining peace and harmony for the successful existence of man on Earth.

As it is the obligation and responsibility of each and every child to protect and respect Mother Earth who has bestowed her myriad boons upon her selfish children, quite selflessly, it is reasonably imperative to cultivate as well as spread ecological consciousness even among the grassroot levels of the society irrespective of class, creed or gender. Spasmodic collaborative efforts must be made to perceive and perform some effective solution to the detrimental environmental calamities and the challenging ecological problems. The 'go green' movement must be promoted with a vision of equitability and safe future. A precise rootedness in the concepts and purpose of human existence can benefit us in piloting a future of ecological sustainability and harmony. Henceforth, there ought to be a communal pursuit for paradigms, pathways, frameworks and visions built of an existing heritage of ideas, world views and cultures anchored on practices-old and new.

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The Fractured Self: A Study of Iqbal Ramoowalia's *The Death of a Passport*

Mehak Bhola

Abstract

Although the different diasporic groups have been able to sustain transnational connections across borders, yet they endure estrangement accompanied by an incessant instinct of incongruity while they search for the necessary means to obtain settlement in their respective host lands. It is the constant reminder of being 'out of place' which never escapes an immigrant's subconscious. The realization of being an outsider, casted aside within a foreign setting achingly kindles diasporic restlessness. Even though the immigrant experience might not convey instances of explicit hostility, however, it definitely puts up with isolation. This estrangement is hidden as much as it is evident and exists in the form of cultural alienation. Punjabi diasporic fiction also deals with the issues of the loss of identity, social isolation and cultural shock and how such issues impact the diasporic experience. The present paper attempts to analyze the influence of similar socio-political estrangements upon troubled and anxious diasporic condition of immigrants resulting in the fragmentation of their identity as characterized in Iqbal Ramoowalia's narrative, *The Death of a Passport*.

Keywords: Cultural alienation; Diaspora; Identity crisis; Isolation; Migration.

Transnationalism, Diaspora and Transnational Feminism

There are varied definitions which aim to put forward a lucid set of images in order to construct a singular meaning of the term "transnationalism", however, it is only possible to comprehend the ideology located behind the concept of transnationalism by considering multiple set of emigrational speculations together. Several researchers of migration studies have inferred upon how immigrants maintained parallel connections with their homelands while acquiring settlement in their respective host lands. Exchanges and interactions which travel across borders are a regular and sustained part of migrants' realities and activities. Transnationalism cre-

ates a greater degree of association between individuals, communities and societies across borders, bringing about change in the social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of societies of origin and destination. However, certain veterans of the theory of Transnational feminist studies such as Chandra Mohanty, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, Richa Nagar, Uma Narayan and many more have utilized the aforesaid term to draw integral conclusions about the positioning of immigrant women, especially third world women in a global context. Richa Nagar and Amanda Lock Swarr have argued about the significance of forming a transnational feminist solidarity in order to address and eventually resolve similar issues in their seminal text entitled as, *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. They allude to the findings of Grewal and Kaplan in order to contextualize the term “transnational” within Transnational Feminist studies as:

In a discussion of transnational sexuality studies, Grewal and Kaplan (2001) specify at least five kinds of foci where the term transnational has gained currency: (a) in theorizing migration as a transnational process; (b) to signal the demise or irrelevance of the nation-state in the current phase of globalization; (c) as a synonym for diasporic; (d) to designate a form of post colonialism; and (e) as an alternative to the problematic of the global and the international, articulated primarily by Western or Euro-American second-wave feminists as well as by multinational corporations, for which “becoming global” marks an expansion into new markets. (4)

The statement elicits a lucid emphasis upon the relation between transnationalism and diaspora as they seem to share a symbiotic relationship. However, the inherent presence of post colonialism seems to acquire a mendacious presence within the studies. Since, “transnational” appears to have been employed as synonymous with “diasporic” within Transnational Feminist studies, it becomes quite imperative to search for its semblance within diasporic literature.

Punjabi Indo-Canadian Diaspora

In his detailed cartographic study of the Punjabi diasporic community entitled as *The Sikh Diaspora: A Search for Statehood*, Darshan Singh Tatla mentions, “Of about a million Sikhs abroad, over three-quarters live in just three countries; namely, Britain, Canada and the United States. For a community of 16 million, the proportion of overseas Sikhs is strikingly high, far above any other group, except Gujaratis and Mirpuris” (Tatla 41). Therefore, the community has established a firm ground for them-

selves over the years and has been able to seek growth in various disparate fields irrespective of confronting unfavorable circumstances during their settlement. The arrival of South Asian groups in Canada and especially the East Indians sought initiation with the advent of the twentieth century. The period registered a proliferation in the arrival of Sikh immigrants as due to the rapid altercations emerging around the globe in terms of social, economic, cultural as well as political instabilities due to the growing insurgencies against imperialism. However, the partisan intervention of the state apparatus in espousing anti-immigrant sentiment to check further expansion of the Sikh community could be underlined through understanding the obtuse "continuous journey" clause, added as Order of Council in 1910. One of the initial procedures to manage the influx of Sikh immigrants was found in the establishment of such an antithetical clause that granted the immigration to only those migrants who travelled from their respective locations to Canada, having undergone a continuous journey without making any halts along the way. Amita Handa, an Indo-Canadian theorist and currently a professor at York University has been furnishing her inferences regarding the contemporary Punjabi diasporic population residing in Canada with her academic hypothesis and intellect. In her influential text, *Silk Saris and Mini Skirts: South Asian Women Walk the Tightrope of Culture* states:

The anxiety about new immigrants in Canada first surfaced at the turn of the century when, due to labor needs, British settlers in Canada began to recruit workers. South Asians first arrived in Canada in 1900. They were predominantly Punjabi Sikhs who settled in British Columbia. Most of them worked in the sawmills and lumberyards, at railway construction, mining, fishing, or as agricultural labourers... While little attention was paid to the first South Asian immigrants, their increase in numbers captured the province's attention by 1906 (as demonstrated by the rise in anti-Asian sentiment); by 1908, there was a complete ban on South Asian immigrants. (Handa 46)

Handa also emphasizes upon the reasons which propelled the South Asians to mobilize themselves under the critical colonial circumstances in order to search for better employment as well as accommodation. Though their arrival in Canada largely remained unnoticed initially, however, the anti-Asian sentiment as pointed out by Handa led to a complete prohibition towards South Asian immigration in Canada until 1960s. As their population increased in the state, so did the white anxieties related to non-white folk arriving in the territory as they assumably became a threat in the white imagination in terms of immorality and delinquency which

eventually established the East-West dichotomy within the dominant discourse. Therefore, "The power struggle between East and West, and the construction of their respective identities, is based on their relationship to one another; the meaning of each is constructed through the marking out of symbolic boundaries. Women are central to this boundary" (Handa 57).

Several global diasporas have come forward with their distinct set of writings to express similar contradictions associated with the cultural battle between the East and West and how immigrant women experience its severity. Diasporic writers have come forward with the description of the brutal challenges which they confronted during their own journey. Amidst the wide umbrella of diasporic literature, Punjabi diasporic fiction holds a significant position, as far as dealing with various issues of conflicted migrant sensibilities is concerned. The characters evidently depict several instances where they are seen falling victims to cultural alienation, economic exploitation, social isolation leading to inflict psychological violence upon their sensitive condition which they come across at different levels during the process of settlement, along with the identity crisis which further pushes their subconscious into a state of uncertainty. As a result, the diasporic consciousness suffers from fragmentation which exerts a severe effect on the psyche of the displaced. "Therefore, the words *exile, diaspora, migration, dislocation, deracination and displacement* are the leading metaphors used to express not only the disorientation but also ideological and existential fragmentation", describes Mandal (40).

Culture and Identity Politics

Culture has been defined as the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. It is also the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group. This definition runs in coherent accordance with Williams' observations and consequently lays down the kinship amid culture and society. Also, it is equally noteworthy to analyze how identity is influenced by culture and in turn through society. Culture needs identity just as much as identity is helped formed by culture. There exists a symbiotic relationship between the two. The process of the formation of a cultural identity begins at a very early stage. It starts to exert its psychological imprint from childhood and continues to do the same until an individual approaches adulthood. It runs as a subconscious desire to live inside our groups, define ourselves through them and even belong to them. The sense of unity which arises out of a cultural congregation justified through belief, induces a sense of belonging with each other and at the

same time develops a state of psychological comfort with the collective consciousness of the group. Therefore, it is fairly evident that people are not born with culture, rather they are raised into it. These objectives can be easily traced within the Cultural Identity Theory. A renowned critic and professor of the same field of research, Myron Lustig argues that cultural identities “are central, dynamic and multifaceted component of one’s self-concept” (Lustig 133). Thus, it can be understood that the cultural practices of a particular society not only build intellectual kinship amongst its subjects but also run intimately with one’s concept of oneself. Although there are numerous other factors such as location, religious beliefs, ethnicity, cultural traditions etc. which blend in together resulting in the generation of a homogeneous cultural subconscious, yet there is one element in particular that holds a separate place in the construction of one’s conception of self. Language holds a rather substantial space as far as the composition of identity is concerned. It happens to be a contributing factor in chiseling an individual’s intellect. Language transcends its original purpose of serving communication and acquires a more profound region within one’s psyche the moment it begins to communicate expression. When language combines with emotion to beget expression, that is when it essentially begins to act as a contributing factor in strengthening one’s collective socio-cultural sensibility. As a result, it secures an inherent space amidst one’s cultural identity.

Keeping in mind, how closely one’s culture runs beside an individual’s conception of oneself, it becomes rather significant to explore the challenges which it encounters while seeking settlement in a transnationalist space. Initially, it is rather necessary to note that a transnationalist movement, be it voluntary or involuntary, begins with uprooting a native from his place of origin and later expecting one to easily situate himself/herself amidst a completely unfamiliar territory while establishing an accommodation for oneself. However, it is critical to observe the whole process of his settlement closely in order to bring out the severity hidden underneath his diasporic experience. Despite the various attempts carried out through globalization in blurring the boundaries across nations, yet the ground reality cannot be overlooked. The technological advancements have indeed brought comfort to the migrant population by providing countless mediums to seek a much more enhanced and accessible communication reaching back home, still they have only been able to somehow reduce the distance virtually. They are the varied mediums of ‘virtual’ communication. As a result, the immigrants continuously bear the unescapable weight of homeland nostalgia upon their psyche and endure homelessness. The entire network of the ‘world wide web’ has indeed brought many families closer to their migrated members and the efficient

means of digital communication have reduced the vast distance to a great extent, still an immigrant has been unable to overcome the inevitable 'homesickness'. In order to rise above this haunting sentiment of recurring homeland nostalgia, he/she undergoes a series of ordeals. It requires a resolute sense of determination in order to withstand the whole process of settlement. This is partially because the migrant's subconscious is hungover upon the memories of one's homeland in spite of securing easy access of communication. Although different diasporic groups have been able to easily sustain transnational connections with their native people across borders, nevertheless they endure estrangement and incongruity while they search for the necessary means to obtain settlement in their respective hostlands. It is the awareness of being 'out of place' which never escapes an immigrant's subconscious. The realization of being an outsider, casted aside within a foreign setting majorly kindles diasporic restlessness. Even though the diasporic experience might not convey instances of explicit hostility, however, it definitely puts up with isolation. This estrangement is hidden as much as it is evident and exits in the form of cultural alienation.

Diasporic Identity and Crisis

The issues and concerns pertaining to cultural alienation hold a major place amidst Punjabi diasporic literature as well as migrant studies. In order to comprehend the several reasons behind furnishing strong emphasis upon cultural estrangement, it is rather critical to position it within the context of Cultural Identity Theory. Here, the intimacy which an individual shares with his/her cultural identity acquires an advanced dynamic. Having established how one's native culture lies adjacent to his/her conception of self; it becomes significant to observe the reasons behind its breakdown as it comes in contact with an unfamiliar and indifferent culture. As culture turns out to be a defining tool in shaping one's identity, it is fathomable to encounter its fragmentation upon the loss of such a fundamental organ. The various practices, codes, conducts, ethics etc. which were actually the binding adhesive of a collective consciousness absorb a relentless blow as one migrates. Although the native community is affected after losing one of its member, yet it is the member who is affected the most. After landing across the border, it is the displaced who suffers more and the cultural differences which he/she observes here, disturb the migrant's already anxious psyche. He/she begins to look out for some essential means of survival in order to acquire settlement. During this whole process, the immigrants remain unable to comprehend the reason behind the incessant frustration which claws at their sanity. In the meanwhile, their subconscious is heavily burdened with the cultural loss and

as a result the diasporic identity breaks into fragments. Unable to identify with the host society and its strange culture, the migrant's psyche is pushed into a state of anxiety, a constant state of restlessness. Since he/she has lost such a significant aspect of "self-concept", the immigrant undergoes identity-crisis (Lustig 133). In his text, *The Location of Culture* Homi Bhabha explains the process of the construction of cultural hybridity as observed in the case of western transnationalist displacement. He argues that under such circumstances the presumptive binaries of colonizer and colonized, self and the other, East and West always runs underneath one's racial consciousness which especially becomes an area of conflict for an oriental immigrant seeking settlement in First world locations. The cultural identity in such a case thus becomes a fluid concept as it undergoes different frames of cultural arrangement and is expected to adapt itself according to its new environment. Amidst this whole conflicting arrangement, it is the diasporic sensibility which suffers the loss. Somdatta Mandal opines, "Living in diaspora means living in forced or voluntary exile and living in exile usually leads to severe identity confusion and problems of identification with and alienation from old and new cultures and homelands" (Mandal 41). Hence, the ruthless onslaughts endured by the diasporic identity in the form of social, cultural along with racial alienation forces it in the direction of crisis.

The Death of a Passport

Iqbal Ramoowalia, an Indo-Canadian writer of the Punjabi diasporic literature has established a prominent position within the prominent field. His fictional characters provide a deep insight into the intricate diasporic realities. He describes the gradual recession of a person's individuality after enduring the impact of displacement and takes the description to its farthest extent through his narrative imagination. Through the tragic narrative of his text, *The Death of a Passport*, he brings out the abject condition of various migrants attempting to find their own social positioning amidst the wide Western world. Iqbal Ramoowalia wishes to lay out the hidden reality which lies behind the sparkling image of the West. Essentially, it is through the protagonist of his novel *Seema*, that the author attempts to bring forward the adversity of dislocation. Ramoowalia outlines the narrative of a woman who has been disowned by her husband and is abandoned to find an accommodation of her own amidst a completely alien country. However, the instances depicting *Seema's* condition while she was living with her husband were equally onerous. She was forcibly married off to Anmol and sent to an entirely unfamiliar place to thrive on her own. Though she was well provided for, but never looked after. She never found content within her marital relationship and decided to leave

the wretched place for good instead of living a life surrounded by rejection and indifference. However, after this instant she only a catastrophic series of misfortunes. Seema knocks at the door of her only friend in Canada, Veena. Unfortunately, her husband's ill-intentions forced Seema to vacate the one place where she was beginning to acquire comfort. This seems as if it is only the inception of a series long struggle which will only worsen at every next step. Subsequently, she somehow comes in contact with Rajan Brar. He employs her in his warehouse under a great deal of risk as Seema has been characterized an illegal immigrant. The ferocity of Seema's growing anxiety depicts the egregious extent of her socio-economic exploitation as an immigrant woman, debilitated under the burden of being an illicit citizen in the state of Canada. The narrative recounts her as acutely troubled and entrapped between her pseudo identity, 'Reeta Gill' which she uses to shield her illegal status from the State and her own. Through such depiction, the author has attempted to bring forth the condition of a certain group of Punjabi women, who migrated from their homeland due to marital reasons as 'dependents' and under an inherent obligation towards familial systems. It manifests how immigrant women like Seema have been subjugated under the global capitalist system as soon as they become vulnerable and exposed to the hegemonic system which suppresses them not only on the basis of their racial identity but also their economic and sexual identities.

The divided psychological state leads which led her into a state of constant restlessness emerged from the complete absence of economic activity for her in the host society. Her anxiety was further fueled by Reeta's incessant threats to expose Seema before the police. As a result, she developed an uncanny solicitude. She was constantly on edge and kept thinking that she could get arrested any moment. This consistent restlessness was consuming her inside out. She was fretting physically as well as emotionally at all times as, "The frequent urge to run to the washroom kept her away from the desk most of the time. The water bottles had never run out that fast before. The serviette box on the table found itself depleted in just an hour, filling in the garbage can with sheets of napkins drenched in her cold sweats. Queer needles did not cease their onslaught: They continued to rise in her blood each time the phone rang" (Ramoowalia 104). The description makes her mental dilemma precisely evident. It is the fear of deportation which pushed her subconscious to the extent where she developed severe anxiety and panic. Through her condition, Ramoowalia describes the severity to which emigrational struggle can affect the very psyche of an individual. Seema gave into her overwhelming fear and such was the extent of her austerity that she fled from Rajan's warehouse. The phobia of deportation forced her to give up the haven which she inde-

pendently built for herself over the years. Seema's adverse condition and fragmented psyche becomes more than evident in the text and a consequence of her illegal status which restrains her from obtaining a decorous socio-economic position. Moreover, it becomes a relentless handicap which turns out to be the reason of her social, economic, psychological as well as sexual exploitation. Throughout the course of the novel, Seema engages herself in distinct economic activities in Toronto, however, only leading herself towards tragic and abusive circumstances every time. Her illegal status along with several other diasporic challenges in the form of culture shock, unemployment, racial subjugation and sexual abuse have been underlined as the reasons behind Seema's tragic transnational existence by the author to depict the troubling circumstances endured by immigrant women like her.

Ramoowalia has skillfully crafted another character in his text which initially appears as a secondary one, however, it is also through the analysis of this character the trauma of migration is realized. The tragedy which Sodhi undergoes is extremely unsettling. He came to Seema's rescue when she was subjected to deportation and suggested that she can only escape the inevitability of her circumstance if she agrees to marry him and subsequently turn a legal immigrant. It is through her observations that the reader learns about Sodhi's background. He turned an orphan at the age of seven and kept fiddling among different relatives thereafter. He executed petty crimes to somehow ensure his survival as he grew. Eventually, he landed in Canada and obtained the legal stamp through his survival techniques.

The detailed description of his past provides the reader with an insight into his conflicted psyche as the cultural estrangement and social rejection which he experienced post-migration seem to be responsible for engendering his angst. As Seema came to live with him, his lecherous motives become more explicit. However, the narrative gradually unfolds to depict that he is a victim of migration as much as she is. At several instances, the ethnocentric bias of the white imagination along with the racial restrictions turns quite apparent in the novel against the immigrant's condition. Even though Sodhi was a landed immigrant, he had to engineer his own accidents in order to draw money from his insurance so that he could ensure his survival. Notably, the author portrays the mercurial spiral which captures an immigrant's consciousness because of continually confronting an incessant inadequacy of economic activity due to his oriental descendancy, putatively rendering him/her subjected to various forms intersectional oppressions. The author eloquently displays the magnitude with which such racial, cultural and economic standards affect-

ed Sodhi's psychological state as all the conflicted emotions collided in his conscience and transfixed him into a fragmented state of mind. His final speech seems overwhelmingly incoherent where his anxiety overpowers him and he's thrown into hysteria. He turns unable to bear the solitude which was a counterpart of his exilic condition. Consequently, his diasporic identity was fractured as he gave himself to his overwhelming hysteria. His final speech appears to be laced with enmeshed emotions where he pleads before Seema to save him from arrest. Eventually, his fractured consciousness leads him towards suicide. Ramoowalia explores the farthest extent to which a migrant's diasporic condition drives him towards a fragmented self as his exilic condition decimated all his hopes and ambitions emerged as a consequence of the a ruthless social, economic and political hegemonic system which incessantly pushed him at a marginal social position.

Conclusion

Iqbal Ramoowalia has deconstructed the multiple layers of the diasporic struggle majorly through the characterization of Seema and Sodhi. Both of them depict an oriental immigrant's struggle in a Neo-Colonial era. In Seema's case, her gender identity along with her illegitimate status turns out to be her nemesis whereas Sodhi's strife illustrated the damage caused by the several organs of the global capitalist network and how it chases an immigrant till he forfeits. Ramoowalia's focus remains on foregrounding the damage caused to one's diasporic consciousness in the contemporary era. A constant victim of socio-cultural marginalization, the immigrant also experiences severe racial isolation. It is because of such hostile circumstances that he's unable to overcome homeland nostalgia. In addition, cultural alienation adds to his misery. It is due to this cultural shock which stabs the diasporic identity with such magnitude that it becomes incapable of recovering from the three-fold set of systemic oppression. It breaks into fissures and eventually fragments. The farthest extent of this fragmentation can be traced through the analysis of Sodhi's character. On one hand, Seema's anxiety illustrates the excessive burden which comes along an immigrant's illegal status, on the other Sodhi's hysteria accounts for the unbearable identity loss emerging out of social isolation, economic oppression and cultural alienation. Such characters establish the significance of one's cultural, racial as well as gender identity and exhibit its fragmentation to a certain extent after undergoing transnational migration. It is critical to note how such a loss directly affects one's individuality and injures it, resulting in its dissolution.

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The Language of the Drum as a Metaphor to Subaltern Speech: A Critical Reading of Shivaram Karanth's *Choma's Drum*

Chand Basha M.

Abstract

The Jnanpith awardee Shivaram Karanth wrote *Chomana Dudi* in the Kannada language in 1933; it was translated into English as *Choma's Drum* by U R Kalkur in 1978. Many critics have grappled with practice of untouchability and the plight of Choma in the novel. But the existing scholarship undermines the symbiotic affiliation between Choma and the inanimate drum. Choma—the protagonist in the novel does not speak but his drum speaks, and he seems to express his anxieties through the object. Drum becomes part and parcel of his life. The paper tries to map the fictional trajectory of narratives that free the drum from the domestic context and modify the drum as a metaphor to the subaltern assertion. In the process of understanding the drum as an agency of the representation of unspeakable assertions of Choma, myriad plights of untouchables are disclosed. The novel contains 'subaltern' perspectives. Choma's tragic life is a result of the caste system and the exploitation of Belli and other labourers in the coffee plantation is the black face of capitalism. The novel seems to see parallel lines between the two oppressive powers.

Keywords: Kannada modernity; Metaphor; Subaltern; Untouchability.

Speaking of the Unspoken: Transcription of Subaltern Perspectives in the Novel

"I read a book one day, and my whole life was changed" (1)— the opening line of the novel *The New Life* by Orhan Pamuk reveals to us the value and strength of literature in the life of an individual. A work of art can contribute to the social changes also. Upon seeing Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in a party he threw after being elected as

the President of USA, Abraham Lincoln exclaimed: "So this is the little lady who started the great-war" (Canada 636). His reaction underlines the impact of her path-breaking novel in mobilizing a social reformation during the Civil War in America. These two lines are exemplary achievements of literature in materializing changes in an individual and a social order.

An individual and society can also inspire a work of art. That is why the world has seen the most celebrated painters, writers, singers, and musicians. They created a definite sense of humanity in their mimetic representation that could not be located in reality. In the context of literature, many writers are remembered under the second category: inspired by the experience of society. Under this argument, I am contextualizing the novel *Choma's Drum*. The narrative matrix of the text unfolds the trajectory of oppressive social reality being depicted by an upper-class writer (Karanth). The humans are not mere living beings; they are a constellation of myriad experiences of a society. Karanth's interest in the anthropological pitches of local communities has strengthened the narratives of his literary works. Being one of the Kannada modern writers, he developed a keen observation of the world around. He points out the motivations behind writing this novel thus:

...there are four classes of untouchables: Meras, Bairas, Ajils and Maris, in South Canara District. Mari Periahs lowest among them are not given importance in the society. Even their shadow is treated as untouchable. They have to survive by eating left-over of their masters and eating dead animals or by doing any lowest profession in the society. Till now they are not entitled to do the work of coolie as well. Choma is the creature of this class. (2007 vii)

He further says that Choma is rejected by god-Panjurli and society. His pain is double-edged. The author shares his ethnographic observations in the novel thus: "I have observed the life of holeyas (Harijans) in my village. I also saw them work in coffee plantations. My observations shaped themselves into *Chomana Dudi* in five days".

These experiences enthused Karanth into writing *Choma's Drum*—one of his masterpieces. The novel deals with the oppressive social structure, the rigid caste prejudices and the inhuman practice of untouchability. Hence, the testimonial observations and narratives of Karanth are in accordance with Pramod Nayar's view on Baby Kamble's life: "accurate historical witnessing of a social structure of traumatic oppression" (2008 109). As a writer from the higher class, Karanth wrote this

novel about an untouchable's life that raised new waves in the Kannada literature and marked as the abolitionist literature.

Before going further, it is essential to know the multi-faceted Karanth who stands along with Rabindranath Tagore, R.K Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk raj Anand. The connecting commonality among all these writers is the visibility of the Gandhian ideologies. They were all motivated by the personality of Mahatma Gandhi and grappled with social issues. Consequently, Karanth wrote not for the sake of writing but to 'educate' people. He contributed to not only literature but also, as Guha observes, to:

nationalism, social reform, commerce, journalism, photography, acting, dance, painting, music, cinema, experiments in education, rural uplift, the popularization of science ... the writing of novels (as many as forty-five), the writing of plays (not less than ninety), and environmentalism." (2004 201)

Bhabani Bhattacharya joins the chorus of writers who depict social realism in their work and says: "I hold that a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society's point of view" (Sharma 145). A writer must pen on social problems that are still alive in the social order. These testimonies of intellectuals corroborate the necessity of providing what Gayatri Spivak observes the 'voice' to the unspoken.

Set in a village named Bhogana Halli, Karanth's work accesses the social reality of Choma with a keen anthropological eye. A brief introduction of Choma's family discloses the intensity of anthropological coherence developed by the novelist. The subaltern Choma has four sons—Chaniya, Guruva, Neela, Kala and the only daughter Belli. He has a few pet animals: a dog (Baadu), two oxen. The keen observation of the performative and ritualistic structure of such communities allows Karanth to see an inanimate thing, i.e., drum as an integral part of the novel. The drum is seen as Choma's companion after the death of his wife; the drum speaks on behalf of the unspoken, tongue-tied slave. Choma's family stays in a small hut which metaphorically represents slums in contemporary rural-urban India. As the author points out: "the hut was his own-when not claimed by rains and storms" (17). The author's description shows how Choma's condition resembles homeless slum dwellers and poor quality of living in villages. The author illustrates Choma's life with biting irony "there was nothing extraordinary either in Choma's drum or in his life. He had remained backward even among the holeyas, the untouchables" (12), and

Karant goes further to explain the deplorable state of Choma that "wife is probably too dignified a word for a lowly untouchable" (ibid) like Choma. These third-person omniscient narratives replicate the social conditions of Holeyas and stereotypical views towards the subaltern castes.

The fictionalization of the everyday life of his family is narrativized thus: "The dinner would be before dark, for no lamp had even been lit in Choma's hut, what precious thing did they have to do at night to need a lamp?" (16) The line invites the realization of the ignored status of the life of an untouchable. The narration of the author on Choma's life consists of biting-irony.

Choma has a dream of earning his bread. He wants to become a small independent farmer and lead a dignified life. Everyone dreams, but some of us dream of achieving what we could not do in wakefulness. Many great personalities dream of achieving in wakefulness, and they do it in mental consciousness. Many times what we see in the dream is materialized in real life only when we put in the effort. Choma puts efforts, but his ideas are not materialized. Choma's life is tragic. Is Choma's dream 'mega-motivated'? Choma dreams of owning a small piece of land. He has dexterity in agriculture. Choma has an intense desire to become a farmer like Wang Lung, the farmer protagonist in Pearl S Buck's novel *The Good Earth* (1931). His effort to possess his bread replicates with the struggles of Santiago in *The Old Man and The Sea*. Strikingly, Choma's only source of consolation seems to be the drum. His attachment with the drum can be better understood in parallel with the case of Oskar Matzerath' in *The Tin Drum*. Being a bonded labourer to Sankampayya, his sincerity can be compared with Uncle Tom's commitment to his master in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Despite all these capabilities, Choma's dream to have a little land on lease remains an only dream.

Choma had been a 'bonded-laborer' to Sankappayya's family since his ancestors. Henceforth he wants to become a farmer. His desire to become a farmer is a natural desire, not the motivated desire by materialist interest. His unconditional service to his master makes him dream for a piece of land on lease. He humbly requests Sankappayya: "Master, you have so many tenants. If you could lease me a piece of land, even barren land, I shall revere your name for the rest of my life" (28). Moreover, he is asking for a barren land that is not used by Sankappayya. Sankappayya's sarcastic reply unfolds the caste prejudices used to justify discrimination thus: "one must stretch one's legs just as much as one's bed allows" (28) Abraham Maslow's words - "What a man can be, he must be" (46) - underlines the importance of equal opportunities in the progress of civilization. Contrari-

ly, Choma is not allowed to till the land for his grains. His enthusiasm, interest and ability are undermined. Sankappayya seems to divert Choma's request by putting this riddle based on Choma's caste and untouchability, but not based on his expertise in tilling the land. The necessity to think about Choma arises in the reader's mind because "a musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself." (Maslow 28)

What I observe in the novel is that Choma's desire is not to gain *power* but to gain 'grain of his own'—a symbol of dignity and self-fulfillment. He strives to come out from the clutches of his master for life long. Choma's desire to till the land is supported by his "sense of belongingness," which avoids the feeling of an unsettled life. The assertion to a sense of denial can be understood better with reference to Yank from O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*. As Yank asserts when he is manacled from his work, his anxiety of being reduced to a mere living being is articulated thus: "I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see—it's all dark, get me? It's all wrong!" (272). Akin to Yank, Choma's unconditional loyalty and hardship are undermined by the caste prejudices. Choma eventually slows down his nature of work without any hope of fulfilling his dream. Choma loses his optimism and sense of belongingness; hence he lands in a vacuum of uncertainty.

Basic needs such as food, water, love, friendship, belongingness, and security needs are the essential requirements. Choma is never met with security needs. To live in a society, we need to achieve economic sources. Choma strongly believes that land could serve the purpose of his life and provide food to his family. Security of resources like food, shelter, cloth, family, respect, and the property is as necessary as breath, sex, sleep, homeostasis, etc. Psychology says when the "deficiency needs" are not met, the man feels anxious and tense. When Choma is not allowed to meet these needs by the hegemony of society, he expresses traumatic feelings and the unsettled life through the drum. Choma's wishes are neither "meta-motivated" (going beyond his limits) nor "mega-motivated" (over-expectation of materialist life). Having strength, experience, skill and positive attitudes to till the land, he wants to be a respectable and simple farmer.

The narratives of the novel seem to gain empathic meaning while disclosing the social reality of the Independent India. Further, the constitutional rights have also not reached the lowest among the lower section of the social order in contemporary times. The inferiority complexity among the

marginal sections further causes self-destruction. The story raises serious questions on the subject of social discrimination from multiple perspectives. For instance, Choma solicits suggestions from his daughter Belligi on means of approaching his master to get a piece of land for lease. She gives a discouraging reply: "now, you don't make any such demand and be snubbed!" (18) Her words unveil the ambiguity and dilemmas that have weakened the socio-psychological structure of the lower caste. Adding to it, Karanth fascinatingly puts his opinion on the possible reaction from the upper echelon society: "they will consider if Holeyaholds land disaster will happen" (11). The author's statement stands testimonial to the act of othering and the dehumanizing treatment of Holeyas in a society dominated by the Brahminical and hegemonic castes.

The native dominant castes, according to the narratives, have constructed a set of moral codes that are followed by the marginal castes. The social obligation curtails the freedom of thought. For instance, Choma is made to be extremely sincere to his master, but he goes through a great deal of difficulty in expressing his wish to lease land. The unconditional sincerity to his landlord stops him from finding alternative means of a dignified survival. When Choma needs to go to the plantation to clear his debt, he gets into the labyrinth of duty and sincerity: "Should he slip away without informing the landlord? That would be an act of treachery" (21). This expression unveils an ethical sense of Choma; whereas, Sankappayya prioritizes the social status over the unconditional commitment of Choma. The master upholds the structure of feudal tradition that undermines the ability of Choma.

The master makes a perpetual strategy to remain in power. The powerless may opt-out a simple life, but the dominant finds ploys to sustain hegemony. The dominant seems to make perpetual treacheries to retain his position of domination and power. Sankamppayya makes alternative ways to divert the mind of Choma. Let me explain the psychology of Sankappayya in the light of a philosophical story: "Three in the Morning" by Chuang Tzu. A monkey trainer went to his monkeys and told them: "As regards your chestnuts: you are going to have three measures in the morning and four in the afternoon."

At this, they all became angry. So he said: "All right, in that case I will give you four in the morning and three in the afternoon." This time they were satisfied.

The two arrangements were the same and the number of chestnuts did not change. But in one case the animals were displeased, and in the oth-

er, they were satisfied. The keeper had been willing to change his personal arrangement in order to meet objective conditions. He lost nothing.

Similarly, Sankappayya assures Choma of giving land while on the other hand, he asks Choma to wait until his mother dies. He brings his mother as a reason to escape from responsibility. He says to Choma, "you will have to wait until my mother dies." Dramatically, Choma passes away early. Though Sankappayya tends to respond to Choma's requests, his replies seem to be a form of 'master morality' – Nietzsche's elucidation on the way master defends himself from his actions in the name of impartiality and a hold on his slave for his existence. By this, he protects his mother's order: "not to offer Brahminhood to an untouchable." Choma's character picturizes the way masters have a hold on subalterns and keep them as subalterns by pretending as if they are helping the subordinate.

The novelist also equates the caste hegemony with capitalism. The progress of capitalism also affected the coolies who primarily belong to the marginal section of the society. The darker side of capitalism and its echoes in the caste system is projected through the narration of the life of workers in the coffee plantations. Workers are not given basic amenities and needs. Capitalism and the plantation environment exploited the coolies as well as Belli. Manuel manipulated accounts and foisted fraudulent loans done by innocent workers. In the name of paying their debts, Manuel made workers for walking to the plantation. Belli gets sexually abused by Manuel and plantation lord Michael. To pay their debts, which was made in crucial conditions, many coolies have to work in plantations for low wages until their debts are cleared.

The coolies' condition at the plantation is so pathetic. Living rooms are like cattle sheds. One has to bend while entering into the rooms. No ventilation, floors are very rough. Staying in the rooms creates a suffocating situation. Food and water provided to workers are unbearable. As this line speaks, "the water was so muddy that even thirsty cattle would have been hesitant to drink it" (36).

In the plantation, struggling life makes subalterns forget even how to enjoy the natural life. They cannot also sense what they have around them. On the way to plantations, they pass by a picturesque landscape but fail to enjoy the aesthetics of the Hirimuruguppe range which "lifted its peaks into a cloud-dapped sky" (38) The range was accompanied by the limpid stream. Karanth narrates: "It was a place where poets would have loved to linger, but to the hard life of these tired travelers it communicated nothing." (38) Meanwhile, the death of Pomma's granddaughter reminds

us of the ugly faces of capitalist society. Manuel's reply—"it was a great thing it had survived all these years" (42) – evokes any sensible reader to criticize capitalist arrogance towards the lives of workers. The testimonial narratives help us in grappling with various forms of exploitation prevalent in the society of Independent India and the creation of subalterns based on religion and capitalism.

Language of the Unspoken: The Cacophony of The Drum as the Voice of the Voiceless

Life of the denied communities is full of struggles and tragedies. Their existence is not acknowledged unless they resist oppressive hegemonic practices. Subalterns find various means of resistance that James Scott observes "everyday weapons of weak." But Scott's idea has limitations because he mentions "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (1985 : 29). The tragic hero broadens the horizon of resistance by using the drum as a weapon of the weak. The image of the inanimate drum is filled with anthropological importance. The drum is being used by various communities in the Indian cultural contexts for ritualistic purposes. The role of the drum in the novel transcends its ritualistic context and becomes an agency of expression. The expression of Choma seems to pour out his unspeakable anxieties. Literary genre (poem, story, play, etc.), an art form (music, dance, etc.) speech, etc. have become an agency of anxieties and articulations. Choma's drum becomes an expression of the inner feelings of Choma, hence the drum becomes a metaphor to his language which bespeaks the unspoken anxieties.

Before going further, it is essential to grapple with the ideology of the oppressor. The social history of exploitation can be better understood with reference to many perspectives. The translator and literary critic C.R. Yravintelimath rightly observes the trajectory of caste discrimination in the Indian social order thus:

In India, the colonial situation... seems to have prevailed even long before the foreigners—the Muslims and the British came to India, but there is no gainsaying that the colonial situation- the domination of the superior over the weaker ones-worsened when the British cast their shadow on India. The pre-colonial situation, which seems to be peculiar to India, was a result of Varnavyavastha-the caste system-which was worse than imperialism because it led to the concentration of political power in one particular caste-the Kshatriya and that of the religious and spiritu-

al power in the Brahmins. By and large this system was known as the Brahminical order. From time immemorial the Brahminical order prevailed in India and in this order the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas together dominated over the Shudras. When the British came to India, the highly privileged superior castes joined force with the British in tyrannizing over the Shudras.

Through the ages, Shudras and the oppressed communities, as the author mentions in his preface to the novel, have been subjected to inferior jobs and remain in the lower echelons of society. Having been denied access to basic needs under the grips of the caste system, they have remained subalterns.

The upper echelon of the society had put many efforts in an attempt to remain in the dominant status and maintain cultural domination, what Antonio Gramsci pointed as "the hegemony," over Shudras. It does not mean that there was no resistance to these imperialist attitudes through the ages and times. Right from the beginning of civilizations, one could see the various avatars of resistance: wars, movements, agitations, etc. Several undocumented social reformations have happened while encountering the cultural hegemony in colonial and post-colonial times.

Literary narratives of the novel imagine the struggle of an individual towards creating a metaphorical resistance to oppressive social order. An individual like Choma can speak through the only language of drum against the humiliating hegemony of the society. The rhetoric of resistance he uses also becomes the form and weapon of resistance and leads to his self-satisfaction. In everyday life, Choma is treated as a domestic animal; contrarily, an inanimate object, i.e., the drum, becomes a means of resistance against dominancy. This struggle for existence becomes a source of inspiration and raw material for 'work of art' through which the author speaks of the unspoken – neglected and oppressed.

In the textual context, Karanth satisfied himself with his concern about marginalized by writing this book. He dedicated this book to Devanna Subraya Pi, who came from the poor class. On the other hand, Choma satisfies himself and meets his emotions and inner self by beating the drum. The beating of the drum is full of pathos. It is his language to express merries and miseries.

The drum transcends its ritualistic context and symbolizes ideologies, subaltern assertions and resistance against social rejection. Choma is helpless on several grounds: the denial to become farmer, the untimely death of his son, sexual exploitation of his daughter, etc. The groundless Choma

finds relief, reconciliation, hope, and a sense of belongingness in the drum.

"Dama-dhamma, dakadhakka"—the voice of drum— grabs the attention of people in the village. The villagers could not understand and hear the inner voice of Choma, so he selected the drum. The drum appears to give him recognition: "All of a sudden that sound damadhamma dakadhakka hits his [Sankappayya] ears like a clap of thunder and stopped him in his tracks. Those behind him also stopped, puzzled by that sound" (11). While returning from the village fair near Bhoganahalli, the drum beatings of Choma grabbed their attention and made them stand for a while. Choma, who had arrived before them from the festival, started expressing his pent-up feelings through his drum at his thatched hut. Having been affected by drum beats, one of the villagers in the company of Sankappayya exclaimed that "this is our Choma's drum. I don't know at what auspicious moment was this fellow born. To him birth and death are alike, night and day are alike drinking and beating the drum" (10). This speech awakes the reader to understand the pathos in Choma and his attachment to the drum.

Choma is a physically powerful man, but his low caste and treatment made him weak. These solitary and traumatic conditions of Choma make him find a way to express his frustrated feelings, and the drum stands as a beacon to his life. It gives him the strength to bear immense sadness and takes part in giving him solace. The drum seems to create an organic relation with the everyday life of Choma.

One day when the family members of Choma came back from the fair without eating anything, younger ones Neela and Kala felt very much hungry; both of them could not control themselves and started crying. They did not have anything but thrashes and beatings from their father, and they slept. Choma was not much disturbed by this, but being a father, he could not forget it easily. So to get relief from the incident, he took his drum and started beating it with greater stress and emotions. Belli started singing ("Le Le Le") with steps along with rhythmical beatings of the drum to accompany her deserted father. He does not speak with anyone while beating the drum, but the drum speaks to a sensible reader to feel the unheard voice of visionary Choma. In the novel, except Belli, nobody knows the purpose of beating the drum. She knows that the drum is an agency through which her father articulates anger, happiness, excitement, suffering, and hope.

Upon expressing his wish to get a piece of land for lease, Belli asked him not to keep his hope of having a portion of the land alive, Choma's

angry doubled. He wept a lot and uttered:

I had hoped to be a farmer during my wife's life-time, but it was not given to her to see me so. Since her death, I have been hoping that my children will see me realise my dream. Should you now try to kill my hopes? (20).

Bewildered by her father's cries, she picked the drum and began to strike it. The anxiety-ridden Choma "snatched it and began to beat it. Belli felt relieved." (20) Mediator between Choma and Belli is the drum, and ultimately drum is a spokesman of Choma feelings.

One day Choma went to Sankappayya as usual and sat in the courtyard like a caged bird. All coolies went to their homes with the wages of the day. Choma neither moved from his place nor spoke to his master. He intends to talk about something, but he is in a dilemma to speak or not to speak. Sankappayya, his master guessed through gestures of Choma that he wanted to ask something. Sankappayya told Choma to ask anything without hesitation. Then Choma asked a piece of wasteland that he could survive independently while cultivating the ground in the name of Sankappayya. This request was the question of the existence of hegemony. It shocks the ontological structure of Sankappayya's feudal ideology. As it is mentioned earlier, a small touch of the subordinate can alter the entire foundation of power. Choma's humble request seems unacceptable to his landlord. Sankappayya did not expect it, and he was shocked. He started brooding his head whether an untouchable could become a farmer. Unwilling to give the land, Sankappayya seeks his mother's suggestions. The mother did not allow him to consider Choma's proposal positively. She exclaimed how these (Holeyas) untouchables dare to ask a piece of land. His mother's utterance "abba, the insolence of these holeyas!" (29) speaks rigidity of caste hierarchy. Choma became speechless and left for the toddy shop with his heavy heart. He came back to his home when everyone except Belli was in sound sleep. He started beating the drum until he lost a sense of bitter humiliation and angst.

The ambition of Choma to call himself a farmer is shattered, but the picture of the plough is still in his eyes. The author narrates the inner thoughts of Choma as "if he was not to wield a plough as a farmer, he thought at times, why should he plough someone else's field? If he was not fated to cultivate his own field he saw no point in toiling in someone else's field." (43) A battle of thoughts started in his mind. He wanted to lead his life with a work of weaving baskets and selling them in the village. It is also not possible to him because it is a tradition that Choma

cannot go to work anywhere except Sankappayya's land. He cannot work for others. The whole of Choma's family became bonded laborers. As per the tradition of a higher caste, an untouchable should be bonded to his master until he dies. Therefore Sankappayya is responsible for Choma's well being. But the master's patronization justifies caste hegemony, which ought to be accepted by the slave. Without slaves, the status of the master does not survive. For the sake of its survival, the feudal patronization takes care of Choma's family. The well-being of his family remains a dream. His children died; some of them suffer from malaria; they struggle for food and clothing. There are many holes in the thatched roof of his hut. In the rainy season, rain falls into the shelter as heavy as it falls outside. Choma takes his drum and beats on it for hours together. Choma became humble, helpless, and voiceless. Belli also could not speak anything against her master; Choma started beating the drum throughout the night, forced his two small children and Belli to step according to the rhythm of the drum.

The narratives verbalize an inanimate drum and humanize the object by establishing an organic affiliation with Choma. The observation of the translator of the book is worth referring to here. According to Kalkur, the *dudi* (drum) gives expression to Choma's overwhelming emotions, joyous or sorrow. Finally, the *dudi* empowers Choma. He dies as if all his life he was preparing for a sudden departure. But the beating of the *dudi* is still heard. Jason Kahn, one of the most excellent contemporary musicians, gives a striking opinion that "the life and energy of the drummer live half within the drummer's soul, and half within the drum he plays." The novel seems to bespeak a symbiotic affiliation between the protagonist and the drum.

Though the relationship between the drum and Choma cannot be substantiated scientifically, a matter of feeling and sense lends a metaphorical ground to it. Relations are felt, understood and sensed. Similarly, the connection between Choma and the drum, and the inspirations and reliefs he gets from it are also left to readers' thoughts, sensitivity, and creativity. In a nutshell, Choma's drum resembles the shaman's drum that mediates between one's reality and a spiritual world.

In the trajectory of civilization, musical instruments have been symbols for revolution, assertion, and expression of angst. Karanth narrates, "the drum was to him (Choma) what *damaru* was to Lord Shiva." (14) In Indian myths, the lord Shiva uses the *damaru* whenever he gets angry. *Damaru* is used as an expression of anger against demonic forces. The sound of *damaru* signifies the infinite energy of Shiva in destroying evils.

In Indian popular culture, especially in movies and revolutionary songs, the drum is used as a medium of frustrations, exploitations, happiness, sorrow, etc. In the African continent also, tribes are very much attached to musical instruments like flute and predominantly the drums of various shapes. The noticeable point is that even Choma's condition is also akin to Africans. Culturally and anthropologically tribes coming in this continent are not an exception from Choma's predicaments.

The so-called civilized countries have also not been spared from using the drum. For instance, the drums were used in the day-to-day life of the soldiers during the American Civil war; they played a significant role in getting rid of boredom with hectic activities in war camps. Through the performance of several drum bands, soldiers were given entertainment and refilled the spirit in their life. Studies reveal the role of drum bands in rejuvenating the spirit of soldiers: "During the Civil War military musicians dramatically affected the lives of both soldiers and civilians" (Manjerovic and Budds 130). Mainly speaking about the drum band, Manjerovic and Budds point out the function of the drum band thus:

...to soothe the anxieties of homesickness, the miseries of campaigning, and the tragedies of war...the very sound of a wind band played a significant role in caring for the soul and spirits of officers, soldieries and villains. (130)

The drum is a language, mediator of the spiritual world, source of inspiration, and voice of wounded one. It also does the job of a weapon of the weak to resist the trauma, chaos in the society that originates by the lust of human beings in an attempt to sustain the feudal structure. Similarly, Choma cannot live without the drum because it is a weapon and a language of resistance against hegemony, which undermined his existence.

Conclusion

The novel narrates myriad tragedies of Choma: the death of his son, disowning his elder son, alienation from his daughter Belli, rejection to become a farmer, finally, his death. Despite his humiliating life, Choma's identity exists in the form of the drum. The drum remains in the novel as an identity of subaltern speech. The cacophony of the drum becomes a social signature for the traumatic life of the subaltern. Choma's drum annihilates all calamities. The echoes of the drum are audible across every chapter. The sound of the drum wakes up the soul of any sensible reader to understand the trauma of Choma. The drum accompanies Choma in every walk of his; the fury of the drum – "damadhamma dakadhakka," joins

the last breath of Choma. The novel starts with the drum beating and ends with the drum beating. Symbolically, the author seems to suggest that the echo of the drum will remain in the minds of readers until characters like Choma exists in society.

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Negotiation of the Female 'Self' in Domestic Space : An Analysis of Bhabendra Nath Saikia's *The Hour before Dawn*

Tuhin Subhra Mandal

Abstract:

The relationship between men and women always has been mutual and interdependent; yet, men have always subjugated women in every space, be it domestic or 'outer' space. Performing household activities or duties and rearing children, women play a prime role in a family, and create a space of their own in which they dwell meditatively. As a result, domestic space emerges as a primary concern for women in their lives. The aim of this paper is to analyse how the process of negotiation and passive resistance work hand in hand and function as complementary to each other, how female 'self' is constructed through the process of women's negotiation with domestic space, how women initiate negotiation with their concerned domestic space through the enforcement of passive resistance, and how women resort to passive resistance on account of negotiation with their concerned domestic space in the light of the novel *The Hour before Dawn*.

Keywords: Co-existence; Domestic Space; Negotiation; Passive Resistance; 'Self'.

There is no doubt that the patriarchal system has placed women in subjugation to men. Men have always occupied the position above women in the hierarchical system of the patriarchal society. As a result, men have been vested with decision-making power in a household or family, and women mere have turned into an object by paying allegiance as well as obedience to decisions initiated by men. Men have exercised their authority over women, ignoring the rights of women in a household, in the governance of a family and suppressed the voices of women forcefully and deliberately. On the other hand, women have acknowledged the supremacy of men through their projection of subservient nature. This subservi-

ent nature and obedience of women towards men have strengthened the pillars of patriarchy to run its course through history. However, with the advent of modernisation, i.e., an era of enlightenment or emancipation, the rigid structure of patriarchal system tends to become loose due to resisting force invoked by women against this prevailing system; indeed, women have resorted to various means of resistance in order to escape from the bondages and clutches of the patriarchal system, as well as in order to seek liberty, relief, and happiness, especially in the domestic space of an androcentric family.

Women always emerge as a prime figure in a household or family because they engage themselves in looking after a family and various household works—starting from kitchen or domestic chores and rearing children to a household management. All the household activities are managed and regulated by them, whereas men focus on the earning and bring their earning home by engaging themselves in various tasks laid outside the boundary of a household. Thus, for women, domestic sphere turns out to be a primary concern, and transforms into a space in which women dwell meditatively and authoritatively. In this regard, Irene Cieraad in her article “Domestic Spaces” expresses, “Domestic space was interpreted not so much as the living space of a household but as a secluded domain in which women took care of children and the household, while men spend much time in public space earning a living and socialising with other men” (1).

The proximity of women to domestic space has been a socio-cultural phenomenon irrespective of any culture or geographical location, whereas men’s association with domestic space has been relegated to such an extent that men’s presence in domestic space has been a subject matter of negligence. Even to talk about domestic space in the context of Georgian London, Benjamin Heller in his article emphasizes the fact that “Whilst women were closely linked with the home and housekeeping, the relative under-representation of men in historians’ analyses of domestic space is problematic” (624). Domestic space, as we generally perceive, is understood in terms of its physicality or physical frame, which includes “the family and the physical structure of homes” (Avilez 136). In fact, the idea of domestic space centres around the house or home that serves “as a gendered spatial locus” (Pattison 225). When the material existence of the house or home transcends the boundary of physicality or physical location and enters into the spatial dimension, it turns into domestic space that “takes into account the material, psychological, spiritual, gendered, social, cultural, and the political aspects of house, home, and garden in the context of everyday and of human relationships within and beyond

the house" (3) and "also encompasses spaces beyond traditional ideas of home . . ." (Briganti and Mezei, 4). It is also very much apparent that an individual's close association with a particular space leaves a profound impact on his/her psyche and accelerates the process of bonding or intimacy between his /her psyche and the space concerned. Similarly, a woman's intimacy with the space of her household establishes a relation between domestic space and her psyche. Thus the idea of domestic space can not only be perceived in terms of only its physical manifestation: for women, it functions as a 'psychological construct or manifestation' that turns out to be an intimate as well as essential part and parcel of women's psyche and lives.

It cannot be denied that though women occupy a central position in domestic space, yet the patriarchal aggression has crippled them to a greater extent by robbing them of their natural freedom. Moreover, the resistance posed by them against the prevailing structure of patriarchal society tends to become passive rather than active. Their passive resistance resembles the concept or idea of non-cooperation, non-violence, or non-interference that Gandhi himself borrowed from Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience". Addressing the concept of resistance, Hollander and Einwohner focus on two central issues on which the position of resistance varies accordingly: the two central issues they mention in their article are "recognition" and "intent" (539).

The first question they pose is whether "recognition" is necessary for an act to be called resistance. The next question they put forward is whether a participant must be aware of his/her action operating as resistance against any authority. Some scholars believe that "recognition" is essential for an act to be regarded as resistance, whereas others think that "recognition" should not be prioritised because sometimes an 'everyday act', such as making false promises, ignoring authority, resorting to pretence, and so on, can function as a form of resistance. Similarly, "intent" behind an action exercised by a participant sometimes may not be apparent to the participant himself/herself or others. To answer these two questions, considering the opinions of different scholars, they have laid down numerous implications concerning the various positions on which resistance operates, because answers to these questions cannot be brought to a single solution, and as the nature as well as outcome of resistance is purely contingent upon an operational system on which the resistance concerned runs its course. However, in order to evade such pluralistic complications and for the sake of simplification of the concept of resistance, many intellectuals also have divided resistance into two broad categories on the basis of its degree: active and passive resistance. The term active denotes 'direct' or

'immediate' cause, whereas the term passive implies 'indirect' or 'non confrontation'. The subtle difference between active and passive resistance lies in the essence of their operation in a system: if passive resistance operates upon the notion of absence of consent, the nature of active resistance incorporates in it the principle of absence of consent along with the desire to 'challenge' or 'transgress the limit'. Here, the term active resistance implies the essence of confrontation with somebody with an authoritative hold or of challenging any authority with coercive force.

Considering Foucault's idea of resistance, Brent L. Pickett also expresses, "Although transgression is the (temporary) negation of a limit, it is not itself negative in character. . . . Through transgression it is possible to undermine these limits, although new ones will always arise" (450). In this context, transgression does not mean going beyond the boundary; here, it means the 'desire to confront' and 'materialise a dream'. There is no doubt that even passive resistance also involves opposition, but its presence of operation cannot be felt, and sometimes, if it is felt, does not invoke the feelings of threat to an authority that governs a system. Although movements such as non-cooperation or non-violence seem to bear the tone of passivity, they cannot be termed passive resistance. Even in those movements mentioned above, the presence as well as measures of resistance is apparent to the authority along with participants themselves, although the way of their operation negates the very idea of extremity. To speak about the ethics of passive resistance, J.G. James in his article remarks thus: " 'Resisters' are fanatics, wrong-headed, seekers for a 'cheap martyrdom,' and 'faddists,' yet the facts that for the most part they are law-abiding citizens, who have never appeared before the magistrates as defaulters or criminals, and that . . . entitle them to respectful consideration and at least serious attention" (281).

Passive resistance posed by women against the patriarchal dominance embeds in it the concept of negotiation. Negotiation is a process that demands co-existence with others; it is a sort of mutual agreement with present circumstances. The initiation of passive resistance invokes the process of negotiation to a greater extent that functions as a tacit essence in the implementation of passive resistance: since passive resistance entails the absence of violence and coercion, the negotiation with the present circumstances becomes the sole means of enforcing passive resistance. Mark A. Boyer and others, considering the view point of many eminent scholars, agree to the proposition as to the way women engage themselves in the negotiation process in various contexts, even though their primary focus lies on women's negotiation in international context: "Even across these wide-ranging venues [such as domestic setting, international con-

text, social relationship, et al.], [Many scholars] argue for similarities in the manner in which women approach negotiation, whether in crisis resolution or household management" (26). Moreover, with regard to the nature of women's approach to negotiation, they also acknowledge the fact that the negotiation process initiated by women through their "interdependent self-schemas" are "more oriented toward maintaining and protecting these relationships" that help women "define themselves in terms of their connection to others" (27). Although generally negotiation is seen as a means of conflict resolution, women's negotiation with domestic space involves a process of their adaptation to the concerned space they reside: their negotiation with the present circumstances that are integral to domestic space acts a strategy for survival as well as a shield against patriarchal injustice.

As for women, they constantly need to negotiate with the domestic space in order to wield passive resistance against the patriarchal authority. The approach to negotiation adopted by women in the context of domestic sphere is determined by "either reason or emotion (or a mixture of both)" (Jagodzinska 73) and serves as "an art of self-management" (76). To illustrate the concept of negotiation, Bruce Fraser in his essay further mentions, "Negotiation is part of being alive, everyone is familiar with it and, like it or not, everyone engages in it daily" (22). Thus, it can be said that the relationship between negotiation and passive resistance has been always reciprocal. Since negotiation works on the principles of mutual understandings and co-existence, passive resistance also follows the pattern of mutual co-existence because passive resisters do not believe in the forceful elimination of their opposition.

The novel *The Hour Before Dawn* commences with the second marriage of Mohikanto – who is the husband of Menoka, the female protagonist – to Kiron. What saddens Menoka is that her husband, Mohikanto, is about to get into wedlock with another woman named Kiron, without even informing and consulting her. This incident of the second marriage of Mohikanto to Kiron infuriates Menoka and invokes in her a sense of hatred towards her husband. The reason for her anger is that her husband has planned to remarry without her consent, even ignoring her presence in the household. The severe abhorrence of Menoka towards her own husband and the mental agony caused by impending events after the second marriage of her husband direct her to take a step of resistance by not letting her husband touch her body. In this instance, her act of revulsion serves as a reciprocation of her husband's initiation of his second marriage. Even on the day of her husband's remarriage, Menoka questions herself whether her body no longer holds the power of attrac-

tion with the passing time: "In baring herself, had [she] emptied herself out? Had she become barren just by giving birth to four children? What did she do wrong—why did the man never, not once, give her a hint? Mohikanto was marrying again—why did she have to hear of it from old Reboti" (Saikia 11)? In fact, her self-determination of keeping her body off her husband's touch makes her realise that the weakness of her husband lies in the body of a woman, and in the process, she also perceives that her body can no longer be in the possession of her husband. Furthermore, Menoka's realisation that her body is her own property and that nobody holds any right over it is what constitutes her 'self'.

However, talking about the 'self' of an individual, there is no definite consensus among scholars because an individual's 'self' is always a part of his/her psyche. Regarding the concept of 'self', Gail Finn in his articles presents Emerton's idea on 'self': "In the formation of self concept, Emerton (1972) believes that the success of development—self concept and identity—is through the ongoing process of social interactions with people . . ." (2). Even, subscribing the same idea of Emerton, Martin L. Maehr and others states, "It is generally assumed that the concept of self develops as a result of and in response to the reaction of *significant others*" (1). In the novel *The Hour Before Dawn*, the female protagonist Menoka's determination and realisation—that she derives from the interaction with social elements, and which comes through her own psychic conflicts and disturbances—form her female 'self'. In the novel, her self-realisation is also reflected in her own words: "She would not allow that power, that masculinity, to return to Mohikanto ever again. Eleven years had made her familiar with all his weak points—and she wasn't too old to teach him a lesson or two yet" (Saikia 46).

It is a fact that as mother or wife, women undertake the privilege of managing their concerned domestic space. As a manifestation of personal as well as private space, domestic space serves as an inevitable part of women's lives: a space in which women associate themselves intimately. Like other women, Menoka is also very much concerned about her own space she shares in her in-laws' household, and she is also no exception to this stereotypical trait. As a housewife that she undertakes the task of managing the household constitutes her domestic space, which she has woven in her psyche after her marriage to Mohikanto. In the context of this anecdote, the domestic space that lies around her becomes a 'psychological construct' rather than a physical one, since she feels the fear of expulsion from the household, and contemplates that her life, along with her own children, will be compromised or undermined with the arrival of a new woman in the household. The interference and intrusion of

another woman as a co-wife into her so-called constructed domestic space instils in her the fear of losing the authority over her concerned domestic space. In one instance, immediate after the wedding between Mohikanto and Kiron, Menoka's concern over the domestic space becomes very much apparent: "Various situations assailed Menoka, making her restless. . . . she would never step into the yard again so that those things would remain out of her sight. She would never look anyone in the eye. Most importantly she would not meet the 'new woman' under any circumstances – she would evade everything and everything" (Saikia 24-25).

The act of Menoka's negotiation with domestic space starts with the advent of Kiron, as Mohikanto's co-wife, in the household. Though in the beginning Menoka is not in a position to cope up with Kiron, but later she gradually learns to adapt to the prevailing situations and circumstances through the discovery and unfolding of events. After the revelation of Kiron's nature and character, she realises that her husband is solely responsible for this marriage: "If Kiron had made the slightest attempt at covering up facts, and Menoka could believe that the young woman had seduced her husband, it would be so easy to make life difficult for her! But if what she said was true, she had not married Mohikanto at all – it was he who had married her" (Saikia 33). As a result, instead of holding grudge against Kiron – that she previously bore in her heart, Menoka initiates negotiation with her concerned domestic space. Her principles of negotiation operate on three crucial aspects: co-existence with Kiron under the same roof; adoption of the principles of non-interference; and imposition of resistance on her husband, who needs to be blamed for his second marriage.

Moreover, her negotiation not only remains confined to Kiron but also is extended to her concerned domestic space, which even includes her own children as well as relatives. Even her negotiation with her own children, especially with her first-born son Indro, seems to tougher than what she expects, as she recalls these words: "She could cope with sharing the Mohikanto chapter of her life and keep things well within her control – but what about [her children]" (Saikia 40)? The adoption of the principles of non-interference that Menoka embraces as one of her ways of negotiation with her concerned domestic space embeds in it the core essence of her passive resistance against the patriarchal authority. In the novel, she decides to withdraw her body from Mohikanto's reach. By doing so, she not only keeps her body out of her husband's reach but also withdraws her 'self' from her husband's life. During one conversation with Kiron, she transparently mentions that it is Kiron's duty to take care of Mohikanto's life: "In the past few days, she had wordlessly made it amply clear to Kiron – 'this

man is solely your responsibility; he has no one but you' " (Saikia 37). The third aspect on which the principles of Menoka's negotiation functions is the imposition of resistance on her husband's advancement towards her private space. Her resistance against Mohikanto, her husband, starts with her disobedience to her husband's wish of using her body as an object of carnal pleasure. What she does actually is that she not only withdraws her body from her husband's touch, but also opposes his advancement towards her body when he shamelessly approaches her with a sexual appetite in his eyes. Even when her husband, Mohikanto, forcefully tries to touch her body, she vehemently protests against his advancement with a cautious warning: "Menoka stepped back into her room and, holding the door planks in either hand, said, 'Don't come to this room like this. When you wish to visit me, bring Kiron along. I shall open the door if she calls to me.' She slammed the door in his face and secured both the bolts from inside" (Saikia 39).

Furthermore, even as she starts loosening her hold on Mohikanto's life, she too desires to find a new way to lead her own life—a way that can bring solace to her distressed life. In order to make herself free from patriarchal imprisonment, she recalls, "All she wanted to do was chart out a path—a path would clear ahead of Mohikanto, but one that he could never, ever comprehend, nor tread on" (Saikia 88). As a matter of fact, she realises that a support, that is, physical as well as mental, is very much necessary to continue her life and struggle against this prevalent adverse situation. And in a man named Modon, whom she embraces to live through, finds the support she hankers after. During one conversation with Modon, she vents her impulsive remarks out to him: "I need a man to call my own—someone who can help me rear Indro, and my other children—someone who is all mine. How can I cope with so much on my own? I had never foreseen that I would need to cope by myself" (Saikia 104)! Further, she adds:

... 'You can alone help me, Modon. You alone can be my man. Do you hear me, Modon?' One of her hands covered his right hand resting on her knee. . . . 'You told me the other day that nobody had seen tears in my eyes. What's the use of crying? Let's see how long I can survive without tears! (Saikia 104)

Her extramarital affair with Modon takes her resistance to a greater level, without any doubt. Although menoka's resistance seems to be active after she starts an extramarital affair with Modon, yet she keeps this secret within her knowledge, without publicising this matter. One of the reasons for her—that works in her psyche—to do so is the fear of isolation

from the society and social stigma, as she is not in a position to challenge the concerned authority as result of her negotiation with the concerned domestic space. In the context of the novel, Menoka's extramarital affair with Modon does not evoke the sense of challenge as well as threat to the concerned authority: here this extramarital affair provides her with the moral and psychological support in the course of her life and acts a solace to her mind. Since her resistance operates on the principles of absence of consent to an authority, it lacks the essence of 'direct' or 'immediate' force. In addition, the operation of her resistance is limited to a certain boundary and does not even come into conflict with the way of Mohikanto's life, and the presence as well as the intensity of her resistance cannot be felt by the authority concerned. In posing her resistance against patriarchal injustice, what she does is that she withdraws herself from the clutches of Mohikanto's life, which embodies itself as a patriarchal authority; by distancing herself from the authority concerned, her confrontation with the concerned authority has been less and less intense and backed by the symptom of withdrawal, and renders her resistance passive instead of active one.

To sum up, it can be said that in the novel, Menoka's passive resistance posed against her husband acts as an outcome of her negotiation with the concerned domestic space. Her relentless negotiation with the concerned domestic space demotivates her to initiate active measures against her husband. Had she not subscribed to the principles of negotiation, perhaps she could resort to active resistance against the patriarchal atrocity.

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Living and Loving in Troubled Times: Reading Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Pankhuri Vyas

Abstract

Exit West (2017) by the Pakistani author, Mohsin Hamid, fictionalizes the fact of living and loving amidst socio-cultural relationships and against the backdrop of the ever-increasing mass-migration/ emigration, displacement, violence and the refugee crisis. The paper aims at portraying Hamid's art of characterization and the narrative that works out each character's pursuit of life in troubled times. The novelist represents a rational approach and balanced attitude against dominance, complexes, instability and helplessness in the face of adverse circumstances. His transnational narrative thus introduces a 'counter voice' thereby shouldering the responsibility of bringing the whole world- both the more and the less powerful countries - on the same page, literally.

Keywords: Displacement; Emigration; Migration; Refugee; Transnational.

The world triangle, formed by the South Asian subcontinent together with Russia and the US, invites us to watch carefully the complex global scenario of social unrest, socio-political changes, forced taking over of governments, foreign interference, and the like. Amidst all of this, the South Asian subcontinent passes through a sensitive period of instability, displacement and dislocation due to porous borders, even as it struggles to co-exist in a strongly polarized world. It was on account of the height of confusion between militarism and moralism that the world turned into a playground of the super powers moving in and out of different countries, re-ordering the world as they liked.

The end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century witnessed an increasing importance of the concepts of nation, nationality and racial purity resulting in the exile and death of thousands of people. The South Asian countries, especially, have lived through unprecedented refugee-movements with scores of suffering people moving in and out

from one place or country to the other for shelter and stability. There are examples of such countries in Chechnya, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Sudan, Afghanistan and Myanmar, victimized by external interference. Several South Asian writers, as Bapsi Sidhwa, Mohsin Hamid, Khaled Hosseini, Nadeem Aslam, Fatima Bhutto, Michael Ondaatji, Shyam Selvadurai, Feryal Ali Gauhar, Kiran Desai and others, have problematized the issue of terrorism, the crossing of borders and the fragility of life in their fictional works.

The paper focuses on *Exit West* (2017), a novel by the Pakistani writer, Mohsin Hamid, who is a self-confessed 'mongrel', having lived parts of his life in Pakistan, America and England. A fable of deterritorialization, the novel is about the global refugee crisis, mass migration and xenophobia. It discusses the issues of violence, terror of militants and the military operations, faced by the fearing and tortured people through a love story set in an unnamed city. It remained unnamed till the end. It might be anywhere in the world, and thus it would help Hamid portray the all encompassing nature of migration, proving it to be a human phenomenon, considering all of us as migrants. Saeed and Nadia met at an evening class on corporate identity and product branding "in a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace or at least not yet openly at war" (Hamid 1). An independent man, Saeed worked for an advertising firm, and Nadia worked for an insurance company, and wore a black robe, and lived alone, which was something rare in their traditional and religious country.

The theme attracts readers exercising a powerful grip, requiring the parallel moving but never coming close movements of Saeed and Nadia, two similar personalities but with differing attitudes to life. While Saeed prefers the materialization of love and sex after marriage, Nadia, though loves passionately and cares for him morally, keeps mum to his marriage proposal; and the idea behind this, maybe the writer's approach to establish the superiority and solidity of love, and social and moral cooperation, though bypassing the importance of the institution of marriage. Hamid's narrative surprises readers for having woven the story and different events around such strange, similar yet different, lovers who give up physical intimacy very soon, and realize it only in the end.

Tariq Ali's book, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* (2002) mentions how the same United States, who had formed an international network of Islamic militants with different countries to fight against the Russians in Afghanistan, came back to fight against the Taliban, whom it harbored with Pakistan (Ali 1-11). In the same way the fear raised by Thomas L. Fried-

man looks genuine that a connection of all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network could usher in an amazing era of prosperity and innovation, if politics and terrorism were not to get in the way. It will empower not only the software writers and computers geeks to collaborate in a flat world but also Al Qaeda and other terrorist networks. (Friedman 8)

No doubt migrations have always been there for economic, academic and worldly purposes, but things become serious to humanity's concern when civil strife, riots, internal and external political interferences strangle life forcing the legal residents to move in and out of countries introducing unstoppable entry of refugees. The civil war in the story struck the city with pictures of pains, horror, uncertainty of the people pottering about their errands for one moment and dying the next, shootings and the old car bombing, letting one feel it in one's chest cavity as a subsonic vibration made by loud speakers, rockets and heavy machine guns hitting Saeed's flat and building, helicopters filling the sky like birds startled by a gunshot, the hawkish mobile sculptures with pilots and gunners chopping across the sky, etc. As the militants appeared to have changed their strategy to take over big territories, instead of detonating a bomb here or orchestrating a shooting there, Saeed and Nadia had to be careful with a vast number of refugees, not to run over an outstretched arm or leg. London was shocked with legal residents in minority, being referred to as the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation.

The study aims at portraying Hamid's art of narration and characterization that works out each character's pursuit of life in troubled times. It projects the voice of the soul with its reciprocal aspect of human relationships in general, sharing love and sorrows, simultaneously challenged by the weakening, terrifying adverse winds of social, political and cultural degeneration. *Exit West* displays it portraying an unnamed city, teetering on the edge of the abyss with physically and emotionally choked life, on account of the militants and military operations, with the parallel dramatic and magical provision of the unknown and dark doors, letting the citizens move in and out anywhere in the world for shelter and stability. The writer's narrative art places his characters' particular bent of mind against a selection of different big and small events and things, adding to their formation of identity, with their actions and reactions; and the result maintains the constantly burning flame of love and net of human relationships, against what otherwise looked hellish and intolerable.

Nayantara Sahgal too supports the idea of resetting in her essay, 'Rejecting Extinction': "In reverse, a migrant can feel securely rooted to

the ground where he has settled because it is human nature to put down roots, and natural to adapt to one's surroundings and be influenced by them. So there is no hard and fast divide between the condition known as exile on the one hand and roots on the other" (Sahgal 7). The study keeps looking for the points, human throbs, and candle-lights that stand out as the advocacy of its point of view - for example, the portrayal of Saeed's family enjoying green tea, taking turns to look up at Mars and the planets through the black, sleek telescope, handed over to his father by his grandfather, placed against the heavy machine guns and rocket fires, with the spread of refuges trying to create the rhythm of normal life with the others, staring at the city, "occupied many of open places in the city, pitching tents in the green belts between roads, erecting lean-tos next to the boundary walls of doors, sleeping rough on pavements and in the margins of streets." (Hamid 23), and the old emotional retired army officer at San Diego, California, recollecting their army's respect for the uniform and their bond with one another just like that of brothers, etc.

The portrayal of the helplessness, reluctance and wavering of Saeed's father too proves to be a niche letting love and emotions lit up across disaster. Saeed's father, a retired university professor, appeared to rebuke himself for not having earned enough to send Saeed abroad safely, instead of helping the youth and the country through research and teaching, which looked merely an expression of vanity. His father, who looked for his lost wife's company amid his cousins, once got confused mentally deciding whom he saw: whether they were children playing with a ball or teenagers with a goat's head or human head, on account of the extreme intensity of his pains and troubles. Hamid himself realized Saeed's father's painful clinging to his past and his fear for his son. Hamid said in an interview given to Terry Gross that the portrait of Saeed's father seemed to be unique in the sense of moving both backwards and forwards at the same time with his past looking for his wife's company, and the future wishing for his son's security, that his country could not provide. In the same way, Hamid's picture of Saeed's mother's mental map of place made an impact on readers: shrunk and resembling an old quilt with patches of government land and patches of militants' land, where she had spent her entire life.

Hamid depicts Saeed's father's intensity of pain and helplessness while leaving his child for departure. The universal truth went together with the comparison painting the future necessity of a drowning parent to let go of the child. "If a flood arrives, one must let go of one's child, because holding on can no longer offer the child protection" (Hamid 92). One could not forget his words that his sons arc sat atop his fa-

ther, a hill atop a hill, a curve atop a curve. Also Nadia's realization of the universally acknowledged truth chased readers convincingly: "but that is the way of things, for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind" (Hamid 94). Another universal truth conveyed the help- less surrender of the migrants: "To flee for ever is beyond the capacity of most, at some point even a hunted animal will stop exhausted and will await its fate." (Hamid 163)

Even minor characters contribute to the design of the writer, such as a war photographer capturing the first kiss of the old man and the wrinkled man, and then deleting it as a gesture of uncharacteristic sentimentality and respect, and the foreman differentiating the unimaginable scale of the present from the limited labour of the past.

The novel surprises its readers with the central point of the creation of doors, through which Saeed and Nadia with several of others moved abroad, as an alternate possibility, a way out for the suffering humanity to steer clear through the violence caused by militants and military operations. The doors become symbolic, and perform as the point and the central image, forming the theme of mass migration and refugee crisis. One can say *Exit West* offers magical doors as a way out to human beings and the world for a dependable substitute with a formation of refugee cities, camps and countries, as can provide a possibility of a human give and take, a reciprocal human structure of relationships. On being asked about the magical doors, Hamid accepted that they exist as a representation of the technological reality of our lives through internet and computers..

Arjun Appadurai, who considers the prominent role of imagination with the juxtaposition of mass mediated images and mass migration, comes quite close to share such a concern of Hamid's, regarding the loosely connected state of affairs in the world. Keeping in view the threats, troubles and weakness of nation states, such as border wars, culture wars and massive immigrant populations, Appadurai hopefully finds the world moving towards diasporic public spheres based on the link between the work of imagination and the emergence of a world with electronic media joining producers and audiences across national boundaries (Appadurai 1-23). It is in this reference that one views the symbolic use of the doors with the elements of magic moving alongside internet and social media providing immense access to people anywhere within seconds.

To create a home away from home, the story transfers Saeed and Nadia first to Mykonos in Greece and then to London, turning them and other migrants into trackers, and forming a kind of camaraderie against the

fight of the nativists, whose hostility was obvious through rumours of a tightening cordon separating illegal residents with the help of soldiers, armoured vehicles, drones and helicopters. Their water and electricity were stopped, but this hostility went concurrently with volunteers and agencies delivering medicines and food sent by the host government, and here Saeed was touched by a young native boy and his earnestness, empathy and good intent, whom none had the power to refuse.

Nadia found it a bit like that of a university dormitory with complete strangers living in close proximity, with their best behaviour adding warmth to the conversations. London introduced the writer's objective of portraying the all-encompassing cover of refugees and migrants with the ever-spreading occupation of the houses, parks, disused lots, unoccupied mansions in the boroughs of Kensington, Chelsea, and the other expanses of Hyde Park.

At this point, one may recollect Stuart Hall's views on gradual assimilation, struggle, hybridity, 'a positioning', and a mutual discourse of 'being' and 'becoming' (Hall 234). We come close to Hall's idea of identity when the novel portrays the influx and unwanted spread of millions of refugees and migrants, their struggle with the host countries' police, leading ultimately to their acceptance of labour-based access to small residences.

To Nadia, these migrants - in different colours and attires - looked charming, having formed their own language, a kind of cacophony with a mix of English. They created a better scene than the stifled life amidst militancy in her place of birth, and relished it. The group of saeed's country folk too created a bonding together of migrants along religious principles, cutting across divisions of race or language or nations. Hamid compared the mixed or indifferent groups of migrants to the placing of "the hearts together, all the clubs together, all the Sudanese, and all the Honurans." (Hamid 143)

It was by turning his characters into migrants, led abroad by adverse circumstances, that Hameed had a glimpse of their inner and external adjustment. Nadia and Saeed came to experience their mental and spiritual growth, as an answer required by the writer to defeat social, political world terrorism and violence. Nadia, though faster accommodating, realized her growing confidence, with the capacity to face and stand the black burly man raising a pistol to her, having joined a food corporative in a commercial zone outside Sansalito in Marine. Even Saeed, who felt nostalgic and slow in adjustment, claimed his unbelievable transformation. After his father's death, he started praying more and more and working hard

as a substitute. At first a mystery, his prayers gradually came to connect him to the notion of being a man, a gentleman, who stood for community, faith, kindness, decency, a man like his father.

Saeed's transformation did not look abrupt, even though coming all of a sudden. Hamid looked for a man whose swift imagination and sentiments could enable him to take in a complete sweep of Nadia's body, on one side, and enter deeper to trace the relationship of Nadia's lemon tree reminding him of his parents and a desire for peace for all, on the other. He was different from the other people in the sense that he prayed to honour the goodness of his parents, who raised him. He realized that love and loss united humanity, with death and birth being integrated to life, and that, sorrows and transitory nature of existence will provide a base to humanity's potential for building a better world. Thus Saeed took prayers as a lament, consolation and hope.

Besides the magical realism of 'doors', a very suggestive reference to an old woman in the nearby town of Palo Alto in Marin, California, illustrates the difficult situation, the objective behind writing the novel. She lived there, had not moved; travelled but never moved; and, yet felt that the world had moved. Her neighbourhood had changed rapidly with the cluster of California families. She concluded that everyone migrated, and even if we stayed in the same houses our whole lives, things changed. We could not help it, and we were all migrants through time.

In short, Hamid's story does achieve its objective(s). The novelist's transnational approach bears resemblance to Appadurai's idea of globalization. Such an imagined picture of the world with several doors may shock us in its reflection of a loosely connected wayward spread of human existence, but it is not only less dangerous than the present state of affairs, but also capable of nurturing a social, cultural and emotional intermingling of people irrespective of nations, regions, religions, castes and ideologies. Such mixed groups will be called citizens of the world. Hamid's example suggests that the development councils of such refugee groups will keep striving for the welfare of their people without any politically motivated interference of the world's superpowers.

One can compare Terrie Akers's interpretation with that of Leerom Medovoe, in terms of the concepts of 'worldly', 'global', 'world capitalist system', 'imperial structure system', and 'world-system literature'. And it brings readers to see the title of Hamid's novel *Exit West* and consider it moving against the West's notion of the suffering refugees, from Mykonos (Greece) to London and California (US) finally. Then, in the

end, Nadia and Saeed meet again in their unnamed city. Is it not a kind of amalgamation of the East and the West or the periphery and the core or the imperialist, capitalist and the third ordinary world, something more than the victory or defeat of the West or the East?

Actually speaking, a voice from the South Asian subcontinent, Hamid's novels enter into a dialogue with the world and the United States particularly to consider itself as an 'other' to match the traditionally considered 'other' passively accepting the West. Hamid's dialogue is all for equal, sensible and healthy reconsideration of both the sides, and it is in this way that he establishes a counter voice, rejecting the South Asian stereotypical attitude. *Exit West* asks the West to rethink and reconsider their selfish, politically colonizing policies in order to let innocent and individual countries flourish as they like, with a suggestion to human beings to think for others as generously as they think for themselves. Hamid intends to fight the indecency of the corrupt, selfish and interfering world politics, raising the weaker, struggling and accommodating voices busily taking root once again in refugee camps. Hamid prepares a plain ground teeming with love and feelings as the new address of humanity, created with such delicate and vulnerable tools as prayer, social and moral exchanges and relationships, which the world otherwise rejects as useless and foolish.

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Darkness and Myth: New Dimensions and Changing Trends in the World of Indian Web Series

Anindita Chattopadhyay

Abstract

The scope of digital platform is expanding in India, so is the number of web series. New concepts, innovative presentation style, unique themes are invading the digital market. Suspense, horror, psychological thriller mixed with tales from mythology and supernatural elements combined with prevailing injustice in our society in socio political economic aspects has given birth to a new genre in concept development and storytelling in Indian digital platforms.- the Dark genre. With these dark contents the web platforms in India are creating one after another popular web series. These web series are high on drama yet realistic in presentation with characters from real life, who are flawed, vulnerable, insecure and have multiple shades and layers. These series are not typical crime or horror ghost stories, rather totally different. Moreover as there is no censorship issues in the streaming platform these web series can very boldly deal with the contemporary socio – political issues prevailing in our country. This research work will be an attempt to study the Indian web series with dark contents and the reason behind the increase in demand for such shows in the market. Here attempts will also be made to understand the emerging trends in the contents of these online series, positive and negative sides.

Keywords: Crime; Dark; Horror; Mythology; Psychological; Thriller.

Introduction

The Indian digital platform is going through a tremendous growth since the past few years of the last decade and is blooming with new and innovative online media contents. With development in the field of digital technology and strong and affordable internet connectivity, which has provided the viewers with the option of accessing digital media content on the go, inclination towards digital media consumption is increasing

and people are spending more time on digital media like laptops and smartphones. Having a global outlook and distribution pattern these on-line streaming easily breaks the domestic boundaries of countries and reaches and appeals to audiences at international level. The arena of web series is larger than telly serials or even films. Television programs are planned, created, and distributed at the episode level, whereas films have a time limitation of 1 to 2 hours mostly. But Web series are created and distributed at the season level and planning are done accordingly, so the story telling pattern has to change and evolved to keep a balance. An important aspect is also that the web series in India gets the relaxation from strict censorships that the television shows and films often has to face even now, so there is always new opportunities and chance of bringing creativity in the different web series that are getting produced.

The digital audiences prefer personalized content, immediacy and mobility - the content they are looking for should be immediately available to them, at their convenient time and should fit their needs, which is now possible due to the online streaming series. Online video streaming has successfully changed the entertainment industry as well as consumption pattern among audience members. With this swift an important area that comes to limelight is the contents of these streaming series and their story telling patterns. Web series with dark content and storytelling pattern are gaining popularity from both the sides' i.e the produces and as well as the receivers - the producers are producing such dark tales with innovation and there is a huge market demand for such series from the audience's side. The online series don't have to go through the ruthless scissors of the censor broad like the Indian television soaps and films, so it can be said that they do have more freedom in terms of expression and presentation of ideas and concepts. Another point is that if the new media fails to provide something new and attractive enough contents to the digital audiences, why will they follow the series? Dark psychological thrillers, suspense with mythological elements are ruling the Indian OTT platforms, trying to be interesting, innovative and appealing for the audiences.

Purpose of Research

In the present scenario in Indian media market, digital media is an emerging force in the way that we produce, consume, and distribute online media contents. This research work will be an attempt to study the Indian web series with dark contents and the reason behind the increase in demand for such shows in the market. Here attempts will also be made to understand the emerging trends in the concept development of such on-line series, their positive and negative sides.

Brief Review of Literature

Online streaming channels have redefined the role and model of traditional way of watching serials and also the story telling patterns. Web series has a unique ability to be an innovative, subtle, minimalist and an effective medium to create and maintain close bonds with their audiences. A literature review on this topic can throw light on the areas where research works are being done regarding this matter and where there is a gap.

Many researchers highlights that convenience of the audiences and their choice in selecting contents are given priority by streaming series. This is mainly in urge to impress the audiences and capture more and more market space to earn more profit. "Video on demand, or the Netflix effect, is ushering in a mediated culture of instant gratification, infinite entertainment choices, and immersive experiences in televisual fantasies that combine drama and realism in irresistibly fascinating and spectacular ways." (S Matrix, 2014).

"Going beyond the convenience of viewer choice and control, Internet TV is believed to encourage new types of entertainment, education, and games that incorporate the Internet's interactive capabilities". (Gerbarg & Noam, 2004). In India television networks primarily serve the domestic market, while on the other hand, OTT Platform is a global phenomenon. With the development in the field of technology, easy access to cheap and strong internet connection, the advancement in field of online streaming and the rise in popularity and demand of web series among Indian audiences, another important aspect to be considered is the contents of these series.

An important area of focus in terms of storytelling pattern in web series is its presentation. It is important to focus on what is the storytelling role of each individual episode in a series that goes for favoring season-level storytelling? There is always new opportunities and chance of bringing creativity in the different web series that are getting produced. Does culture and contemporary issues have their effects on the contents of the web series? Very few researchers tends to focus on this crucial area. Due to lack of censorship like in the case of Indian television serials and films, the online series do have more creative freedom in terms of expression and presentation of ideas and concepts. They are entertaining and engaging, at the same time thrilling. "Creators of television programs have always encountered certain restrictions or guidelines for what they are able to present on screen. As the number of avenues for programming has grown, creators have become faced with several distribution options offering var-

ious degrees of creative freedom and autonomy. These variations can be attributed to industrial, organizational, and commercial factors. By studying the historical progression of creative freedom in television, we can get a sense of the influences and motivations behind the creative environment that Netflix provides the creators of its scripted series. Censorship and content restrictions have a substantial impact on creative freedom. The FCC has long regulated broadcast television, censoring what it determines to be obscene, indecent, and profane content." (Sharma, 2016). But with the relaxation of censorship in web series and freedom of creation comes the question of issue of maintaining discipline and quality control of the web series, which mostly remains unanswered. This research paper will try to cover this research gap.

"It's all about the Content: Immersive, Inspiring, Commercial-Free TV Binges. When young people lose themselves in make-believe TV worlds, part of the escapist pleasure is about inspiration and in some cases, aspirational maturity." According to the Stage of Life researchers, the sample of teens they interviewed widely reported that "they learned to be themselves, follow their dreams, and set new and interesting goals to achieve" by watching their favourite teen dramas. Beyond teen dramas, there is ample evidence online that younger viewers are watching adult programs to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, for the sexually mature content, and to enjoy the high production values." "Beyond being the TV platform of choice for teens, then, Netflix is also winning the original content wars, producing shows that are cinematically interesting, with complex narratives, compelling characters, and enough cliffhangers to keep audiences hooked, episode after episode, season after season." (S Matrix, 2014).

Contents of web series allows for non-linear narrative structures that converge at the end of each episode, prompting viewers to watch the next episode to resolve narrative complexities, and this had given birth to the habit of binge watching among the audiences. Much research effort has been spent on investigating the user behavior interactions and effects on change in behavior of online viewers due to online video streaming consumptions but often it is not noticed that behavioral change of audiences is directly related with the contents of the web series that he or she is consuming. What people is consuming is actually going to effect the Psychology and mindset of the consumer, and in long run it will affect the society as a whole. So it is important to study not only what people are preferring to consume but also what they are being served by the digital streaming channels, which will be done in this research paper.

With rising demand of viewership of web series among youths specially,

several problems are also cropping up, relating with their lifestyle, and often affecting their health, family life and even the society as a whole. "One new disorder is arriving in Youth "Internet addiction Disorder". Indian young youth now a days only follows Netflix, Amazon prime, Hot star, You tube. They ignore their studies, work, family, and friends. Every time every second youth opens the mobile screen, Laptop screen, Tab screen and watching the web series only...When grooming age youth would more focus the web series it mean they are learning a lot of things from web series. In fact, the analysis shows that majority of youth psychological affected through web series. Web series are not only changing their behavior toward aggressive but also changing their language and language is most important part of any culture. Smoking, Drinking habits are fast increasing in youth. More use of web series as source of entertainment than the other physical activates. Obesity, depression, eyes disorders are commonly seen in youths. Findings shows that youth perceive the content of the web series shows is very against the ethics, culture and value of society." (Koravi, 2019). It is being highlighted by the researchers that contents of OTT Platforms have the power to influence the thinking process and can bring about a behavioral change among the audiences who are exposed to such contents – this effect can be positive or negative depending upon the nature of the content and the level of exposure of the audience to these contents of OTT Platforms.

"Indian web-series are getting bigger and better with each passing day and we have already seen the kind of success recent shows such as Sacred Games, Made in Heaven etc have met with. It's a challenging task to get the audiences hooked in a series format but content creators have been happy with the kind of liberation they get with these platforms when it comes covering challenging themes and topics. A major change that has been observed in the content presented on the digital medium has also been a refreshing one when it comes to female characters." (Redkar, 2019)

Not much research has been done on the field to study the growth of dark genre of story telling in the Indian web series, which will be covered in this research paper.

Research Questions

1. The important questions that are to be considered in this research work are:
2. What is the evolving dimension and trends of the contents of the Indian web series and their story telling patterns where inclination to-

wards dark contents are on a rise? What are the factors effecting and deciding the story telling patterns of these web series where myths, mythology and supernatural elements are getting prominence?

3. What is the pattern of representation of social and psychological darkness in these web series?
4. What are the issues relating with censorship regarding the contents of the online web series?
5. What can be anticipated about the future of these web series and on-line streaming platform for healthy entertainment?

Research Methodology

For doing this research paper empirical approach is being followed. Qualitative Analysis and Case study of Six Indian web series (time span 2015 – 20) are done to reach the conclusion.

The Indian Web Series : Emerging Trends

Dark content on the screen, mixing with one's own dark side and appealing to the dark inner self can create a mystic world of its own and can keep the audiences glued to the screen. With these dark contents the web platforms in India are creating one after another popular web series. Since its inception the Indian web series had always tried to follow the pattern of their foreign counter part and this attraction towards the dark content is no exception. But while making the web series for Indian audiences special care is taken that the plot should be "Indianized" and "localized" containing popular elements from Indian social structure, following Indian culture and covering themes from Indian mythologies and folklores, so that the audiences can get a feel of cognition. "Netflix has indeed veered away from traditional modes of storytelling, by foraying into original programming... by eliminating advertisers who pay premiums for gender specific, 'happy' sitcom audiences, Netflix is able to create 'darker TV' – exploring darker themes, realistic portrayals and more intense narrative styles." (George, 2019)

The web platforms, keeping in mind that their primary target audience is the young generation, mostly comprising of age group of 18 to 40, are creating a new genre of web series dealing with the dark shades – both inside and outside of a human being. As the psychological thrillers and crime series are creating a strong market place of its own, with these contents the Indian mythology, myth and folk tales are getting punched, to create

an irresistible content mix for the new generation web audiences. While some of these dark drama primarily deals with crime and social injustice based on caste, creed and gender, contemporary politics being the prime focus of all these series, human psychology also plays a vital part.

The treatment of these shows are completely different, presentation also. Dark ambience plays a pivotal role. These web series are totally different from their film and television show counterparts under the crime or horror genre. Here superstitions are not encouraged, questions are raised on mythological characters, including "God", there is no typical villain character as we are accustomed of seeing in the television screen or films, rather we get to see the inner demons those resides silently like dormant volcanoes inside every common human being. The characters are grey, instead of being pure black or white, including the "heroes", as they are also not flawless. Personal darkness playing a role of catalyst in these web series mixing with social darkness and creating a new genre of its own, where at times it becomes difficult to say who is "good" or who is "bad". These series are very appealing for the young audiences the main reason being no community watch but personal watch. People can decode them as they like.

Case Study of Six Indian Web Series

To complete the research work, here Six Indian web series are being studied and analysis is being done of the concepts and contents of these series as case study.

- *Sacred Games*
- *Ghoul*
- *Typewriter*
- *Asur*
- *Paatal Lok*
- *Betaal*

***Sacred Games* : Season 1 (2018) & Season 2 (2019)**

The world of Indian web series has never been the same since *Sacred Games* was launched by Netflix original from India. The pathfinder that introduced the Indian web audiences with crime, thriller, and suspense mixed with mythological aspects. For the first time Indian web audiences saw a web series with so much of violence, explicit sex scenes and use of cuss words, still the web series was not gross or cheap. Rather it brought a new style of presentation and gave birth to a new genre – the dark one.

In the first season, the story starts off with Sartaj Singh (Saif Ali Khan), a police officer in Mumbai, fighting his own inner demons as his life is into a mess. He receives a call from the wanted criminal Ganesh Gaintonde (Nawazuddin Siddique) and his life changes totally as Gaintonde offers him to protect the city within 25 days. Now the series starts from here and follows later events, often going to flashback mode to show the life of Gaintonde, his rise and fall as Mumbai's top mafia. As Sartaj gets deeply involved in the investigation, more and more dark secrets are revealed to him, than what meets the eyes at surface level. The whole story is narrated by the voice over of Gaintonde, who commits suicide at the very beginning of the series itself.

The second season starts from where the first ended. The whole past life of Gaintonde is revealed here along with his connection to Sartaj's father and "Guruji" (Pankaj Tripathi), who plans to end the world with nuclear bombs starting from Mumbai, so that 'Kalyug' ends and a new "Satyayug" starts.

Scared Games gave everything to the audience that a dark drama should have, along with some tender moments of relationships, love and betrayal, highlighting the vulnerability of each characters. Dialogue delivery was a powerful part of this web series, like the Sanskrit line "aham brahmasmi" became a trademark after this series. The characters were realistic, yet larger than life. The use of real location and top class cinematography gave the series a whole new dimension. These factors are always missing in the Indian television soaps. This series dealt with terrorism like never before, along with religion based politics, psychological manipulation, drug addiction and class division. Audiences were able to relate with the characters, their vulnerability, their flaws, their faults, their failures and most importantly their psychological darkness. The characters have shades, layers and depth and are never one-dimensional.

Ghoul (2018)

Ghoul is the second Netflix original from India, based on the Arab folklore monster called ghoul and the pioneer in the field of horror genre. Written and directed by Patrick Graham this web series gave a whole new dimension to the concept development and storytelling pattern to Indian web series.

Set in a dystopian future in India where fascism rules, where there is no place for freedom of speech, expression, movement or even religion, the story's main plot revolves around Nida Rahim (Radhika Apte), a newly recruited military officer, appointed at a covert military detention Centre to

interrogate Ali Saeed, a considered deadly terrorist who has been recently captured and she is extremely loyal to the authoritarian regime, ready to go to any limit to prove her faith, even to the extent of getting her own father arrested for showing dissent towards the existing rule. During the interrogation with twist in events the terrorist turns the tables on his interrogators, exposing their most shameful secrets, igniting a series of horrifying and supernatural events and deaths in the aftermath. Rahim comes to the conclusion that Ali Saeed doesn't belong to this world and is possessed by some supernatural entity, called to take revenge by her own father who was killed at this same detention camp.

This series was a powerful one, boldly highlighting the socio, religious political condition under an authoritarian rule, where freedom of speech and expression doesn't exist and people live in fear under constant threat of being harassed and persecuted without any reason by the state servants. Islamophobia is also shown in a manner that actually gets into the audience's nerves. The violence shown in the series is enough to give the audience sleepless nights and the thought that what would happen if this drama actually becomes a reality in near future in our Nation?

Typewriter (2019)

Premiering on Netflix, *Typewriter* is a horror thriller web series, set in Goa, and revolves around a haunted villa, with a typewriter and a book that captures the attention of a group of school children - Sameera, Satyajit and Devraj, who are also wannabe young ghost hunters. After reading a ghost novel involving an old man who died writing a novel called "The Ghost of Sultanpore", and out of curiosity the friends form a ghost club and decide to seek a ghost at the old haunted villa in their neighborhood as their first mission. However, before they are able to discover a ghost, a new family moves in the villa and the supernatural being of the villa resurfaces in frightening mode. The plot moves forward with solving the mystery behind the titular typewriter, which comes to life to create havoc and kill people under the spell of "Fakir" (Abhishek Banerjee). The narrative is further interestingly complicated by the narration of past occupants, with the story jumping between decades.

This web series has a powerful storyline and also highlights that due to certain unfortunate situations, good turns to evil and evil gives birth to more evil. The lust and greed for power and money can be destructive. The storytelling pattern is engaging and also covers tender emotions like the bonding between mother and her child.

Asur (2020)

Asur is a psychological crime thriller that premiered on Voot, Set in the backdrop of Varanasi and Mumbai the series moves backward and forward in time to give the backstory of the lead characters along with the present situations. The plot revolves around Nikhil Nair (Barun Sobti), a forensic-expert-turned-teacher, who returns to his native place and at the CBI, and along with his former mentor Dhananjay Rajpoot (Arshad Warsi), finds himself caught in a chasing game with a brutal serial killer, who leaves a sign after every murder and follows Indian Mythology and considers himself to be an "asur". The story is a blend of suspense, mythology, psychological mind games, with the lead characters fighting their own demons of past and inner turmoil while solving the murders of some people totally unrelated. At the climax when the identity of the killer, Shubh is revealed it gives a shock to the audiences.

But the uniqueness of the series was that no character was flawless, even the lead protagonist Dhananjay Rajpoot, along with Shubh's father was to be blamed partially for creating the devil that Shubh eventually becomes. Abused and cursed since his birth, because he was born on "Asur lagna" and his mother died at the time of childbirth, Shubh was born with extraordinary merits, which took an evil turn and he started calling himself "Asur" and went on killing good people so that he can challenge and force Lord Vishnu to take his final avatar "Kalki", and come on Earth. With proper love and guidance since childhood this extraordinary merit could have been harnessed into a positive direction. This series successfully portrayed the inner darkness of human beings, hidden behind the masks that we wear every day.

Paatal Lok (2020)

Paatal Lok is a dark sociological crime thriller web series which premiered on Amazon Prime Video and is inspired by the traditional Indian mythological concepts of "teen lok" - "Svarga, Dharti and Paatal" (heaven, earth and the hell), as metaphors for the different classes of India and the four estates. Delhi is being used as the backdrop where "Lutyens" Delhi is heaven, "Vasant Kunj" and "Noida" is the earth while "Jamna Paar" in South Delhi is hell, where the protagonist inspector Hathi Ram Chaudhary (Jaideep Ahlawat) is posted, along with his right hand and junior Imran Ansari (Ishwak Singh) and the day when suddenly a high profile case lands on his table. The case turns into a dark mystery thriller that leads him to the dark realm of underworld (Paatal Lok). The climax of the story is also based on the mythological fable of Yudhisthira's dog

from the Mahabharata. The show gives an insight into various forms of discrimination in India, including baseless dislike against Muslims through the character of Kabir M and Imran Ansari. Religion and caste based power play and politics are also visible in the show, through the backstory of Tope Singh while Chinni's story brings out the issues of child abuse and discrimination against transgenders. Hathoda Tyagi's background gives insight into the pathetic state of women safety in rural India and poor condition of law and order. As he investigates into the lives of the four suspects who were hired to murder a top journalist Sanjeev Mehra (Neeraj Kabi), he discovers startling truths and insights that eventually helps him rediscover his responsibilities as a police officer as well as a family man, his role in society and the larger meaning of life itself and also the present condition of our contemporary society.

Audiences actually relate with the characters and starts to sympathize with the four suspects after learning about their backgrounds and how they were being used by the powerful people for their own benefits. Justice is never served to the poor and powerless people, they are always being exploited. The present state of Indian Journalism is also a prime area of focus in this series, where objectivity is compromised and fake news rules.

Betaal (2020)

For the first time Indian web viewers got a taste of Zombie story mixed with Indian folktale elements. Betaal is a web series about a battle between modern-day army and a centuries-old British Army officer with his zombie redcoats. The web series focused on Commandant Vikram Sirohi (Vineet Kumar Singh) and his team of 'Baaz Squad', a paramilitary force under the command of corrupt Commandant Tyagi (Suchitra Pillai), who privately works for power hungry Surya Construction's owner, Jay Mudhalvan (Jitendra Joshi). On Mudhalva's orders Commandant Tyagi and her team of 'Baaz Squad' heads to a remote village in a jungle and starts to evacuate and get the tunnel cleared for a highway-building project for Mudhalva's own petty reasons for profit. The tribal are forcefully evacuated and the tunnel is cleared on the expense of killing some tribal who were preventing the mission from accomplishing as they knew about the evils that resides inside the tunnel in form of the spirit of Colonel John Lynedoch and his army of undead "redcoat" who all were killed by Indian freedom fighters and their souls being trapped inside the tunnel. But Lynedoch, who was a practitioner of black magic, sacrificed the life of his own son and summoned Betaal.

This highlighted that Lynedoch's devotion towards Betaal was only an outcome of his own hunger for power, something similar as later seen in case of Mudhalvan's as well, who tries to kill his own daughter for power. Even the name of the protagonist of the series is Vikram, Betaal being the Supreme Evil Being, resembling the Indian tale of "Vikram and Betaal". Once the tunnel opens, it unleashes the evil power in full strength.

Another area of focus of this series was the sense of morality which one often tends to forget. The series also covers relevant themes like the politics of displacement and disenfranchisement in today's time, the urban-rural divide, impact of capitalistic greed, land grabbing by force, political power play and branding any dissent as being anti-nationalistic. Though India is independent from the British rule but the practice of tyranny and oppression still continues in our Nation.

Observations

Darkness resides inside all of us, and at times all are vulnerable and the success of these web series lies in the factor that these web series are successful in appealing to these dark psychology of the audiences. They are just only not typically scary but also psychologically appealing. Moreover as there is no censorship issues in the streaming platform these web series can very boldly deal with the contemporary socio - political issues prevailing in our country. They are entertaining, innovative and engaging, at the same time thrilling. They also highlights different areas from Indian mythology and folktales. Indian mythology is still like a hidden treasure box for not only western countries but also for the young Indian generation as well. There is always a huge demand for these tales. These web series perfectly blends these supernatural elements, myths, with contemporary time and has created a successful genre in itself with a strong fan base. There is no definite ending for these web series, often providing the viewers with much deep thoughts to ponder upon.

There is a common complaint against these series from few camps that these series exaggerate violence and vulgar language which is not suitable for audiences, which is true in certain cases. Excess Violence is a part and parcel of these dark drama series, which does often crosses the line of common acceptance.

Conclusion

The scope of digital platform is expanding in India, so is the number of web series. New concepts, innovative presentation style, unique themes

are invading the digital market, which is natural because in order to survive in this highly competitive market and also to catch and retain the attention of the target audiences it is extremely necessary to provide them with something new, something they haven't seen before. This dark genre created by the Indian web series perfectly fits that box. They are thrilling, filled with suspense, mixed with a generous dose of supernatural elements, complied with the evils that is prevailing in our contemporary society like caste based discrimination, islamphobia, gender discrimination, dirty politics in the name of religion and so on. Moreover the characters of these series are realistic in nature, they are having flaws, having their own insecurities, daily life problems, yet they fight back. People can easily relate with such characters and they love to "binge watch" these series. The locations, ambience are also chosen minutely to fit the tone of these series. When a horror series tries to pack in as much subliminal messages as it can into a small run it ends up to be a perfect entertainer. These web series actually can have a bright future, provided the temptation of showing excessive violence and use of cuss words is checked as they can have a severe negative impact on the audience psychology.

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Ageing and/as Disability: (Re)Reading Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Kakababu* Series

Debaditya Chakraborty

Abstract

Despite man's lust for youthfulness, discovery of no such antidote to put the ageing process an end has made the contemporary world into a desperate search for 'productive ageing' or 'successful ageing'. Set against the negative stereotyping of the elderly where old age is deemed as a punishment, a burden, a socio-cultural death, spatial exclusion and the loss of self, postmodern discourse consider it to be socially constructed. The concept of 'old age' rebuts to be a monolithic category. Gerontology, therefore, undertakes to enquire the process of ageing on the one hand, and puts on show the techniques to make it as enjoyable as possible on the other. Literary gerontology instead of focusing on why we grow older, concentrates on and investigates into what growing older signifies culturally, socially, and politically, and the way it can be instrumental in fostering fecund interdisciplinary dialogue regarding how ageing as a lifelong activity is understood and experienced. Since time immemorial, Indian literature has been portraying a cross-section of perspectives on old age and the process of ageing. In the present study, efforts will be made to seek and show how the Sahitya Akademi award winner Sunil Gangopadhyay in his *Kakababu* series, falling 'usually' under the adventure genre of (children) literature grapples with the problematics of ageing.

Keywords: Ageism; Literary gerontology; Old age; Productive ageing; Successful ageing.

enectus morbidus est

(Old age is a disease.)

—Seneca (Achenbaum 681)

In our world today, there is little celebration of old age and the old person. We need the idea of the old wise man and woman, but he/

she seems to be present in the fairy tales than in our post-modern society. The wisdom of the old is not easily valued in an era of hi-fi and Wi-Fi, hi-tech and hi-speed in which the young, beautiful and ambitious are the emperors.

— Erel Shalit (148)

In our contemporary world of increased life expectancy, gerontology can no longer be consigned to 'an academic backwater'. The incidence of a teeming *greying population* worldwide makes it imperative that we not only revise government policies on 'threshold age' and retirement schemes but also view the entire phenomenon of ageing from a new perspective. Down the ages, old age has been considered as an inevitable mishap, as "the only disease [...] that you don't look forward to being cured of". (Hamilton 4) Ageing, accordingly, has been expounded as the sum of the metamorphosis which decreases man's capabilities and increases the possibility of death. This common definition of ageing as a kind of disability implies that old people be identified with dependent members in any collective rather than with its dynamic agents. In the context of the Indian society, the dominance of the discourse of *ageism* has meant, paradoxically, that old people be revered for their 'wisdom' – a stance which effectively implies their distance from 'action'. Such stereotyping has a deleterious effect on the individual and social psyche.

Monolithic assumptions surrounding senility must be contested through inviting new narratives and imaginaries which re-count what it means to age actively and productively which is, in brief, the project of gerontology. In my paper I propose to critique the identity category of 'old age' by engaging with its various dimensions—chronological, psychological, social, 'third' and 'fourth' ages, and so on. To that end, I would like to proceed via literary gerontology and explore the politics of representation in *Kakababu*. Written by the Sahitya Akademi award winner famous Bengali litterateur Sunil Gangopadhyay, *Kakababu* is a series of adventure novels and short stories in the 'young adult' category surrounding the exploits of the aged but agile protagonist, the eponymous 'uncle' of the boy-narrator.

The ancient known manuscript bringing up ageing is perhaps a narrative written in 2500 BCE by Ptah-Hotep, noted Egyptian philosopher-poet: "How hard and painful are the last days of an aged man! He grows weaker every day [...]. Old age is the worst of misfortunes that can afflict a man." (Shalit 154) Indeed, as Kate Davidson points out, "Reflection on ageing is as old as intellectual thought itself—from ancient

times, philosophers, scientists, theologians, economists, artists and writers have pondered the meanings and experiences of growing and being old." (Davidson 227) However, notwithstanding 'positive' narratives like the *antediluvian* and *Hyperborean ageing myths* or the Biblical Methuselah, or Cicero's famous assertion that "Old age is usually not only poorer, but is even richer [...] old age, so far from being feeble and inactive, is ever busy and doing and effecting something" (Achenbaum681), old age has been viewed down the ages as a punishment and an inevitable misfortune, or as Nobel prize winner Elie Metchnikoff dubs old age as "an infectious, chronic disease which is manifested by a degeneration, or an enfeebling of the noble elements." (Achenbaum682) Ageing is, as Butler clarifies, "a personal revulsion towards and distaste for growing old, disease and disability, and a fear of powerlessness, uselessness and death." (Minichiello et al. 2) Ageing, therefore, has conventionally been explicated as the sum of transformations which peters out human faculties and escalates the probability of death.

Being piqued by methodical stereotyping and prejudice of the aged people simply since they were old, the US based 42-year old psychiatrist Robert Neil Butler in 1969 coined the term 'age-ism' during an interview in *Washington Post* to denote a "process of systematic stereotyping or discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish with skin colour and gender." (Butler 35) "Ageism allows the younger generations to see older people as different than themselves; thus they subtly cease to identify with their elders as human beings," Butler added. (Butler 35) The sturdy stereotypes around aging, according to Butler, are those that can be truncated as '3Ds' – disease, disability and death. Subsequently, as the term acquired wide reception, it was incorporated in the *American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1979 and therefore came out to be the subject of gerontological discourse. In the context of the Indian society, ageism has meant, paradoxically, that older people be revered for their 'wisdom' – a stance which effectively and simultaneously implies their spatiotemporal distance from 'action'. It is reminiscent of John Dewey's 'paradox of ageing' where the renowned philosopher-psychologist observes, "we are [...] in the unpleasant and illogical condition of extolling maturity and depreciating age." (Dewey iv) Evidently, such entrenched ideas have a deleterious effect on the individual and social psyche.

Coined in English in 1903 from by Ilya Ilyich Mechinov from the Greek *geron* meaning 'old man', and *-logia* meaning 'study of', gerontology is the scrutiny of the socio-cultural, psycho-cognitive and biological facets of 'ageing'. Gerontology basically deals with locating,

investigating and comprehending the ageing experience and the consequence of ageing. It differs from geriatrics which is the medical study of old age disorders. Social gerontology examines the experience of later life which has been sustained by a resilient humanitarian as well as theoretical standpoint which considers old age to be a social problem. It was Clark Tibbits who gave the nomenclature 'social gerontology' in order to underscore how "aspects of gerontology [...] (bears) a major component of social factors and forces." (Cox et al. 17) The social forces include the "roles and status of the old, how the old are viewed by society, and the degree to which normative aspects of aging determine the behavior of older persons." (Cox et al. 17) Subsequently, this broad area of study evolved into what is called 'critical gerontology' which is "a critique of the social influences, philosophical foundations and empirical methodologies on which gerontology as a field has been historically constructed." (Ray 675) It is "a more value-committed approach to social gerontology—a commitment not just to understand the social construction of ageing but to change it." (Phillipson et al. 280) Harry R. Moody also argues, "critical gerontology is concerned with identifying possibilities for emancipatory social change, including positive ideals for the last stage of life." (Moody xv)

An offshoot of the humanistic approach, 'literary gerontology' designates the study of older people and ageing in various genres and sub-genres of literary work in order to achieve a diversely imaginative and empathetic understanding of what it means to be old. Significant contributions to this field include seminal works like *Old Age* by Simone de Beauvoir (1972), *Stories of Ageing* by Mike Hepworth (2000) and *Writing Old Age* by Julia Johnson (2004). As Hannah Zeilig succinctly puts it, "Literature has been used to diverse ends within gerontology and by those who are not gerontologists but who have an interest in 'age'." (Zeilig 20) As Steven Weiland in his article "Criticism Between Literature and Gerontology" points out,

Gerontology has shown a steady interest in imaginative literature, largely ignoring developments in literary theory and instead accumulating accounts of what are often called 'images of aging.' Studies of this kind represent the historical mainstream of literary inquiry and the belief in referential value. Accordingly, literature is used to illustrate negative or (less often) positive stereotypes of aging or to provide an aging character in a short story, novel, play, or film as an example of resignation, wisdom, or another quality understood to be unique to the experience of growing old [...]. Literary case studies may be seen as standing

side by side, albeit in a different vocabulary, with objects of scientific research to demonstrate the consequences of aging in cognitive and personality development, family relations, and social attitudes. For obvious reasons this approach favors fiction and drama in which human character appears in recognizable situations over time. (Weiland 78)

Indian literature too is replete with portraying the experiences of ageing. The problematic of ageing find skilful portrayal in the writings of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, Ayyappa Paniker, Buddadeva Bose, Upamanyu Chatterjee, K. Satchidanandan, Dilip Chitre, Amitav Ghosh, Girish Karnad, Arun Kolatkar and Kamala Das among others. (Raja 10) Kamala Das in her writings, for example, poignantly depicts the distress of the alienation of the old people. As Amit Bhattacharya notes, "In many of her poems and prose articles, Kamala Das had tackled the issue of ageing and its consequent degradation as well as discrimination that lead the aged to the accursed fate of 'structured dependency.'" (Bhattacharya 201)

Celebrated Bengali litterateur Sunil Gangopadhyay (1934-2012) has remained alert to and expressive of the 'experience' of 'ageing'. In a poem titled 'Age', he writes:

So I'm growing older? I ask myself, laughing,
Several times in the bathroom before my shower
Even a pirouette or two in such severe solitude
Can do no harm -
Should I exercise to slim down, wear tight trousers?
Out of breath with laughter in the evening
I tell Nira,
Have you been told I'm growing older? It's in the papers.
It's true - my chest hair, sideburns, stubble, are all greying
Here, see for yourself
Everyone will say, what do you mean young, he's old
This magic can't be cracked - how a young man can age
But still people always grow old and die
I'll die too
Having loved some more, written some more poems
Surely I'll die too
Isn't that right?
What is this place I've wandered into, so unfamiliar
My kingdom was huge, but beyond that the body's
Infinite music gives me pangs even to lower my eyes
I enjoyed this journey, saw not a few sights, after all,

Even the darkness is sweet.

Very much sensitive to the polemics of 'ageing', Gangopadhyay penned *Kakababu*, a series of 39 adventure novels and short stories in the 'young adult' category surrounding the exploits of the aged but agile protagonist, Raja Roychowdhury, the eponymous 'uncle' of the boy-narrator. With the sole exception of Syed Mustafa Siraj's Niladri Sarkar, a Santa-bearded Ex-colonel, *Kakababu* is perhaps unique in the long line of 91 Bengali detectives till date. Whereas the Bengali detective fiction that started in 1892 with Priyanath Mukhopadhyay's *Banomali Daser Hatya (The Murder Of Banomali Das)* have since been portraying spirited young sleuth, *Kakababu* is aged and differently-abled. Launched into the literary circle in the autumn of 1979 with the publication of *Bhoyonkor b (The Emperor's Lost Head)* in the puja number of *Anandamela* magazine, *Kakababu* series kept going for 33 years on popular appetite until the death of Gangopadhyay in 2012.

Raja Roychowdhury a.k.a. *Kakababu*, an ex-Director of the Archaeological Survey of India and an advisor in CBI, despite being aged and crippled responded to the clarion call of his passion, thanks to his unmitigated will power and profound mental strength. In the parlance of psychological theories on ageing, this phenomenon could be viewed as what Peck calls the mental stage of *body transcendence versus body preoccupation* where the individual learns to accept their essential being and not be preoccupied with their bodily infirmities. In fact, by way of winning over his infirmity and leading an eventful, adventurous life, *Kakababu* seems to present himself as a fictional rebuttal to Cumming and Henry's 'Disengagement Theory' that postulates,

Aging is an inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement resulting in decreased action between the aging person and others in the social system he belongs to. [...] His withdrawal may be accompanied from the outset by an increased preoccupation with himself [...]. (Cumming and Henry 14)

A critique of this theory seems significant since, in Kate Davidson's words, "Although conceived some 50 years ago, Cumming and Henry's findings continue to resonate with lay perceptions of how and why older people come to terms with withdrawal from the labour force, society and, ultimately, life." (Davidson 231) *Kakababu* seems to have achieved 'successful ageing' through voluntary work or pursuing one's passion as proposed by *Activity and Continuity* theorists like Havinghurst and Atchley.

Sabuj Dwiper Raja (The King of the Verdant Island) introduces *Kakababu*, the chief protagonist of the 39 fictions in clear terms:

While Kakababu looked years younger than his actual age, the truth was that he *was* getting on in years. [...] he was probably fifty-three or fifty-four. [...] He was demonstrably fit and strong, with an enormous, intimidating moustache [...]. (AK114)

By way of a flashback, the novel recounts how Kakababu lost his leg:

Back then, Kakababu had still been a high-ranking official at the Archaeological Survey of India. During a work trip to Afghanistan, his Jeep had skidded off the mountain road and tumbled into a deep ravine. Kakababu had eventually recovered, but the bones of his right foot had been splintered beyond repair. Shontu had heard his family talk about it. 'Powdered to dust', they had said. Kakababu had slowly learned to walk again, but now he had slowly learned to walk again, but now he had to use a pair of crutches all the time. (AK 114)

Notwithstanding, his age and disability, Kakababu never remained in the close doors of his house. As the narrator of the novel writes, "After that incident, Kakababu left his job, but he cannot live a peaceful life in home. Passion for invention is still alive in him." (AK 114) When in *Sabuj Dwiper Raja (King of the Emerald Isle)* Mr. Dashgupto asked Kakababu about the *raison d'être* for his volunteering for 'certain death' in most number of cases, Kakababu answers,

Because not everyone's cut from the same cloth [...]. Some of us might prefer to let sleeping dogs lie, but me? I know for a fact that if I don't get to the bottom of this mystery, I don't have a good night's sleep for the rest of my life. (AK 178)

What is more, in spite of having poor eyesight and a life-long disability, Kakababu neither expresses his agony to anyone, nor does he tell in explicitly the incident how he became crippled. This reluctance on his part to recount his bodily or chronological history could be interpreted as Kakababu's strategy of 'age resistance' through what poststructuralist theorists term a 'performative body'.

In *Pahar Churaye Aatwonko (Horror on the Hilltop)* Kakababu endeavours to climb Mt. Everest, the highest peak in the world by foot to solve the mystery of Yeti (Snowman). Being astounded, Shontu, his nephew cum assistant asks him,

Kakababu, you, I mean, I mean you are really going there? [...] Isn't it hard to believe that a lame footed man who can't walk without the help of a crutch will climb up to the Everest? (KSI 186)

The idea made the teenager Shontu all the more delighted, for

Kakababu will be the first on one count. For, never has a lame footed man with a crutch in his hand has ever dared to climb up the Mount Everest. (KSI 186)

In fact, Kakababu, the representative of Lansett's seminal concept of the 'third age' that denotes *active citizenship* as opposed to the 'fourth age' that "functions as social imagery of a fear of incapacity" (Kydd et al. 2018) goes to the extreme hilly areas time and again during his adventures giving a rebuttal to the traditional ageist concept that posits old age as a metaphor of unproductivity and death. In the short story *Ekti Lal Lonka (A Red Chilli)*, for instance, Kakababu goes to the far off Himalayan ranges in search of a strawberry like fruit that supposedly makes people invisible. (KSIII 259-276)

Kakababu never gets afraid to fight, actually he a man who is open to all the extremities of life. In *Shontu o Ek Tukro Chand (Shontu and a Moon Stone)*, to cite an instance, when the criminal Thakur Singh threatens Kakababu by saying, "[...] you have come with police to hackle me. I'll cut the two children along with you into pieces with this sword and bury you here [...]", the daring Kakababu retorts,

Thakur Singh, one of my legs is crippled; people think I'm weak. Yes, I'm weak, I can't run. But these hands of mine possess much strength than many. I can see more than anybody sees. Even my mind works more. I have been in trouble many a times, but none can kill me. You'll kill me so easily, don't you dare to think. (KSIII 400)

Then, keeping his crutches aside, Kakababu picking up a sword from the wall implored Thakur Singh for a duel. Despite Singh thought Kakababu to be a mere aged 'crippled Bengali', Kakababu jumping on his one foot whitewashed at ease Singh in no time. Thakur Singh became doubly ashamed since, "He could not believe that even having such a stout muscular body, he has got overpowered by a crippled, middle-aged man." (KSIII 402)

Kakababu's take on disease too is a remarkable one: he scarcely falls ill but even if, sometimes he feels unwell, he regards it not worth bothering about it at all. Shontu in *Kakabaur Prothom Abhijan (The First Adventure of Kakababu)* informs his mother: "Mother, Kakababu is running a high fever. But he's forbidden to tell you." (KSIV 287) When Shontu's mother noticed it, she insists on calling a doctor, but Kakababu dissuades her to

do so, saying:

No, no, there's no need to call a doctor. Just a fever, it will be naturally cured. If doctor comes, he will prescribe a lot of medicines, and push injections. (KSIV 287)

Kakababu further points towards the unpleasant situation he would be likely in if the news of his fever reaches his friends and relatives:

Now, the news of my ailment will spread everywhere and the friends and relatives will come in groups will visit me. This is the very nature of the Bengalis, they gather in the sick person's room and talk about their known ones who have died in various diseases. And have tea-snacks! (KSIV 287)

From a sociological and human rights perspective, we could theorize Kakababu's aversion to being designated ill and requiring medical help as a resistance to what is referred to as the *medicalization* of old age, that is, becoming the 'subject' of medical sciences who become the sole authority on ageing.

True, Kakababu being called aged and his consequent overpowering the societal notions of ageing and disability make him a brilliant case who has adapted quite successfully his age along with his deformity in due course of his life. Regarding disability, Debra Sheets in his article *Ag-ing with Physical Disability* asserts, "Disability is not a static condition but rather a process of continuous adaptation to changes across the life course." (Sheets 2) In Kakababu's case the process of ageing has been superimposed on disability, the phenomenon that has been dubbed by Campbell et al. to be 'accelerated aging'. (Campbell et al. 1999) It is indeed unfortunate that functional debilities that are often associated with 'old age' caught Kakababu on the hop in his mid-life.

Note: All the translations of Sunil Gangopadhyay's works are mine, if not otherwise mentioned.

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The Transgressive Self in Amruta Patil's *Kari*

Keyushee Vashishtha

Abstract

The paper endeavours to understand and justify the revolutionary spirit embodied by the protagonist of the graphic novel, *Kari* (2008) by Amruta Patil. It seeks to examine the maltreatment of the queer community and expose the years of prejudice attached to their acceptance in our society. The paper, through the use of Queer theory, will thus be an attempt to understand the implicit politics in *Kari*, especially in terms of the fluidity through which the protagonist moves across gendered sexualities, spaces and boundaries - physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and geographical. It proposes to trace *Kari's* search for identity by revealing how even the most minute of daily experiences can affect one's understanding of the self. Patil's use of vibrant images/ graphics would also be taken up to analyse the foregrounding of queer, urban spaces and the ritual of queer desire as also the importance of identifying our oneness.

Keywords: Gender-fluid; Graphic novel; Identity; Queer; Self.

The emergence of the field of graphic literature defines itself as a narrative through comics and crafted images, which in turn helps us pay attention to these graphic narratives in an immaculate way. The term "graphic novel," can be a misnomer to understand graphic narrative and encompasses a range of narrative work in comics. The canonic components, outlines and channels, of the graphic narrative captivates us as readers through its visual excellence, and further encourages us to act, process, and interpret the same. Graphic novels bring across their motives and thoughts through both drawing and language (dialogues). This transparent style leaves little to our imagination and instils in us the explicit awareness of the work. Its intricate and layered interaction of words and images accentuates the representation of thought and adds to its narrative style, making the language of comic unique and intangible.

To go with the flow of the changing times, the literature produced and

studied has, over the years, adopted new interdisciplinary practices and gone into varied fields, viz. psychology, arts, philosophy, and biology to name a few; for motivations, inspiration and relation. One such outcome of the same is graphic novels, their unprecedented blend of words and illustrations collectively add to the essence of the text. With everyday inventions and discoveries around the globe veering us in newer directions, it is safe to say that no alliance seems odd. Hence, now is the time when we affirm and embrace diversity over mainstream alliance wholeheartedly. Though any distinct change usually meets resistance and criticism more openly, than acceptance and hope, the reception of these newer ideas becomes tougher if they are a component of the popular culture.

Incubated in the backdrop of the Great Recession of 2008, Amruta Patil's first graphic novel, *Kari*, is the narrative of a girl in the suburban 'smoke city', Mumbai. Patil through her use of vibrant images/graphics examines the foregrounding of queer urban spaces and the ritual of desire while outlining the protagonist's (Kari) struggle with her identity as a homosexual and her reaction to a recent breakup.

Kari is portrayed as having varied identities, like that of a modern-day working woman, a caring yet confused daughter, a passionate lover, a convenient room-mate are only some of the most prominent ones. Patil traces these issues and struggles in an attempt to bring forth and illustrate how Kari transgresses through her queer identity. Whether she does so deliberately or not is not as important, rather, what is interesting is that by merely coming to terms with her own identity she occupies society in very different ways. The reality of Kari's queer self in terms of how she does not conform to norms, occupies gendered spaces and deviates from all that is coded with meaning and politics in society, only to create her own, is what challenges the status quo.

India is yet to fully come to terms with the concept of queerness or rather queer sexuality. Though queer identity has been a rather popular topic for debate, prejudice and discussion, its acceptance somehow always has been dangling on a fine thread. R.K. Dasgupta maintains in "Queer Sexuality: A Cultural Narrative of India's Historical Archive" that "identities are complicated to begin with and become more complicated when relating them to nation and sexuality". And knowing the complex diversity of a slow-developing nation like India, who is still more attached to terms like culture and tradition rather than ethnicity and progression, Indian sexual identities have become the product of brutal internal and external conflict.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are two different concepts, as are sex and gender, one is biological and the other is societal. Sexual orientation is the romantic indulgence towards other people and can range from heterosexuality to homosexuality. Gender identity is one's sense of self as a woman, man, or transgender, and may be different from one's biological sex. Through the introduction of the modern doctrine of secularism and keeping away organized faith from politics, economics, and identity, there have been escalating instances of societal problems like queer-phobia, which is the explicit and implicit hostility towards the LGBTQ community.

Gender, class, and religious equality have been perpetual concerns over centuries. Humanity is struggling for its rights in a constrained conventional society. The world is in a constant battle to establish just and equal rights for women, LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender, Queer, Inter-sex, and Asexual), minority and backward classes. Yet the victory is not achieved. In order to understand the status of equality in the present, we must be able to comprehend equality in the past. Was the world emancipated of these concerns in the prehistoric age? Were our ancestors free of the burden of equality? Perhaps, yes. Perhaps, they had relished the established equality among every realm possible. But where does that leave us in the modern times? And how are we to move ahead with these questions dangling around? Patil has attempted to reason with and answer similar questions in her novel through the character of Kari, possibly leading way towards new understanding and hope.

The morbid beginning of the novel suggests more than it lets on. We witness a visual of Kari's and Ruth's attempt to commit suicide. Both Kari and Ruth survive this suicide, but not in the same way. Kari's attempted suicide and escape from death can be read in several ways. Since Kari can be understood as an abject figure, it is indicative that this suicide can be looked at as a catalyst to her queering. Her bizarre escape takes her on the journey of reflection and meditation towards her acceptance of her queer self. This suicide becomes significant since the book begins and ends with it and the Kari we are introduced to is not the same by the end of it. In Kari's narrative, we see consistent references to her 'failed suicide' and how she was saved. There is a transformative viewpoint to Kari's suicide which can be noticed through her admittance of the act, the shifts in her thought and the ways in which she comes to term with herself and her sexuality. It is only because the sewer spits out Kari into reality again (vis. Ruth's safety net), that she emerges as a resilient and tougher individual: "A failed suicide is a death still, because no one emerges from it unscathed." (10)

It is important to note that suicide only acts as a catalyst and not the sole reason for Kari's transformation. It lends a lens for her to view herself and society. Therefore, adding to the characteristic rebirth of Kari, in every sense of the word: "The body rights itself midair, aligns itself heaviest part first. It is with the head, then, that I must meet death, thought it was the heart that willed it." (5) The quote confirms Kari's attempt at suicide as an ideological one. Her motivations may have had to do with love (Ruth, to be specific) but she meets 'death' headfirst and rationally. To understand, why suicide was an ideological one; it is essential to know how Kari was saved and how her life changed. Patil uses bleak and raw images of sewage, effluvium, stinks and claustrophobic spaces to project the rash realities of both the 'smoke-city' and Kari's headspace.

Every day, the city seems to be getting heavier, and her varicose veins fight to break out of her skin. Soon we must mutate – thick skins and resilient lungs – to survive this new reality. (13)

The novel is replete with water imagery, but not of a traditional kind. In *Kari* water does not stand for purity and fertility, rather it occupies Kari's consciousness pivotally and becomes a space denoting fluidity, navigation, negotiation and regeneration. From being saved by sewage effluents till the end of the novel, the image of water in *Kari* is dirty, claustrophobic and dark – much like how Kari looks at the 'smog city' or society at large. Water which has traditionally denoted all that is life-giving becomes polluted and asphyxiating for Kari. It also acts as a metaphor for Kari's navigation and negotiation with the self and society. Hence, Kari takes on the role of a boatman who is advancing within the society and its tyrannical structures. And simultaneously, is seen coming to terms with her sexuality. Along with this, helping others only leads her to understand herself better.

The day I hauled myself out of the sewer – the day of the double suicide – I promised the water I'd return her favour. That I'd unclog her sewers when she couldn't breathe. I earned me a boat that night. As a boatman, you learn to row clean through the darkest water. (31)

Angel, Kari's friend who is dying from cancer, pushes her further to understand this role. Angel is brusque and unemotional but is the only one in Kari's life that asks her the right kind of questions. She asks why Kari chose to take on a more challenging trail in questioning herself, rather than choosing a more unconventional route to living. Kari takes this issue further and decides to stay in the fluid space. She begins to understand the nature of water itself, and as an extension, how to navigate through it fear-

lessly. In another instance, while on her way to Angel's house Kari spots a woman on the road, completely drenched in water. The same night she dreams about it:

In my dreams that night, I rowed home after an evening with the drenched girl on the street. I rowed towards the house of the West, where the dead sleep. Furiously, the sewer flowed. So violent was the grey water that it cracked my canoe in half. No matter where you are headed, or how nobly, you can sink without a trace. (56)

The boatman metaphor inevitably acts as a constant reminder to society of the instability of a fixed sexual identity. Therefore, Kari is the essence of queer - one which haunts society's hetero-normative structure by being both within it and equally distanced from it. It is this very act of distancing that allows her to acknowledge the structures that bind her. Dasgupta opines - "The queer struggle is not only intended to achieve a sense of equality but also to challenge the apparent immutability and naturalness of the constructed ideas such as identity and sexuality." The closer Kari comes to accepting her queer self, the easier her relationship with water (society) gets; she feels comfortable in that periphery, in the space of fluidity and challenges it by going at it headfirst. In the images denoting the festival of *Ganesh Chaturthi*, Kari navigates through the water with the idol, steering clear of obstacles, this depiction, though a simple ritual, has immense significance metaphorically. These images reveal both Kari's courage while also the slow weakening of the structures in society.

This kind of metaphorical imagery consumes the surreal universe that Kari inhabits without ever spelling out things, answering questions, categorizing or justifying its fluid and complex nature - quite like the queer self. At no point in the novel, does Kari identify as queer or talk about her sexuality explicitly, which is where its most prominent fervour lies. Not only does it force the reader to read between the lines and recognize the more subtle markings of fluid sexuality but further, it resists identification and categorization which is quintessential to being queer. Kari ardently defies all attempts toward the indications of femininity and is never satisfied or comfortable with most female attributes. When she first started living at her apartment, Crystal Palace, she had several stereotypical perceptions of what living with women would be like and is instead surprised to find indifference: "This warbling Little Women camaraderie is a badge that must be painstakingly earned." (18)

She never quite fits in with her room-mates and their lives, but is simultaneously both inside and outside this 'feminine space'. She acts again as the

outsider, the observer and is "non-intrusive". Kari's narrative voice also exposes the fluidity of sexuality at large in her dynamic with her room-mates. Her room-mates also project the role of "the gay best friend" onto Kari by expressing how they would like a husband like her, who is handsome and loyal. Kari plays that role consciously at times, exhibiting the other ways that men and women treat her sexuality.

Kari's voice is a feminine one, she acts as the less dominating one in her relationships, but her attire and aesthetics are masculine. In several instances, it is evident that she is uncomfortable with her female body, be it about her menstrual cycle or the fact that she has breasts. Kari mentions how she was captivated with K.D Lang as a child when she saw her on television and refers to her as the "genderless one". When her friend Laz asks her if she is a "proper lesbian", she finds the question strange. And, replies by saying: "I'd say armchair straight, armchair gay, active loner. The circus isn't in my life. It's in my head." (79)

Kari's response appears relatively absurd, but, she is often seen seeking sanctuary in absurdity. For she has realized, that the idea of constructed sexuality implies nothing but internalization of absurdity itself. She exposes this construct of sexuality and its performative aspect, both of which are suggestive of the authenticity of fluidity, malleability and transferability of gender and sexuality itself. These actions do not, of course, exist in isolation. There are socio-cultural and political meanings encoded within them. Existence of people like Kari or K.D. Lang challenges the heterosexual framework that our society so diligently follows, and is seldom believed to disrupt these fixed meanings of identities and sexualities. Therefore, when Kari finally accepts her own identity, she concurrently weakens and defies the patriarchal narratives of identity and sexuality. The more she accepts her queerness, the more hegemonic boundaries she transgresses making the act more radical.

Kari, while working with Laz on their 'Fairytale Hair' Ad had been feeling tomboyish or increasingly more like a 'drag queen', and in preparation for the award they were to receive, she decides to get a haircut. The cutting of hair then becomes an awakening for Kari, to 'sever the umbilical cord' that bounds her, and she leaves the award ceremony. Now, standing atop a building again, Kari is shown, in the last chapter - Exit Route, fighting the urge to jump off and she imagines a metaphorical 'Pigeon Girl' jumping off, which can be looked at as Kari's 'desire' and 'passion' finally taking flight.

These realizations of not wanting to 'step off' into the abyss, instead 'step

back' and finally notice herself and her surroundings sets Kari free. She humbly accepts the true depth of her love for Ruth but at the same time also acknowledges the fact that even though she - "still loves Ruthie more than anyone else in the world but (I) won't be jumping off ledges for anyone anymore". And in a way only Kari can justify and express these feelings as something deep and dark she humorously yet absurdly says:

There are so many ways to exit towards the Light, but with my luck, I'd be the one electrocuted by Diwali lights. Or the one who cracks her head falling off a footstool. I'd still be a jester, leaving the audience with a stitch in their sides. (114)

The trope of space is of immense importance in the text with Kari's literal navigation through space symbolizing the spatial movement in her mind-space, and her culminating point where she upholds and embraces the realities of her existence as a queer, leaving behind the 'circus that is in her head'. And letting Ruth go, emotionally and psychologically, in a distant city, smiling and leading a different life. Kari's reflection woven journey in a fantastically surrealist narrative starts with a suicide and ends with one. Her journey started with a younger, reckless and unsure girl and ended gracefully, with a competent, mature and assured woman.

On the whole, Amruta Patil's *Kari* depicts poignantly the experience of a kind of crisis which is attached to the transition from the rigid categories of a hetero-normativity with regard to self, subjectivity and sexuality. Furthermore, it shows how such a crisis - and the way in which it is negotiated - is not limited to the plot alone. The very surreal atmosphere and the world depicted in the work also reflect it in remarkable ways.

Conclusively, one can view *Kari* as a story about pushing and transgressing boundaries, recognizing one's true self (queer), and ultimately about the mundane quest for love, even a potentially absent one, which goes beyond the petty and patriarchal constructs of sex, gender, and identity. It serves as a perspective, a queer one, challenging the stability and the monolithic narrative of identity; the gaze that is both inside and outside and is accompanied with the mock-ironic tone, tearing apart our notion of all that is normative, heterosexual and constant. Kari's queering, hence, is as radical as it gets.

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After the Last Sky: Transnationalism and its Discontents

Shalini. M.

Abstract

The paper attempts to look at transnationalism critically in light of the propositions put forward by critics like Gayathri Spivak, Pascale Casanova and some other contemporary comparatists who have brought our attention to the politics of border crossing. While drawing for its theoretical frame from the above-mentioned critics, the paper attempts to analyse two novels by the Palestinian writer Susan Abulhawa to elaborate on this. Transnationalism, as a manifestation of globalization, too should be understood as multiple, complex and to an extent disordered. The paper is interested to look at how transnational practices are enabled, limited and coloured by all kinds of disparities in power and resources.

Keywords: Border-Crossing; Palestinian Novel; Transnationalism.

Where should we go after the last frontiers?
Where should the birds fly after the last sky ?
Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air ?
We will write our names with scarlet steam.
We will cut off the hand of the song to be finished by our flesh.
We will die here, here in the last passage.
Here and here our blood will plant its olive tree. (Godrej 56)

Taken the first part of its title from a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet, the paper attempts to look at the phenomenon "transnationalism" critically by asking questions like who has the privilege to be a transnational?, who can cross borders? and whose nation is it anyway? Transnationalism is a celebrated interdisciplinary field which crosses over the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, geography, political science, law, economics and history, as well as interdisciplinary fields such as international relations, development studies, business studies, ethnic and racial studies, gender studies, religious studies, media and cultural stud-

ies and migration and diaspora studies to comparative literary studies to many others. Transnationalism nowadays is understood as a product or by-product of globalization. It suggests the fraternity over many countries, free movement between them while sugar coating the harsher aspects of the conflicts and competitions between different countries. It also conceptually blurs the hierarchies between countries to different worlds as east and west, privileged and unprivileged, rich and poor, under siege or war. Transnationalism along with similar worlds like cosmopolitanism that have emerged in the post globalised world attempt to smooth over the differences that create unequal power and denial of access to amenities what we term as basic human rights.

The paper attempts to read two Palestinian novels in order to discuss how literary works critique and problematize the high ideals of transnationalism. The paper considers critical engagements with this phenomenon as part of Comparative Literary Studies/ Comparative Literature, a field which has been looking at the politics and global implications of terminologies of this kind. Comparative Literature, a Eurocentric approach like most modern disciplines, has undergone several reformations and rebirths. The intention of this paper is not to define or idealise this concept but rather to de-romanticise it and cautiously point at the dangers of idealising it. The paper draws its theoretical frames from the ideas put forward by critics like Gayathri Spivak, Edward Said, Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova and a few other contemporary comparatists who have brought our attention to the politics of border crossing and to the role of national literature. The paper attempts to take a closer look at the two novels titled *Mornings in Jenin* (2006) and *The Blue between the Sky and the Water* (2015) written by the Palestinian writer Susan Abulhawa, through a theoretical frame borrowed from the above mentioned critics.

Transnationalism is generally understood as sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states. In that sense transnationalism is in several ways connected to globalisation and is also facilitated by improved transportation, technology, telecommunications etc. Greater transnational connections between social groups signify an important index of globalization. (Vertovec 2) Over a period of time, we have learnt to view globalization critically and cautiously, considering the various ways in which the global capital, cultural capital and western hegemonic values play in the process. Therefore, as many critics of globalisation contend "globalization itself has not produced a smooth, borderless, integrated global order." (Vertovec 2) James Rosenau in his work *Distant Proximities: Dynamics beyond Globalization* (2003) opines that globalization is not essentially economic

or political or sociocultural or environmental, rather as all of these, taking the form of multiple, complex, messy proximities and interconnections. In that sense, we should understand transnationalism as a manifestation of globalization, too is multiple, complex and to an extent messy. As a result, it is not free from the clutches of capitalism, the new forms of the empire, market and so on, contrary to the assumption which places transnationalism in an idealised platform and comprehend it as something that does not possess the evils of globalization. The paper is interested to look at how transnational practices are enabled, limited and coloured by all kinds of disparities in power and resources. Just as transnationalism is a manifestation of globalization, its constituent processes and outcomes are multiple and messy too.

Transnationalism is definitely a neighbouring field for an interdisciplinary field like Comparative Literature as many key concepts in the field like World Literature and Cosmopolitanism etc are close to the conceptual terrains of Comparative Literature. Pascale Casanova argues in her work *Literature, Nation and Politics* (1999) that world literature, rather than being a kind of timeless entity where great works from different cultures coexist in harmony, is a field of endless struggle for centrality or domination. Writers from peripheral regions negotiate the unequal power relations between their national traditions and powerful metropolitan centres. (Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature, 329) Any kind of global border crossing in that sense has to be cautious about moving beyond mere assimilation to Western norms on the one hand and a defensive localism on the other. It is interesting to note who faces difficulty in crossing borders. One set of people cross borders legally while the majority attempts to cross borders through visiting visas, boats, by walk.

Gayatri Spivak, in her book *The Death of a Discipline* (2003) addresses how the differences are accounted in border crossing. She writes:

I have remarked above that borders are easily crossed from metropolitan countries, whereas attempts to enter from the so-called peripheral countries encounter bureaucratic and policed frontiers, altogether more difficult to penetrate. In spite of the fact that the effects of globalization can be felt all over the world, that there are satellite dishes in Nepalese villages, the opposite is never true. The everyday cultural detail, condition and effect of sedimented cultural idiom, does not come up into satellite country. (Spivak 16)

Franco Moretti, another comparatist, also alerts us against getting com-

fortable and cozy with terms like World literature. While revisiting Goethe's concept of Weltliteratur, she contends that contemporary literature in terms of a world system that is "one, but unequal." (Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature, XV).

From these, the paper would like to put forward the argument that the present transnational approach privileges the nation, instead of moving beyond it as the term self-proclaims. Who has the privilege to own and disown nation? Whose nation is it anyway? Who can afford to have a nation? And who does not? – The two Palestinian novels are read in light of these questions to see if a Palestinian can afford to be a transnational where he/she doesn't have a nation and is not permitted to move freely even within their place of residence. The two novels written by Susan Abulhawa – *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue between the Sky and the Water* open before us a group of people who have lost the taste of independence and freedom on account of the dream of another's nation. All these narratives shuffle between myth and reality, past and present, and memory and history. Here we see that a nation's presence is preserved through the memories of people while there is a strong institutional and state power which is adamant to remove it from history. A place gets slowly wiped away and it appears with new names on the map, the map being the tool of the powerful. The visual and documentational erasure of a geographical place and its culture through official maps is resisted through tales of compassion and humour, pain and pleasure, death and birth. Here, memory becomes a mode of resistance, a tool to dismantle the institutionalised and biased history.

Mornings in Jenin was originally published with the title *The Scar of David*. It is interesting to note that *Mornings in Jenin* is one of the first mainstream novels in English to explore life in Palestine through 1948 Nakba or cataclysm. The novel tells the story of four generations of the Abulheja family through upheaval and violence in their tranquil village of olive farmers called Ein Hod from 1948 when Israel declares statehood. The novel reads less like a fiction at times as it unceremoniously documents one of the most obdurate political sieges of 20th century. Without much narrative techniques of flashback and foreshadowing, the novel narrates the story of Palestine through the multigenerational story of the Abulheja family. The story opens in a pastoral setting where an entire village of olive farmers gets ready for harvest. Yehya and Basima and their two sons are all set for the harvest. The elder son Hasan is married to Dalia and he has two sons. Amidst the celebrations the first Zionist invasion takes place. The villagers, not strangers to different kinds of colonizations, only wanted to cling on to their land.

"In May 1948, the British left Palestine and Jewish refugees who had been pouring in proclaimed themselves a Jewish state, changing the name of the land from Palestine to Israel. But Ein Hod was adjacent to three villages that formed an unconquered triangle inside the new state, so the fate of Ein Hod's people was joined with that of some twenty thousand other Palestinians who still clung to their homes. They repulsed attacks and called for a truce, wanting only to live on their land as they always had. For they had endured many masters—Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Ottomans, British—and nationalism was inconsequential. Attachment to God, land and family was the core of their being and that is what they defended and sought to keep" (*Mornings in Jenin* 27)

The villagers attempt to reach a truce and decided to prepare a friendly feast as a gesture of friendship to the Jews. However after the feast, Israel broke the truce and started bombing the villages. The people of the village who have been living there for generations are forced to move to a refugee camp in Jenin. In this chaotic shifting, an Israeli soldier named Moshe snatches baby Ismael from the arms of the young mother Dalia Abulheja. The soldier takes the Palestinian child home to his childless wife Jolanta, a Polish Holocaust survivor. Here, baby Ismael grows up as David, an Israeli who will unwittingly hate and fight his own people. The novel documents this contradiction of life as the victim becomes the victimiser as follows:

As the people of Ein Hod were marched into dispossession, Moshe and his comrades guarded and looted the newly emptied village. While Dalia lay heartbroken, delirious with the loss of Ismael, Jolanta rocked David to sleep. While Hasan tended to his family's survival, Moshe sang in drunken revelry with his fellow soldiers. And while Yehya and others moved in anguished steps away from their land, the usurpers sang "Hatikva" and shouted "Long live Israel!" (*Mornings in Jenin*, 39)

The novel is told through the eyes of the younger daughter of Abulheja family, Amal. Although she is the granddaughter of the old village patriarch, she was born in the refugee camp. She lives through losses from the beginning. She loses her loving father who read Arabic verses to her in the camp and her mother who lost her mind in different wars, while she continues to live in different refugee camps. Later, she is shifted to an orphanage and then she goes to the US on a scholarship. After many years, she comes back to Lebanon to meet her brother Yousef. She finds her brother living happily with his wife and kids. She meets her brother's

friend and falls in love with him to get married to him soon. But in Lebanese war she loses everyone except her brother who by then had moved to extremist positions. Amal leaves for the US again to raise her new born daughter. This is when she is visited by an Israeli named David, her lost brother who lived his life as an Israeli. The novel ends when she goes back to her homeland with her daughter where the everyday life is marked with refugee camps, poverty, restriction, and the fear of soldiers, guns, checkpoints and beatings.!

Two threads in this novel are of importance in the analysis as it symbolically represent the predicament of Palestine and Israel. One: Her first brother Yousef, the Palestinian one who turns into a terrorist and gets involved in terrorist activities after his wife and children were brutally murdered in the Lebanese war. The novel portrays the transformation of a compassionate, sober, loving man to an extremist position which is in a way a closer look at terrorism and extremism itself. This in a way could also facilitate a justification on behalf of Israel, how the holocaust victims turned to victimisers. In another subplot, Moshe, the soldier who stole Ismael from his Palestinian parents and committed many crimes against Palestinians, while confessing in his last moments to Ismael/David says: "Mercy was a luxury we could not afford" (277). An adjoining parallel plot is also important as the novel talks about a friendship between Hasan and Ari Perlstein, "the son of a German professor who had fled Nazism early and settled in Jerusalem" (8) as boys before Israel declares statehood. With Ari's father reminding us of Erich Auerbach, Theodor W Adorno and all those Jewish scholars who fled Nazi Germany, the novel talks about this steady and compassionate friendship between the two boys, despite the changing fortunes. "Thus a friendship had been born in the shadow of Nazism in Europe and in the growing divide between Arab and Jew at home, and it had been consolidated in the innocence of their twelve years, the poetic solitude of books, and their disinterest in politics." (9) And years later Hasan reminisces about their friendship to his little daughter Amal saying "He was like a brother."

The second and the most important thread is the predicaments of the two brothers who get estranged- Yousef, the one remained to be brought up as a Palestinian while the other named Ismael gets stolen to be brought up as an Israeli. Here, we get to see the conflictual yet inseparable, bonded from within fraternal relationship which is symbolic of the relationship between Palestine and Israel. The beginning of the novel talks about an accident the baby Ismael meets with which leaves him scarred for his life. It is actually his older brother Yousef who gives Ismael this scar although it was an accident that the baby fell from the four-year-old

Yousef's hands. It is this scar that makes Yousef identify his brother years later. The author, after narrating the accident makes an ominous remark which points to the future: "The physical remnant of that day was a distinctive scar that would mark Ismael's face forever, and eventually lead him to his truth" (22). Years later as while Yousef as a young Palestinian could not move freely and was examined and intimidated by Israeli soldiers at every check point, his brother Ismael/David joins the army like his foster father. Abulhawa vividly narrates the episode when David gets to see his Palestinian brother for the first time when Yousef is captured by David's fellow soldiers. As the superior tells him to come and take a look at a Palestinian who looked like his twin, David knew that he was going to have a proof to the secret he did not know and did not want to know. "He did not want to see that Palestinian again. The one who had his face without a scar" (105) As David is taunted for the similarity in their appearance by his fellow soldiers, he gets into a frenzy of violence, where he beats his brother black and blue. "David slapped the Arab. He struck him next with the butt of his rifle. He knew not why, but now he could not stop." (105) The episode highlights the thin line between the victim and the victimiser and the self-hatred that one carries within.

The second novel too dwells on these dual nature of identities and its subsequent conflicts. It is again a multigenerational tale of a family that takes place in Palestine in post Nakba. *The Blue between Sky and Water* (2015) is set in Gaza, which is often described by many as "the largest open air prison in the world" (*The Blue between Sky and Water ix*). Unlike the first novel which focused on history and memory, the second novel attempts to bank on myths, supernatural events and powers with techniques of magical realism. This story of displacement also discusses issues of rape, survival, loss and belongingness. The novel opens in the historical Palestinian village of Beit Daras in 1947 before the Nakba telling the story of Baraka family. The Baraka family is often the subject of ridicule in the village as Um Mamdouh Baraka, a single mother of three is known for her eccentric behaviour. She is possessed by a spirit named Sulayman. She gets the status of a seer and being respected after she predicts the Israeli invasion. Nazmiyeh, the eldest daughter of Um Mamdouh is beautiful but foul-mouthed. The second is Mariam, who is clairvoyant and has mismatched eyes -- one brown and the other green. Mamdouh is the youngest son of Um Mamdouh.

Things go astray as the Baraka family and many others are forced to flee their village by the Zionist militia just after Nazmiyeh is married to Atiyeh. Nazmiyeh goes back to her village in search of her younger sister Mariam with whom she had a deep connection. Some people who see

her go back warn Nazmiyeh against doing so saying the soldiers could harm her suggesting sexual violence. However, Nazmiyeh is determined to go. She finds her little sister, but soon the two sisters are found by two foreign soldiers. The soldiers rape Nazmiyeh. Nazmiyeh is worried about her sister and bears the pain of rape in silence so that her little sister will not be traumatised. Both soldiers who rape her command her to scream but she does not. They slap her violently. One of the soldiers says to the other he knows how to make her scream and he kills Mariam. The soldiers kill Mariam after they realise that Nazmiyeh as a girl who couldn't be destroyed by rape. Her stone-like severity while getting raped offends the soldiers and they kill her baby sister. This throws light onto the fact that although we understand rape as sexual violence, the reasons behind it are as wide ranging as racial and socio-political domination. The novel highlights how rape is more than a sexual violence and in contexts of this kind. It is not the sexual aspect that often leads to rape as most of the studies on rapes during ethnic violence and wars have shown us. She starts screaming and wailing seeing her little sister dead as the soldiers laugh. She gets raped by many more. Nazmiyeh walks back to life, half alive knowing she will never be fully happy again. She goes back to the refugee camps in the southern shores of Gaza.

Of those who take refuge in Gaza, some migrated to the Gulf and America, while some remain in the refugee camp. The first part of the novel takes place in the refugee camps in Gaza focusing on the lives of those who stayed behind especially the matriarch Nazmiyeh. Nazmiyeh, although heart-broken at the loss of her sister, is a strong-willed woman who tries her best to keep her family together. The second part of the novel brings in the character Nur Valdez Nur, a Palestinian from her father's side and Nazmiyeh's grandniece. Nur has been mostly raised in the foster care in the U.S. and has her own share of miseries which leave her mind wounded. She was neglected by her mother while her step father abused her sexually. Her Palestinian connection is mostly established through the time she spent with her paternal grandfather Mamdouh, Nazmiyeh's brother. Nur, except for her time that she spent with her grandfather did not have any connections to Palestine. The author however states an apparent connection that Nur shared with Palestine as follows:

History took us away from our rightful destiny. But with Nur, life hurled her so far that nothing around her resembled anything Palestinian, not even the dislocated lives of the exiles. So it was ironic that her life reflected the most basic truth of what it means to be Palestinian, dispossessed, disinherited and exiled. That to be alone in the world without a family or

a clan or land or country means that one must live at the mercy of others. There are those who might take pity and those who will exploit and harm. One lives by the whims of the host, rarely treated with the dignity of a person, nearly always put in place. (89)

Nur slowly recovers from all these as she comes to Palestine and its refugee camps to be with her people. She feels at home here although she had never been to Palestine before. Nur's cousin Khaled, a 10-year-old boy, is another main character in the novel. We hear his voice before he is born and after his death. Khaled meets with an accident as he, like many other young boys started smuggling day to day provisions and goods through the tunnel between Gaza and Egypt. His prophetic voice functions as a spiritual connection between the happy old Gaza and the present day refugee camps. Khaled was in the imagination of Mariam as she spoke about him to Nazmiyeh although he is Nazmiyeh's grandson. And after his accident, he was physically present but psychologically absent.

Two important moments in the second novel take us to mull over the paradoxes of identities. The first one is an image or a symbol that gets recurred throughout the novel. It is the image of the mismatched eyes. Nazmiyeh's baby sister Mariam had one eye brown and the other green. Mariam gets killed while Nazmiyeh gets raped brutally by the Zionist soldiers. The mismatched eyes of Mariam appears throughout the novel as a reminder of Palestine's past, its history preserved through memory and myths. Decades later, Nur, with the same mismatched eyes, comes from the US to feel at home in the refugee camps. Nur always hid her mismatched eyes by wearing contact lenses when she lived in the US. Nazmiyeh, seeing the mismatched eyes of Nur finally is at peace. She has been waiting for the reassuring presence of Mariam in her life in some form and she gets it as Nur comes back to her life. She says: "I know you have a hand in this Mariam. I know you are here. You never left." (198) It is Nazmiyeh who stands by Nur when Nur falls in love and gets pregnant by a married man. Nazmiyeh is also seen as someone who does not wear hijab and defends her culture which didn't use it. The novel celebrates memory, belongingness and filiations to commemorate a disappearing nation.

The second moment reminds us of the sundered brothers David and Yousef of the first novel *Mornings in Jenin*. Nazmiyeh, who gets conceived after the incidence of rape, decides to give birth to the child with the support of her husband. Nazmiyeh was terrified to see the same grey eyes of one of the soldier who raped her in her first born. She was reluctant to take care of the child. She cried: "This one is the son of the Devil. Is Allah testing me? How can I love this thing? How do I love the son of a

devil?" (44) It was her husband who asked her to feed and take care of the child. They rear the child along with their other children. The community often murmurs this among themselves and the way the first son looks different. However, the child who was conceived after being raped by the Zionist soldiers grows up to be one of the important leaders of anti-Zionist movement in Gaza. These moments call us to rethink the way in which identities are formed and shaped in the contexts of nationalisms.

It is strange that in the case of Palestine, people who haven't migrated to other places too are experiencing exile. Edward Said, the Palestinian critic and thinker writes about Palestine and exile in his "Reflections on Exile" as follows:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: it's essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever. (Said 173)

Said, as a close observer, an expatriate sympathiser and compassionate advocate of Palestine, reflects on the way we experience exile in the modern world. Said says that the exchanges between nationalism and exilic states create the notions of insiders and outsiders. Historian Beshara Doumani in his recollections of Palestine talks about a song from World War II Haifa. He is unable to archive this ditty which even dates back to times prior to his own birth. He says he cannot remember his father or anyone singing the song. However, he remembers the song in its bits, sung in a Haifa accent which is wiped out of Palestine. He says: "The ditty is a perfectly pristine memory that is ... well...not so memory-like. It must be a miracle memory: a memory of immaculate birth." (Johnson and Shehadeh, 18) Gayatri Spivak, in her book *The Death of a Discipline* argues for the importance of imagination in cross cultural engagements. It is through these coincident meetings between unaccounted memory and imagination that a place like Palestine exists.

It is probably appropriate to turn back to the works of Erich Auerbach, one of the most memorable Jewish intellectual and comparatist of the 20th century at this juncture. The first chapter of his remarkable work *Mimesis: Representations of Reality in Western Literature* (first published in 1946) titled "The Odysseus's Scar" while comparing representations

of reality in the *Old Testament* and Homeric tradition also discusses the shared traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Here in the contexts of the Zionist question, Islamophobia and the role of the United States in connection with Palestine, it is curious that we are reminded of the intuitions of this Jewish intellectual. Written during his refugee years in Istanbul from the Nazi Germany, leaving his university position and all his material possessions, Auerbach wrote *Mimesis* from his memory. Abulhawa's books too, through its tales, highlight the important role memory plays when there is an organised attempt from the part of institutionalised history writing to erase the existence of some peoples/cultures. The paper is an attempt to rethink whether transnationalism or similar concepts enable those in the margins to leave behind their marginality and cross borders freely as it claims or does it deepen the discriminations and push them further to the margins and borders.

The covid-19 hit world is probably the best context to critique the high ideals of transnationalism and globalization. The year 2020 locked us in our own homes, making us aware of every single border we have in our everyday life, which we normally wipe away superficially or pretend to ignore. We experience the fear of shortages of provision, we panic-shop and we worry about the weak, the unwell, the kids and the aged. And the only thing that lets us cope with this is the hope that it is soon going to end and we will get back to normal life. Weeks before all these lockdowns and restrictions, we saw world leaders meet to assure cooperation, alliances between countries. Can transnationalism address closed borders, cancelled flight services, restricted entry, and exclusive admission of any kind? But here we are living a Palestinian life, without the expertise they have managed to amass and without the courage they have mustered out of their long years of blockage.

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A Case of Food and Self in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "Affair"

Priyanka Sharma

Abstract

Food and food related activities forms a major part of a person's everyday life. The constant perusal of food centric choices and habits reaffirms our personal and cultural identity. For an immigrant the most proximate sign of culture and comfort space is food. It is empirical to acknowledge how writers deploy food as a literary element to negotiate the self. Food studies have recently emerged as an important discourse in analyzing a literary text. It encourages an understanding of intricate familial bond and inter-personal connections. This paper analyzes ways in which food and the self are deployed across this oeuvre.

Keywords: Culture; Food; Identity; Self; Space.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) is a debut collection of the author's ravishingly beautiful short stories. The stories are skillfully crafted to explore the spaces of disempowerment in an immigrant's life and display accounts woven with profound sentiments. As one of the early writings of Divakaruni, it explores the institution of marriage in the lives of immigrant women. The women protagonists in her works sense a conflict to abide by the old beliefs or be a spokesperson of a conscious self. Divakaruni lays bare the crucial issues that affect the lives of her characters in form of attitudes, customs and nature. Her work "Affair" casts Abha's journey out of her cocoon, a confined self.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni through her character stands consistently against the vulnerability and suppression as faced in daily mundane lives. Her primary focus remains on the nature of change in itself rather than a big change in society or an ideology. "Affair" explores the life of Abha as a subject who evolves with a sincere consciousness and discovers a personal identity distinct from the roles ascribed to her by the community and society. Banerjee reveals a connection between food and Abha's life, com-

bating her feeling of loneliness the character makes use of food to ensure her survival in a house where she feels no harmony. The recurrent trope of food assumes a language of its own, Annie Hauck-Lawson calls it "the food voice" (24). Hauck's concept of "food voice" takes form of a research tool to examine various aspects of an individual identity.

The notion of identity can be understood through the protean term self. Self of a person refers to his idea or concept about his/herself, which is a result of the society one lives in, culture one is subjected to and behavior one engages in. Self-identities are the "labels people use to describe themselves" (Biddle et al. 326). The introspection about identity becomes important as it results in a strong premise to understand the character and persona in texts of literary nature.

Literary critics who engage in a criticism about food understand that the food is employed in poems, plays and novels to "explain the complex relationship between the body, subjectivity, and social structures regulating consumption" and authors employ food in their writing because "they are usually telling the reader something important about the narrative, plot, characterization, motives, and so on" (Fitzpatrick 122). Ashis Nandy's article "The Changing Popular Culture of Indian Food: Preliminary Notes" (2004) explores the idea relating to cuisine, dining, consumption, health, taste, authenticity and much more in Indian context. Ketu Katrak, an Indian American cultural critic in her essay "Food and Belonging: At 'Home' and in 'Alien' Kitchens" (1997) speaks of nostalgia in narratives that provokes memories of the home country. This autobiographical essay speaks of food as an experience that locates emotional depths of Katrak.

Food studies came to be a serious field of study in 1970s, works of structuralism, sociologists and anthropologists provided grounds for it to establish its critique. Although Food studies is an interdisciplinary field of subject and does not owe its existence to any specific method. It rather works on research agendas and discourse analysis. The critiques have turned to food in order to understand the relationship between individual and society. The theories reflect the importance of food in literature, how food emerges as a lens to see the micro and the macro spaces in a multi-cultural world.

A study devoted to explore the place of food in literature in order to understand cultural continuum has some unique challenges and possibilities for an inquiry relating to society and individual. The study of food typically falls under the purview of sociology and anthropology, believing it has a mere material value, and is still not widely read or acknowledged

from a literary point of view.

The selection of fiction in the genre of short story adds a focused view to the content. Such works can be finished in a go and they present an in-depth scope for interpretation as does any other form of genre in literary framework. There is a fair access to locate the voices in short stories, even though in its brevity, it offers complexity. In the blog "From novels to short stories", James Aitcheson, an acclaimed novelist writes "The short story is more technical, more succinct; it requires greater precision of language and phrasing. Every word matters. What is not said can be just as important as that which is made explicit." Through the selection of this genre, the study would be better able to probe the ideas on cuisine, culture and identity.

Ruth Maxey in her chapter "Mangoes and Coconuts and Grandmothers': Food in Transatlantic South Asian Writing" quotes Graham Huggan that "India... is more available than ever for consumption; and more prevalent than ever are the gastronomic images through which the nation is to be consumed" (1). She also notes that the "tropes of food and eating" especially "in a familial setting" shows mark of cultural productions where "food has become a means of depicting south Asian Diasporic" lives (1).

"Affair" takes up the narrative of a woman who is reserved and passive. Abha is at a midpoint in her life where she shares a loveless marriage with her husband Ashok. Her marriage leaves her no agency on her life. To perform the role of a wife, she puts aside her own self and resorts to a personality that is passive, indecisive, and dependent. Abha's journey of self discovery is associated with food on various levels. Food is a part of her journey through out as if a partner in itself. It's a support, an emotion and a career prospect that helps Abha to cross the boundary of a constrained arranged marriage.

The connection between food and Abha illustrates series of events that makes her realize what she truly wants from her life. Since the very beginning of the story, Divakaruni brings in the phenomenon of housekeeping and the kitchen space to the fore. The opening is dramatic and food centric, "I WAS IN THE KITCHEN CHOPPING VEGETABLES FOR DIN-ner when I found out about it" (231). Ashok tells her about her dear friend Meena's affair. Abha feels enraged to hear the news from Ashok. Ashok intends to mock her all the time and chides her for her "prudish Indian upbringing" (234). Abha's marriage to Ashok has turned so toxic that in the fit of the moment, "The knife slipped and nicked my finger. I watched the blood appear as though from nowhere, dyeing the meticulously sliced

carrots a deeper orange (231)".

Abha feels betrayed; she busies herself in the kitchen with "chopping onions" so that she'd have "a valid reason for tears" (232). Ashok won't disclose who the lover of Meena is. Food in Abha's life functions as vectors of resentment. The culinary images and scenes negotiate with the persona of Abha and communicate her subjectivity. "Angrily I dumped a couple of extra teaspoons of red pepper powder into the chicken curry. Hot food gives Ashok the most terrible heartburn" (233).

Michael Camille mentions Foucault's quote from his work *History of Sexuality* that, "Never did sexuality enjoy a more immediately natural understanding and never did it know a greater felicity of expression" (58). The story mentions in detail the journey of Abha accepting herself and her body. She believes that, "Even under the best of circumstances I am no beauty" (235). She doesn't have fair skin, or curly black hair or long lashes. Abha is suspicious that her husband is the one with whom Meena has an affair with, she even dreams of them having sex. The next day, she, Ashok, Meena and Shrikant, Meena's husband meet at a party. Ashok and Meena dance seductively together, to which Abha gets upset. Abha displays a glimpse of self care when she buys a night dress for herself. She wears the peach robe, puts some lipstick on, sprays Chanel no. 5 on herself, slips in a pair of high heels, and pairs them with a pair of dangly crystal earrings (258). Abha nourishes herself with this getting ready ritual. She feels confident and that self love is heightened when Shrikant knocks at her door and acknowledges that she looks nice when she meets him. Abha remodels herself into a more confident woman who is about to completely find out what she wants from her life.

Abha would occasionally freelance, write recipes for Indian papers. Indian culture is reinforced in the foreign land with Asha's cooking. She prepares "chicken curry", "rogan josh", "pista kulfi". The Indian Courier, a paper approaches her to compile a cookbook. For which Abha would be "visiting the restaurants, sampling the menu, choosing the best dishes for the book, observing how they are prepared, and writing a simplified version suited to the western lifestyle and plate" (253). She goes for a lunch with the editor of the paper, Suren. At first the idea of having lunch with a man other than her husband is not comforting to her. But slowly she realizes what a gentleman he is and she rather enjoys her time with him.

In the final section of the story, we get a glimpse of Abha's new found self. She gets to find out that Meena's affair is not with her husband. Even so, she decides to leave him to pursue a career as a chef:

Sitting on the guest bed now in a house that had never, for all its comforts, been my home, I closed my eyes and tried to see my new life- not as I wanted but as it really would be. Struggling to maneuver enormous skillets and saucepans and tandoor ovens in a vast, dark kitchen with the smell of old grease heavying the air, amid the heat and the sweat and the curse words of the rushing waiters. Living in a one-room apartment above some garage where on my off days I heated soup over burner. (271)

Abha writes a letter to Ashok where she confesses her feeling about their marriage. There was no hope left in their relationship and it was becoming bitter with each passing day. She writes, "Its better this way, each of us freeing the other before it's too late... so we can start learning, once more, to live" (271-72).

Literary works of fiction have the perfect ingredient to make its content culturally authentic. The use of Food trope in the works helps to locate - identity of characters, communities and cultures, authenticity and assimilation, power relations and so on. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's short story "Affair" has rich descriptions of culture, eating manners, culinary practices, choices and ever changing tastes.

The eventually failed marriage and separation at the end of the story suggest that even though for most women it is not easy to step beyond the socially constructed barriers and sexual vulnerability, some find courage and passion to seek a self that is absolute and who is able to practice agency. Abha finds a high plane of understanding and consciousness. There are glimpses given by the author that Abha has changed. She is now ready to face the raw and grave life, full of challenges and hard work. Having restored the strength to pursue her dream of working as a chef, she can begin anywhere anew and afresh. She has finally able to pose a response against the conditioned functioning of women according to the world.

Her life has been a case of chicken curry against Dominos. She is a wonderful cook, is able to prepare delicacies, but her husband rather chooses to order out, a pizza with sausage and mushroom topping. Her heart aches to see her effort go futile as her curry sits uneaten on the kitchen counter. (237)

Anita Mannur in her work *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture* quotes "Edible Ecriture" by Terry Eagleton, "If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food - it is endlessly interpretable - materialized emotion". She notes that *Mistress of Spices*, a novel by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni overflows with aroma and passion of Indian Spices

(107). Indeed Chitra Banerjee's most works makes use of Food apropos. More such examples are *Oleander Girl*, "Meeting Mrinal", "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter", "The Blooming Season of Cacti" and etc.

The wide culinary imagery evoked in the story offers insight into the diasporic subjectivity. It frames and navigates the cultural continuum. The fictiveness of such writings paves access to understand immigrant life and foodways. It engages the readers with authentic cultural details and weaves a palatable narrative. Food studies is not bound by any discipline, it is free and abstract. In the story "Affair" the study of food elements agrees with the journey of self discovery of the character Abha. The ample precision paid to the culinary idiom and descriptions of everyday activities and encounters of food projects a story large enough to absorb the emotions, issues and conditions of a woman protagonist struggling to find an individualist access to life.

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Problems and Challenges of English Language Teaching and Learning in the Colleges of Arunachal Pradesh

Eli Doye

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the issues related to the problems and challenges of teaching and learning English language as a second language in the colleges of Arunachal Pradesh. The quality of English language teaching and learning in these colleges is apparently disappointing. Students just managed to get through their examinations without trying to understand the language and appreciate their value. Poor language proficiency, inadequate language learning, lack of language teachers at foundation level, lack of communicative environment, traditional teaching methods, dearth of infrastructures, etc. are some of major concerns that deter the teaching and learning of quality English language in the state. If all these problems discussed hereunder are addressed to and proper measures are taken teaching as well as learning process of English language in the colleges may improve significantly.

Keywords: English Language Teaching; Language-learning; Methodology; Phonology.

Introduction

This article proposes to provide a profile of teaching and learning process of English language status and situation, problems and challenges, the remedial measures and needs of English language learners or students studying in the colleges of Arunachal Pradesh. It also explored and examined the whys, whats and wherefores of the English as a language of potential in the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual social context existing in the state.

English language in Arunachal Pradesh is used as a second language.

But it is also the contact and official language in the state. It is the language which is commonly used in schools, colleges, universities and other institutes of learning. Moreover, in academic discussions or meetings such as seminars, conferences, workshops and trainings, it is widely used. The communications in radio, TV and print media, English is extensively used.

Objectives

- To study and understand the problems and challenges of English language and existing teaching and learning process in government colleges of Arunachal Pradesh.
- To suggest measures to solve the identified problems and challenges of ELT.

Methodology

This paper is an outcome of a qualitative study carried out among the English learners and English teachers. The universe of study for this research work is the assessment of the problems and challenges of English and its teaching and learning process in the colleges of Arunachal Pradesh. In order to overcome certain limitations and provide a comprehensive outcome, the study was restricted to two government colleges located in the Itanagar Capital complex. It covers the study of attributes, qualities and understanding of the students of English and English teachers towards understanding, learning and application of English. The tools used to collect the data from the respondents included – (i) questionnaire and (ii) interview schedule. The data had been collected on random basis. Since it is the study of ground reality, the assessment is based mainly on primary data collected from the students and teachers which was supplemented by available secondary sources. In order to assess variability of perceptions based on class factors, the responses have been divided into four categories: (i) BA I Semester, English Compulsory students, (ii) BA III Semester, English Elective students, (iii) BA V Semester, English Major students and (iv) English teachers. In addition to the tools mentioned above, personal interviews and informal discussion were also done to supplement and check on the validity of the data collected. Students from each semester and English teachers from two colleges were randomly selected for purpose of this-study.

Problems of English Language Teaching & Learning

People inhabiting this easternmost part of Himalayan state of India are thinly populated multi-ethnic hill tribes. Linguistically, they speak

different dialects and languages and come under the Tibeto-Burman family. Compared to other states of India, education has started very late in Arunachal Pradesh. And it started with English as a medium of instruction right from the primary level onwards. Hence, students know well the functional value of English for its employability and for all day-to-day activities. They know it well that having a better command of English language will give them an edge on any competitive examinations and interviews in future. Therefore, one who chooses teaching, medical, IT, salesmanship, legal, banking professions, etc. as their career, obviously need to have a better command over English language. Further, those students who wish to go outside the state or abroad for Higher Studies or for jobs understand the value and significance of spoken English. The pertinent question that needs urgent attention is "Does the present English language teaching and learning provide enough opportunities to the students of Arunachal Pradesh to equip themselves for all these needs?"

Some of the problems related to English language teaching and learning in the government colleges are discussed below:

Phonological Problems

One of the problems of English learners is in phonology. There is difference in the correct sound of a word and the sound represented by its letters. So learners have to know the actual sounds from English teacher. Unfortunately, most of the English teachers do not have ELT qualifications or trained in phonetics. Many words are misspelt by the students as they are unaware of the English sound systems and International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) of various English words such as *ache, aisle, alumni, amateur, blackguard, bough, buffet, bury, colonel, conch, cough, coup, cupboard, debris, debt, debut, epitome, fugue, heir, impugn, imprimatur, invitation, island, mortgage, rapport, receipt, solder, tough, viscount, victuals*, etc. English spoken by them is not in accordance with International Phonetic Alphabets or Received Pronunciation (RP). Mispronunciation of English words, substitution of English sounds with corresponding mother tongues, faulty accents, omission of main words unstressed in connected speech, incorrect stress and intonation, etc. are some reasons that led to their unintelligibility to others.

Some English sounds which are difficult for them are:

- (i) Majority of students do not maintain the distinction between /I/ or /i:/. So they use /I/ for /i:/ or /i:/ for /I/. Such substitution results in their inability to make a distinction between Fit /fIt/ & Feat /fi:t/ and Filled /fIld/ & Field /fi:ld/, etc.

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- (ii) Again many of them replace /æ/ with /e/. This substitution creates confusion in pairs of words like Man /mæn/ & Men /men/ and Sand /sænd/ & Send /send/, etc.
 - (iii) Many use /ɔ/ instead of /ɑ:/. Thus, All /ɔ:l/ is pronounced as /ɔ/ and Ball /bɔ:l/ is pronounced as /bɔl/.
 - (iv) Phoneme /ʒ/ as a consonant is pronounced differently with difficulty. It is generally substituted by /s/ or /z/ as in words such as *measure, pleasure, treasure, garage* and *mirage*, etc.
 - (v) Fricatives such as /θ/ and /ð/ cannot be articulated properly. These phonemes are substituted with [th] and [d]. Hence, word *themselves* is mispronounced as *damsels* and *they* is mispronounced as *day*.
 - (vi) Usually students use unaspirated [p], [t] and [k] for aspirated [p^h], [t^h] and [k^h] respectively at the beginning of accented syllable. Thus, the word *paper* whose correct pronunciation is [p^heɪpə] according to native English speakers is wrongly pronounced [pepr] by majority of students.
 - (vii) In Received Pronunciation (R.P.), /r/ is pronounced only before a vowel, that is, /r/ is not pronounced if a consonant comes after it. But students pronounced it in their articulation even if a consonant comes after it.

Grammatical / Syntactical Problems

- (i) '-s' or '-es' are always used for verbs which come after the third person singular numbers.
e.g. (i) Harry plays football, (ii) He does not like to play football.
- (ii) Main verbs that come after 'be' verbs such as 'do', 'does' and 'did' in the interrogative sentences are written in past form.
- (iii) Infinitive 'to' and preposition 'to' and their difference are often confused and misunderstood.
- (iv) Many prepositions are used at wrong place in the sentence. Often it is omitted where necessary and used where unnecessary leading to errors in sentence.
e.g. (a) We should pray God everyday.
(b) The boy resembles to his father.
- (v) There are words without their plural forms such as *administration*,

advice, furniture, hair, help, information, knowledge, scenery, water, weather, etc. but many students wrongly write them in plurals.

(vi) Adverbs are inserted where unnecessary.

e.g. (a) He briefly glanced at his mobile phone.

(b) I am completely exhausted.

(c) I hate you! she screamed angrily.

(vii) Repeating same ideas using different words in a sentence.

e.g. The board at last came to a final conclusion.

(viii) Rules of transformation of sentences is also a difficult area for many Arunachal students. They commit a lot of mistakes here too.

Lack of Proper Steps to Augment Spoken English

In the whole academic curriculum at the undergraduate levels, no proper steps have been made to augment spoken English as a distinct language skill necessary to be taught to the students. Unfortunately, syllabus design utterly neglects the spoken part of English. It has stressed more on written and reading skills relegating the other two skills especially speaking skill of the students. There is no 'connection' or 'horizontal integration' of different language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing in the syllabus. Non-inclusion of spoken English in the college curriculum and their resultant absence in the textbooks or study materials is a big disadvantage that has created barrier in the entire process of teaching and learning of spoken English. As a result of such shortcoming, no effort is given to test the student's proficiency in this area. Consequently, both teacher and the pupils are not obliged to seriously consider spoken English as an essential part of teaching or learning of English language in Arunachal Pradesh.

Lack of Training Facility for the English Teacher

Teachers of Arunachal Pradesh as a whole do not have better chance and accessibility to undergo proper training courses necessary to boost their language proficiency. Their English is based on their own individual academic backgrounds and tastes, and their students learn to imitate the same English from them and eventually develop the same variety of English. Majority of English teachers in the colleges of Arunachal Pradesh are not trained teachers with ELT specialisation. Moreover, there is no training

institute either like the Regional Institute of Education (RIE) or capacity building or training centres like the Central Institute of English and Foreign Language (CIEFL) in the state. Further, there is no specific provision or facility for English teachers to undergo training in such centres and institutes located in other parts of India. Thus, only few English teachers could avail the opportunity to train themselves in CIEFL through their personal initiatives and interest.

Lack of English Teachers in Schools

One of the biggest problems and challenges of teaching and learning of English language in the state is due to lack of English teachers in most schools in rural primary schools. Any teacher without English subject background teaches English to the students. Without proper base on English in their school years, these students confront enormous difficulty while learning English in colleges and universities.

Dearth of Teaching Equipment

Teaching of spoken English requires certain teaching equipment such as language laboratory, voice recorder, smart board, etc. and use of ICT in the classroom. Teacher is supposed to be facilitated with minimum equipment like pen drives, disks, etc. which can be used in the classroom. But there is acute dearth of such equipment in almost all institutions of the state. As a result, the English teachers become helpless not only in terms of their overall teaching plan but are bound to sideline the spoken aspect of the language in the process. These teachers confined mostly to teaching literature and grammar in their day-to-day classroom teachings.

Distinct Socio-cultural Milieu

Arunachal Pradesh is one such state in India where there is diversity of ethnic groups having their own dialects. The students of the colleges belong to diverse tribal groups having different social and cultural backgrounds. There is minimum opportunity to use English in their interaction and communications as all students do not understand the English and almost every student speak their own mother tongues or the Hindi language for better understanding. There is apparent lack of favourable milieu for English speaking students. As a result, the opportunity to speak English is very limited for the students. Moreover, there is a wrong treatment towards the students who speak English as majority of students consider

it irrelevant to use spoken English in their usual communications. Such behavioural attitude towards English speaking students is also one of the hindrances that create difficulty in learning the language.

Use of Hindi as the Lingua Franca

Unlike other northeastern states, Hindi is widely spoken by almost all tribes in Arunachal Pradesh although it is not the correct Hindi spoken by the people of northern Indian states. And obviously, it is true in case of college students as well. One of the reasons is the lack of one common regional language in the state. Since the state has a heterogeneous multilingual society, all people both old and young converse in Hindi whether it is in the offices, markets, etc. Even in schools and colleges, Hindi is predominantly used as medium of communication by the students and teachers. As such Hindi has become a kind of lingua franca in the state. Such a use of Hindi as a common communicative language among all tribes has relegated the use of spoken English to the background.

Traditional and Inappropriate Teaching Methods

The method of teaching English in the colleges has been the stereotyped and commonplace translation method, and its efficacy in increasing the proficiency of students' language is being questioned nowadays. Language teaching aimed not just to enable the students learn the four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, but also to allow them to speak the language effectively and meaningfully. Many teachers are unaware of basic purpose of teaching a language. They teach the recommended books and edify the knowledge and information included in the textbooks only without giving the students language skills. Though Hindi is used as a lingua franca, English language plays a significant role as it is the official language used in all written mode of communications. Therefore, proficiency in English language becomes very useful and the proficient ones are well appreciated by all. Nevertheless, the language skills achieved by the students of English in colleges are still very low and much more is required to be done for its improvement.

Teacher-Centred Classes

A very common problem noticed in the teaching of English language in the state is related to the teacher themselves who are highly active while students are highly passive in the classes. One of the reasons is because many

teachers do not create interactive classes. They do not interact with students to facilitate improvement and enhancement of their communication skills. They just teach them what is given in the syllabus, share notes and study materials on the topics of the syllabus and wrapped up their teaching. Such type of classes compelled students to solely rely on teachers for their studies which thereby restricted their understanding and retarded their interactive and language learning ability.

Condition of the Classrooms

The size of the classrooms in the colleges is by far very large, so proper participation in different class works like interaction, discussion and other class activities are nearly impracticable. The student-teacher ratio is not proportionate in the colleges. Overcrowded classrooms do not permit the teachers to give individual attention to the students which again is also one of the hurdles in teaching-learning process of English language in Arunachal Pradesh.

Flawed Examination System

The kind of examinations conducted to assess students' knowledge and understanding of English is flawed one and it needs proper reorientation in consistent with the changing times. Examinations are conducted not to test the knowledge acquired, analytical ability and creative skills of the students but it is done just to test their capacity to memorise the answers or to judge their parrot-like knowledge. As a result, they just memorise some important concepts and topics and reproduce them in their examinations. Thus, their answers are devoid of any originality and creativity.

Suggestions & Conclusion

Considering the significant roles played by the English as official language in Arunachal Pradesh, greater and consistent endeavours may be put into practice in order to develop the teaching-learning process of the language. Whatever minimum teaching methods, teaching materials and other facilities given for ELT, if any in the colleges are negligible and utterly unsatisfactory. These need to be looked into, revised and improved as per the needs and requirements of the learners. People at university and college who plan and frame the course curriculum need to take into consideration the ground reality of the college classrooms before coming out with the curriculum meant for their

students. The identification and recognition of the students' needs in learning English language should be a significant consideration while designing the course curriculum. In view of the multi-linguistic situation of Arunachal Pradesh, proper opportunity to use spoken English in day to day communications may be created along with the use of vernacular dialects and Hindi. Since English language is essential and considered very effective to get lucrative jobs and to pursue higher studies in any part of the world, English language teaching and learning should be focused upon enhancing language skills in English and also to secure better marks in competitive job examinations. Hence, it is well suggested that the students in colleges should be taught language skills for correct and effective communication. The English course may be framed in such a way as to allow students to use the rules of the language in day-to-day communications and situations and thereafter to permit them to face any kind of communicative situation in their lives with courage and confidence. It is a fact that despite having introduced English language since primary level itself in the state, the students continue to confront difficulty in the language which is clearly manifested in low level of fluency in spoken English and poor grammatical or syntactical knowledge in terms of sentence constructions.

The teacher, the students, the books and the physical surroundings are the four discernible and tangible factors involved and required in classroom teaching and learning process. So while framing the course curriculum, the designers should seriously emphasize these four factors for purpose of achieving desirable goal which is to allow the students to communicate fluently in English and write correctly. For this a teacher having specialisation in ELT may be recruited for all colleges and the prevailing system of allowing any English literature teacher without ELT specialisation to teach English language may be changed. In addition to these, a wiser step would be to appoint English teachers against all government primary schools of rural areas where foundation of learners start and developed.

The main aim of teaching English language is to bring about a shift from exercise level of language learning in the classroom to experimental level in world outside. Accordingly, proper language learning need to be initiated inside the classroom and the teachers should produce real world situations in the classroom by inviting experts of English language to freely communicate with the students in the classroom from time to time. Students should also be genuinely motivated to keep themselves abreast of the real world through various academic programmes shown in TV and other means. Further, English teachers should motivate their English students to be interactive and communicate in English especial-

ly among themselves both inside and outside their classrooms. With extra care and diligence, English teachers should transmit various subtle qualities of spoken English at least intermittently in a week as a remedial class. In fact, this kind of spoken English class may be created in student-friendly or learner-centric environment. Students should be motivated to engage themselves in participative learning and make the whole teaching-learning process a two-way or multi-way process. It will not only ensure learner-friendly atmosphere for students but will let them participate more and learn more.

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The Self as Other: Estrangement in/ and the City in Neel Mukherjee's *A Life Apart*

Pooja Sharma

Abstract

Neel Mukherjee's first novel *A Life Apart/ Past Continuous* (2008) is a lofty 400-page literary endeavour that delves into a person's entanglements of illegal migratory experience and his/ her place in society. The crucial purpose of the novel in literary writings highlights the concept of the self as the other, by following the life of the protagonist in a city. City Narratives studies have recently emerged as an important discussion in examining the social processes whereby an individual intersects and interacts with the city, creating a connection with it. Set in the "city of joy", Calcutta, the chosen novel probes the feeling of estrangement experienced by the protagonist's emotional, cultural, and social self and with such factors as migration – hence, marginalization – contributing to it.

Keywords: Estrangement; Homelessness; Marginalization; Migration; Nostalgia.

Neel Mukherjee is a contemporary Indian writer who has published critically-acclaimed novels such as *Past Continuous* (published in 2008 in India) which was re-published in the UK as *A Life Apart* (2010), *The Lives of Others* (2014) and *A State of Freedom* (2017). Calcutta-born and London-based Mukherjee's writing offers contemplations on the universal themes of misery, alienation, dislocation, displacement, with respect to life in the heart of India's "city of joy", by exploring the city's underbelly in all its gory details. His works delve into the multitude of probabilities staring at people in the scuffle for a better life, even as those (his works) simultaneously open up the layers of the political, economic and social realities of life around his characters. His fiction and non-fiction, both, ingeniously sketch the depths and formations that the lives of people (can) assume through their own actions, ranging from a harsh defiance to a calm escape, from a tactical positioning of oneself to a rash renouncing of the self, com-

posed with unrelenting honesty. Rakes Sarkar too mirrors such a picture of the marginalized and presents the murky reality of the city of Calcutta in his thesis entitled '*Exploring the Interface.....*', as follows:

The world of illegal migrants in England, the conflicts and dilemmas of sexual marginalization, the flow and flowering of histories in terms of both inheritance and endurance make this novel all the more rich with the possibilities of being situated within the interface of marginality, power and resistance. (24)

By better understanding the role of emotional responses and their connection with urban forms of living, we can begin to understand marginalization, alienation and the concept of self as the other towards influencing individual lives. The novel also entails an understanding of how an individual develops the narratives of his/ her city that provide social and cultural significance through meaning of place and space, for stories are a means of symbolic politics that can be used for building the city as a brand. The Paper is, therefore, an analysis of how the nexus of escapism, racial discrimination, exploitation, violence, memory and the past tap into the protagonist's self via the city.

A Life Apart is set in the 1990s and deals with the protagonist's MA year in Oxford as well as his experience of illegal migration which sees him being treated as marginalized, alienated and as an 'other' in a Western society. The 400-page literary endeavour portrays a modern India through the lens of a young man, Ritwik, who escapes a ruined adolescence of wretchedness and maltreatment in Calcutta by turning into a homosexual in an estranged land at the age of twenty one. Memories play a big role in the novel during which the protagonist associates the memories of the past to the present. The novel is verbose and operatic in prose. Kunal Sen reviews it thus: 'The language in the novel is consistently spectacular and it's a great piece of meta-fiction with a great concept and focused on aesthetics. This is sweeping, ambitious, but it's also an intimate, doll-house of a work.'

Mukherjee presents Ritwik's dislike of the poisonous ventilation system of Calcutta, with its huge and messy traffic and a seriously insanitary environment. The demise of his mother is a huge loss for him at his age. His tale thus takes shape as a narrative of loss that frames Ritwik's risky and insecure life, lacking in certitude. The other characters in the novel too are more or less condemnatory of the blood relationships in their own ways. Ritwik plays the role of an alien for whom the land also becomes alien when he shifts from Calcutta to Oxford. Mukherjee is thus concerned

with racial issues as well when everyone at Oxford makes fun of Ritwik's brown skin as also his use of the English language and accent, thus pushing him outside of the mainstream.

The novelist posits the main character as a disgruntled young man and representative of the deadening realities of Calcutta. In the beginning of the novel, Ritwik is at the *Kalighat* crematorium for his mother's funeral. He was not present for the cremation rites for his father which took place only a few days ago, but had to perform what he had so wilfully avoided some days back. We find him contemptuous of his social group and calls them a 'parliament of vultures' that had been "gathering for the last week to circle around that one death when it looked as if it could suddenly, thrillingly, jump up to two. Their piously suppressed excitement provided a tight murmur in the background, like the muffled buzzing of bees: grief offered such a delicious peek into the minutiae of other people's lives". (*A Life...*, 4)

The story of Ritwik who, after the death of his parents, moves from Calcutta to Oxford to study for an MA in English Literature, throws light on his varied experiences of estrangement and alienation. When his student visa expires, he continues to remain in the UK and starts residing with illegal migrants and sex workers, working without a permit. His story has a contradiction in that of Miss Gilby, which occupies almost half of the novel and is a re-writing of Rabindranath Tagore's *Ghare Baire* (or *The Home and the World*). As the English teacher for Bimala, the wife of an Indian landowner, Miss Gilby attempts to amalgamate into the Indian community; but, in the wake of the Independence movement, she is the first victim of nationalist violence. The story of Ritwik's transformation - from a young man to illegal migrant to homosexual - exposes a blotched picture of society. The novel justly delineates the immigrant's position within the society both in his country of origin and that of arrival. Both at home and abroad, he is and remains an alien.

Ritwik's recollections of his memories of squalor and sexual abuse, domestic violence and discrimination, cast an ominous shadow on his present life exposing the lack of love from his mother. This is seen to make it difficult for him to mingle with other people and causes in him a heavy feeling of isolation. Ritwik did not want to live in filth and dirt like his father who was not able to escape the drudgery of it all. He wanted a different life and so left the city and the country. The plot thus raises the subject of the act of transatlantic migration in a bid to flee from an oppressive and suffocating (city) life.

Cultural alienation plays a vital role in the novel. Ritwik is culturally alienated in a foreign country. When he loses his citizenship there and starts to look for ways to make ends meet and - more importantly - to keep his body and soul together, he comes face to face with fear, hunger, misery and suffering Mukherjee pertinently brings out the experience of homelessness experienced by the protagonist. In a comprehensive sense, alienation is used to indicate sentiments of detachment from the rest of the community, elimination from political life and a sense of absence of meaning in one's own existence. Besides cultural alienation, social alienation also marks Ritwik who picks up unknown people for sex in the public toilets in Oxford, and gradually forays into homosexuality.

The novel thus opens up layers of displacement, isolation and alienation. If spatial terms are given attention, we have not only one but double displacement: first from Calcutta to Oxford, and then from Oxford to London. In both the new places, Ritwik is assailed by the perpetual fear of getting lost. His 'home' is first the college room, which he describes both as a paradise and a cell, and then with Anne Cameron, an old British woman, whose decadent house in London provides him a shelter of sorts from the harshness of immigrant life. So, here Cameron functions as a sort of contemplative centre of the novel. On the one hand, her condition of social oblivion and alienation is the same as that of Ritwik. For the latter, however, denial and reminiscence mark the association with his city of beginning. Delineating the shape of migration and the perception of estrangement in Calcutta, Suchetana Chattopadhyay, in her article "War, Migration and Alienation in Colonial Calcutta..." (2007), talks about Calcutta's urban social environment, the sources of self-alteration and the political shift apparent in the city throughout the 1910s and views the movement from the rural to the urban through the prism of migration.

Calcutta can also be seen in countless memories as a city characterized by either dust or monsoon floods and, above all, by decadence and sickness. Mukherjee's extremely graphic prose conveys all the disdain that Ritwik feels for his hometown and his final decision not to go back there. Sometimes, the British weather reminds him of the Calcutta monsoon and makes him dewy-eyed. This is reminiscent of how Amit Chaudhuri's *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013) makes 'place' a complex character. Chaudhuri creates a portrait of Calcutta to explore and challenge prevailing literary and artistic concepts of modernity. Sukhdev Sandhu in 'Calcutta: Two Years in the City by Amit Chaudhuri- review' states that Chaudhuri considers the reader a city possessed of a 'self-renewing way of seeing, of inhabiting space, of apprehending life.' The reader is taken through green avenues and derelict alleyways; introduced to intellectuals,

Marxists, members of the declining haute bourgeoisie, street vendors and domestic workers too. The portrayal of the city as a character, inspiration, childhood, and nostalgia, runs in tandem with the ideas presented in Stuti Khanna's book entitled *Writing the City.....* (2020) as well, especially in showing how the city becomes a silent spectator in individual works of literature.

Mukherjee's novel deals with the issue of marginalization as the process of disempowering or eliminating a group or class of people who are taken as less important or downgraded to a secondary position and are clustered together as second class citizens. For Ritwik, it is a case of double jeopardy for he is not an insider at home and always an outsider abroad. Apala Saha's article "The Kolkata Imageries..." (2017) argues that:

..... an association with the 'city has been circumstantial for the fittest (who could manage prolonged survival). Just by virtue of the fact that nobody belongs to the city, the city belongs to everybody. One always forgets that the city itself has, or rather develops, a perception of its own; the city is not what it is, but what it emerges to be. The inhabitants characterize the city that interacts with them. As more and more people become part of the city, its character evolves and so does that of its people. This is what time does to the city. Space finds character and meaning through the imaginings of those who are the current inhabitants of urban life and are the images of the same. (25-26)

Ritwik remained on the fringes in England. His passing away in a foreign land ironically becomes the disastrous high point of his long-lasting marginalization which had steadily widened to assimilate him fully. Even his book about Miss Gilby has a ghostlike similitude with his own life. The other character Nikhilesh's death in rampage matches the protagonist's passing away in the alleys of England. Nikhilesh too was also marginalized at home as well as outside, in search of a better life. *A Life Apart* is thus a scalding novel about dislocations, marginalization, migration, alienation, and is as much about the tenuous and insensible crisscrossing of lives and chronicles as about the solace and comfort of soulful story-telling.

Bridge and Watson, in *A Companion to the City* (2007) write that cities "...are more than only material or lived spaces and that ideas about cities are not simply formed at a conscious level; rather, they are also a product of unconscious desires and imaginations". (7). A number of theories assist in exploring and analyzing the complex - and often contradictory - elements of the self in relation to the city; the individual vis-a-vis society, in

literature. These theories help explain the city fast emerging as a lens to view the micro and the macro spaces in a multicultural world and to critique the city for its problematic relationship with the interacting self of its resident. No more does the study of city typically fall under the purview of Sociology and/or Anthropology, believing that it has mere material value, but is now being widely read and acknowledged from a literary point of view as well.

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Performing Genders: A Study of Atypical Masculinity in Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover"

Anna Maria George

Abstract

The moment a child is born, the baby is called either a 'girl' or a 'boy' on the basis of reproductive organs and structures. The discourse which we understand and follow, differentiates males, females and other genders on the basis of anatomical differences and thus strangely enough children are all born not as humans but as 'males' and 'females.' Since the literature of a time reflects the social realities of the period to which it belongs, choosing Judith Butler's 'performative theory' of gender, Robert Browning's 19th century poem 'Porphyria's Lover' is studied to have a general understanding of the ideas of masculinity as prevalent during the Victorian age.

Keywords: Gender performativity; Masculinity; Victorian gender constructions.

Introduction

"Porphyria's Lover" is a poem by Robert Browning which was first published as 'Porphyria' in the January 1836 issue of the *Monthly Repository*. The poem pictures a man, who is visited by his lover named 'Porphyria'. The man realizes her love for him the very first time and burning with passion, he strangles her with her hair. The man opens her eyes, unfolds the hair from her neck and spends the rest of the night cuddling with her corpse.

Robert Browning, born on 7th May, 1812 and lived up to 12th December 1889, was an English poet and playwright whose mastery of the dramatic monologue made him one of the foremost Victorian poets. His poems are

known for their irony, characterization, challenging vocabulary, dark humor, social commentary, historical settings and syntax. "A chief support of Browning's popularity is that he is for many, an initiator into deeper mysteries of passion, a means of escaping from the moral poverty of their own lives and of feeling the rhythm and compulsion of the general striving" (Santayana 19). Almost all of Browning's heroes are blinded by the passion of love. His poem 'Porphyria's Lover' is chosen as a subject of study to understand the idea of masculinity in correspondence with the social settings of the Victorian era.

In general discourse, the term 'sex' stands for the identification of a person as male or female, and gender stands for the state of being. That is, we have presumed patterns of behavior that are considered typical to men and women. These patterns are inscribed on the unconscious of human beings right from childhood and are treated as normal. For example, 'Men don't cry' is a common comment told by elders to young boys where boys are indirectly taught that men should be strong and should not be emotionally expressive, which also suggests that women are just the opposite. They become the 'ideal adults' who believe in the strength of man and in the fragility of woman. Another example is the 'fairytales' or 'folktales' for kids where legendary heroes save helpless heroines. These acts establish the 'vigor' and 'power' of men that is different from that of the 'weakness' and 'submissiveness' of women.

The book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) by Judith Butler, American philosopher and gender theorist, is considered as one of the most influential works on gender studies. Looking at the concept of gender, Butler asks: "Is there a gender which persons are said to have, or is it an essential attribute that a person is said to be" (7). This questions the authenticity with which we conceive the notions of both 'sex' and 'gender'. The central concept of Butler's theory is the term 'Performativity of gender', by which she claims that gender is the stylized repetition of acts, an imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of gender. On the basis of what Butler explains, gender is to be understood as a 'social construction', or rather, a 'misrepresentation'. This attributes an essence to the existence of a man and woman which is termed as 'masculinity' and 'femininity' respectively.

Butler also contradicts the 'body politics' we follow, making forced gender roles free from the 'burden of Sex! Quoting "One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one" from *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir 330), Butler explains: "One becomes a woman but always under a cultural compulsion to become one and clearly the compulsion does not come from sex. There

is nothing in her account that guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female" (8). The same can be told in case of men too. Thus, the body has nothing to do with behavioural expectations and can be understood as a passive recipient of cultural laws, which actually denies the intended connection between sex and gender. Thus, if gender is independent of sex, masculinity can be attributed to a female body and femininity to a male body without any queerness.

Now the question is, what is masculinity? How far is it nurtured? An inquest into the so called 'maleness' reveals that the very term is accepted and followed in its most narrow sense. Tim Edwards, in his book '*Cultures of Masculinity*' (2006) opines that the typical representations of masculinity actually place the very concept itself in both 'physical' and 'cultural' crises. The cultural representation of men as the breadwinner, head of families and center of power, along with the physical representation with well built, muscular, oiled and gleaming body established itself as the essentialities for an 'ideal masculinity'. Therefore, the classic model for men, always remained to be one-dimensional, emotionally limiting and centered on models of performance.

Primarily defined in terms of sex role theory, family, work and education became the key institutions through which boys became men, developing strong values of competitiveness, careerism and success. Along with these advancements, there also developed a repression of sensitivities through the withdrawal of physical affection and increasing stigmatization of expressions of vulnerability, such as crying. This trapped the men in a position which undermined both their physical health and psychological happiness. These increased repressions turned men to ways of sports, career or sexual conquests with an unusual energy to 'perform' their masculinity. Perhaps, the fact that the performance of physical violence like hitting, punching, pulling, tearing, smashing, stamping, slamming, etc. was done by men than women in the recorded history of crimes, attributed 'violence' as a quintessential characteristic of masculinity (Edwards 42)

Thus, for men, aggression, belligerence and violence became ways to represent power. Along with that, hardness, suffering in silence, insensitivity to pain, and an unflinching willingness to inflict it when deemed necessary were considered key aspects of successful masculinity. Being thrust upon men so vigorously, these very characteristics shaped masculinity the more 'performed', 'socially privileged' and 'greater pretender' of gender than femininity.

The rigidity with which we follow the gender binary system as reflected in

the popular culture could be traced back to nineteenth century England. The period is named 'The Victorian Era' after Queen Victoria. She ruled England from 20 June 1837 until her death, on 22 January 1901. Butler observes: "It becomes impossible to separate out Gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (3). 'Victorian Morality' actually drew a clear-cut line between the two genders thereby framing 'separate spheres' for men and women. "During the Victorian period men and women's roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history. . . As the 19th century progressed men increasingly commuted to their place of work - the factory, shop or office. Wives, daughters and sisters were left at home all day to oversee the domestic duties" (Hughes).

Thus, it was accepted without question that men were the breadwinner of the family while women shall take care of the domestic household.

Victorian theorists such as 'Herbert Spencer' (English philosopher, sociologist, and liberal political theorist of the Victorian era) and 'Patrick Geddes' (Scottish biologist, philanthropist), constructed a stereotypical model of the gender binaries that pointed out men as the 'active agents' who expended energy while women were considered 'sedentary', 'storing' and 'Conserving' energy. Therefore, it was defined with a dichotomy that what is feminine is 'anabolic' in nature which nurtured, and what is masculine is 'katabolic', which released energy. (Lee)

In spite of these assigned roles in family structure, strict patterns were drawn for them in their sexuality also. Along with courage, resolution, tenacity and financial independence, the question of sexual behaviour also became an essential factor in defining successful manliness in the Victorian era. Victorians marked a kind of interconnectivity between 'sex' and 'gender roles' which naturally forced the weaker sex to remain cold and frigid. At the same time, the catabolic men were justified for their sexual acts. Difference in 'Gender roles' were rationalized on the basis of physicality, and identities got defined in terms of 'male and female body' or rather in terms of a natural or biological evolution.

This switching to a new perception actually indicates the birth of a strong 'patriarchal culture' or rather a 'hegemonic masculinity' the concept which normalized the projection of its sexual anxieties on its subordinates, none other than women. But in this play, unfortunately both the sexes were unknowingly trapping themselves in strictly set patterns of physical and emotional expressions which they could not ever escape. These referenc-

es, if studied under the ideas of Butler, reveal to us that “the cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of identities cannot exist – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not follow from either sex or gender” (17). Hence, it is also to be understood that it was neither culturally possible for the Victorians to think of gender, sex and desire as independent entities nor they could escape their notions of gender roles as that would make their existence culturally meaningless and unintelligible.

Victorian literature reflected the social and cultural dilemma the people were going through. Victorian poets talked or created the fictive versions of the then existing social realities. Browning’s poems clearly reveal the extremities of the two genders in working out their passions. Also “The men and women of his poems are representative of their eras and reflect the milieu-political, artistic and religious-of the time in which they live” (Raymond 117). Hence his poems could serve the purpose of history in its true sense, a quality for which his poems are famous. Thus, by taking into account a poem of nineteenth century, the paper aims to carry out a quest in understanding masculinity, gender roles and their normative acceptances related to a period of history.

A Performing Lover

‘Porphyria’s Lover’ is one of Browning’s most acknowledged poems. The central theme of the poem is nothing but murder. The poem under discussion and other poems like ‘*Andrea Del Sarto*’ (1855), ‘*Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*’ (1842) etc. are examples of ‘Dramatic Monologues’. Dramatic monologue, also known as a ‘persona poem’, is a type of poetry written in the form of a speech of an individual character – a poem in which an imagined speaker; not the poet, addresses a silent listener; usually not the reader. A literary form that was rather new to English literature, was developed by Browning which requires the reader to complete the dramatic scene from within, by means of inference and imagination. Structured as thus, Browning used this form to speak about desire, passion, obsession and madness –what constituted his heroes. He pictured his leading men extremely possessive and obsessive in love. In reflection of the 19th century Victorian milieu, Browning spoke on gender and sexuality of man and woman. In fact, more of men than women.

In ‘Porphyria’s Lover’, the title takes the stand of Porphyria the woman, and refers to her lover, the man. The first understanding of the title creates an impression that the man who does not even have a name, lives in the

shade of Porphyria or rather it is Porphyria who gives meaning to his existence, but on reading the poem, we infer that if the man is 'nameless', the woman is 'identity less'. He is 'verbally silent', but she has 'no voice'. He is 'passive in actions', but she 'lacks the freedom to act'. Observing how masculinity and its Victorian implications shape the character of the hero, we see a male with a perverted possessiveness. The man, widely read by critics as paranoid or insane could be referred as the very reflection of Victorian power dynamics based on gender.

The poem begins with the description of a troublesome atmosphere, amidst of which we see a man in his cottage. It is raining and the wind is personified as having woken up, tearing the top of elm trees out of resentment and vexing the lake nearby. This nature of the storm is suggestive of the disturbed mind of the man.

The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break. (2-5)

His heart is troubled in the absence of Porphyria, his lover. Suddenly Porphyria ushers herself in to the cottage. According to the speaker, "she shut the cold out and the storm" (7). With her presence he feels relaxed and experiences warmth out of the chaos around. Once inside, Porphyria removes her cloak, shawl and gloves. She is ready to spend the night with him and expresses her feelings for him.

She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there (16-19)

The man remains rather cold or irresponsible to the demands of Porphyria. He, neither pays any attention nor is moved by her seductive acts. When she declares her love for him in words, he sees it as mere murmuring. He realizes that she loves him. But he responds that she cannot break up with her upper-class ties and therefore, is too weak to follow her heart. For him, "pride, and vainer ties dissever" (24) her love. At the same time, he thinks of the struggle she underwent to come and meet him despite the storm. He is delighted and declares "Porphyria worshipped me" (33). He wants to possess her at that very moment with all her fairness and beauty. He

knows that he cannot own her and thus decides to kill her – an instinct driven out of extreme passion!

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around (36-40)

The man after committing the murder unties her hair and kisses the dead body of Porphyria. In his words, "her cheek once more blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:" (47-48). He then makes her head rest on his shoulder and finds glee in seeing that her utmost desire to be with him is now fulfilled. "So glad it has its utmost will/ That all it scorned at once is fled/ And I, its love, am gained instead! (53-55). The man thinks that by killing Porphyria he is doing a favour for her as he is helping in getting rid of everything she hates and assumes that her greatest desire is to possess him! "Porphyria's love: she guessed not how/ Her darling one wish would be heard" (56-57). He sits with her still body the whole night and believes that he did the right thing because even "God has not said a word!" (60)

Browning has employed a play in picturing the man and woman in 'Porphyria's Lover'. He presents his male lead to the readers as an exception as compared to the typical Victorian man. Contrary to the accepted pattern of living, in the poem, it is the man who stays at the cottage while the woman is out during night. As per Victorian morals, no woman is allowed to go out or walk alone at night. Therefore, in the very beginning of the poem itself, readers are faced with a question of a role reversal – something that was unthinkable in the Victorian era. Also, the man or 'the masculinity' as seen in the poem, is passive or somewhat submissive in the beginning: "I listened with heart fit to break" (5). The man is understood to possess a tender heart which might break any time. This shows how far he is from the qualities of courage and strength of Victorian masculinity.

Also, the poet has carefully chosen words in describing the body postures and positions of both the man and woman. Porphyria kneeled first, thereby causing the man and the atmosphere to blaze. This is suggestive of the normal 'female submissiveness' and the probable pride-filled mental state of the Victorian male stereotype, whose superiority and dominance is accepted by a female. Browning but immediately confirms that then she 'rose'. Thus, the man continues to sit while Porphyria stands: "And kneeled and made the cheerless grate/ Blaze up, and all the cottage

warm/Which done, she rose..." (8-10). This could be a signal of a feminine power over the masculine. The ascent refers to the rise of the female class or rather it equally stands for the descent of masculinity. Coming to sexuality and its representations in the poem, again readers are met with a contradiction. The man remains irresponsive to Porphyria's sensual acts. He is cold and devoid of desire.

The verbal silence of the man at Porphyria's highly sensuous acts is quite shocking and unacceptable to the Victorians because it was normal for men to have sexual arousals and intense passions because the katabolic men need to spend their energy. The man tries to keep himself away from the socially dictated role of masculinity, in the beginning of the poem by being submissive in body posture, action and sexuality. That is, Porphyria's lover at the least was trying to disestablish the masculine notions.

This is where Browning's hero leaves a mark. The poem takes a diversion when the hero commits a rethinking. His ego strikes him the very moment, and his change of mind is suggestive of a failed attempt to tear down the practiced gender roles of the Victorian period. He was not able to stand that momentary submissiveness before Porphyria and couldn't accept the truth that Porphyria has declared her love towards him while it was his right to propose love to her first. This is because, he was so trapped in the social setting through continued practices, which re-established his masculine role of dominance. Being insecure in her social superiority, the insane decision to kill Porphyria is nothing but the ferocious expulsion of this momentary suppressed pride and will.

This portrayal of an alienated Victorian man, if analysed in the context of Butler's gender performativity, adds to our understanding of gender stereotypes. The man, who ended up in killing his lover in the ecstasy of passion, suggests the impossibility of the Victorian men to escape out of a constructed male self: "Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding self" (Butler 140).

Thus, it is to be understood that the image of an 'ideal man', framed by the Victorian morality, with the typical qualities of power, superiority and dominance constituted his gendered self which he was never able to escape. The man cannot escape this male consciousness that was once imbibed, practiced and still persisted in his gestures, movements and ac-

tions. Being part of a society with strict, conditioned norms and standards on gender identities, it became his necessity to show his masculine power and maintain the dignity. According to Butler, gender is nothing but "re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation" (140). The ritualization of gender practices made the Victorian men, slaves to those roles. Thus, it is obvious that any act, that attempts to take them away from that role, would pressurize them mentally and result in intense emotions, anger and aggression.

In 'Porphyria's Lover' this aggression came out as a desire to make Porphyria lifeless. The comment made by the man after strangling her deserves much attention: "And strangled her. No pain felt she/ I am quite sure she felt no pain" (41-42). The man declares openly that she didn't feel any pain while being strangled. Here, he tries to project Porphyria as an emotionless, senseless and cold being; in fact, not only Porphyria, but all the Victorian women. Also, the man expresses affection on Porphyria's lifeless body by kissing her. This clearly points the fact that, what the man actually wanted was not to kill her, but make her senseless like an object, so that he can gain complete control over her. Here, the true self of the man is revealed to be in need of Porphyria.

He also wanted to possess her just like she wanted to be with him, except that he wanted her senseless. Thus, the constructed self finds that killing her is the best way to fully express its will and he supplicates to the same. The man ends up in showcasing himself as a zealot, but one with no regrets. The gruesome act of killing Porphyria and the display of affection that followed were all part of the ways in which, the constructed self, expressed itself! Thus, 'Porphyria's Lover', who is widely read as an insane psychopath is understood to be more of a 'victim' of the social practices of the time, than a 'passionate lover'.

For a society with tight and strict norms on behavioural patterns, it is quite impossible to impart a change quickly, especially when the whole social group imitates what has been already there. Butler remarks that the "gender performances are effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame" (140). It is to be understood that the practiced gender roles, limited and restrained the idea of 'gender' itself into the categories of 'male' and 'female'. Also, the very concept of sexuality got stuck within this binary framework, for which, Victorians claimed new notions, differently for both genders.

The man becomes a victim of repeated practices of gender. He cannot es-

cape out of the socially constructed identity of his maleness. The question here is, how did this gender performativity, or rather, false identities survive through the ages? "Gender reality created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character" (Butler 141). It is clear that, the so called 'performances' and the 'identities' that follow, are both constructed and inseparable to each other. In fact, the repeated performances create a false illusion of identities and the acceptance of these identities as normal and natural, in turn, demands them to be practiced and performed.

Conclusion

The Victorian society was a social group founded on strict and rigid social practices. In the realm of gender, a clear separation between 'man' and 'woman' was established and specific gender roles were assigned to both. By practice, these roles eventually established a dominant masculine and subordinate feminine culture. In the light of Butler's gender performativity, gender is identified to be independent of an identity or essence of its own. Instead, masculinity and femininity are regarded as ontological concepts only because they are performative in the very acts through which they survive.

The male character in the poem has widely been acknowledged by critics, as an insane psychopath who burned with extreme passion to possess his love. Browning's hero actually has his individuality in conflict – a conflict between the 'constructed' and the 'true' self. The constructed self, demanded the man to be dominant over his partner, because he has been practicing the same, individually and socially and expected the woman to submit to it. But Porphyria's active and lively interactions troubled him and he got caught in a struggle of losing his own identity. This increased his fear of failure and made him commit a terrible murder! The man committed the gruesome murder not because of his inherent masculine violence, but due to the very pressure the society exerted over him to follow the ways of the constructed self and his helplessness to come out of this glass ceiling. Browning has clearly depicted this mental pressure on Victorian masculinity to maintain manhood and dignity which crushed his heroes' sense of identity and made him a victim of his circumstances!

The fact that continued practices affect the shaping of false identities also hints at a possible solution. That is, if we cannot stop practicing, we can change what we practice! The very performative character of gender itself

can be used to tackle the problem of gender differentiation –practice, continue and follow patterns of behaviour which are not restricted by body, sexuality, gender and identities – that is, focus on the possibilities of the performances than its limitations! The question carries the answer in itself: ‘If gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently?’

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Translating Womanism: Can there be Gender-sensitive Translations?

Uzma Shafi

Abstract

This paper, "*Translating Womanism : Can there be a Gender Sensitive Translation ?*" is a study which establishes the need for translations of texts that are gender sensitive and those which deal with race and class based oppression of the women .The main objective of the study will be to analyse *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood in the light of *womanism* and how language as a *phallogocentric* tool has made a woman incapable of expressing her emotions and feelings. The paper will explore the very topic in the light of *Ecriture feminine* . Moreover the use of term 'Translating' is metaphorical to establish that women and their experience have not well been resonated with the language which is more or less phallogocentric in origin. The methods employed in this study are qualitative in nature and will deal with the post-modernist analysis of the chosen text written by a woman.

Keywords: *Ecriture feminine*; Lacanian real; Language; Other; Phallogocentric; Womanism.

In almost all the societies across the world, women akin to subjugated subjects have been marginalized to the position of 'other' by the patriarchal domination. This term *other* equivocally resonated with women sharing an intimate bond with the colonized cultures and races who had been at the receiving end of the politics of oppression and repression. From the early 19th century many women writers vehemently asserted the idea of female identity in a way that a social movement grew out of it and people started acknowledging this articulation of feminist struggle to end patriarchal dominations. In 1975, in her essay *The Laugh of Medusa*, a French feminist, Helen Cixous, claimed that a woman must write herself, write about women and put other women to write from which they have been forced apart as violently as from their bodies," "because their sexual

pleasures have been marginalised and denied expression. Utilizing Lacan's work in structure of language that is focused around the Phallus, and that language inside the specific emblematic order is authentic and where a solitary signifier is associated with a solitary signified, Cixous contends that the subject situation of "woman" or the "feminine" is on the edges of the Symbolic, and consequently less firmly secured and constrained by the Phallus.

Using the principle of play from Derrida, Helen Cixous comments that "women" are decentred, and therefore free to travel, render and reinvent in this way. Kristeva's "Ecriture Feminine" possibility develops from Freud's notion, which describes that women are large, less balanced than men, less good, and calls them "the dim landmass" along these lines, while Cixous uses that as a representation to celebrate this powerlessness of having possible influence over the condition of a woman in the emblematic phallogocentric Order.

Feminine works are similar to the Lacanian Real, the maternal body, exiled from the emblematic request; it links the symbolic composition with the illustrative composition and the feminine and maternal bodies with the non-authentic composition. However, feminine writings do not inherently have a place exclusively for women; Cixous argues that within the Symbolic order, everyone can take up the oppressed status of a "woman" and write from that position in *Ecriture feminine*. In the light of the reality that it will be to describe and detain it within the rationale of Western phallogocentric realism, refusing to characterise or encrypt or identify *Ecriture Feminine*, Cixous conflictingly declares that *Ecriture Feminine* comes from the female body, and that men may also write from that place. She depicts *Ecriture feminine* through an assortment of similitude's, which include milk, orgasm, nectar, and the sea. She notes that as a problematic and deconstructive force, *Ecriture female* fills in, shaking the protection and reliability of the phallogocentric Symbolic Order, and ultimately making further play for all subjects using language in gender, texts, and sexuality.

In brief, this paper emphasises the importance of language experience and non-linear writing rights that oppose the debate dominated by the *phallogocentric* paradigm, as language is no longer a neutral means, but acts as a patriarchal speech tool. By the novel surfacing, this paper supports the exhibition.

Surfacing is a novel by Margaret Atwood; the novel is set in the time when Canada was looking for autonomy from America. The

story line spins around the female anonymous protagonist who is out on a mission of finding her father alongside her companions and her boyfriend. From the beginning, the problematising nature of language is revealed as the character does not own a name and is barely referenced by a name in the book. Her inability to have a name is correlated with her impotence to be included in the Symbolic, and as is referred to by Lacan, Kristeva and many others as an appeal where the subject is constructed or built by the father's name and is divided from her/his true self. As the story unfolds, we see this same character approaching a point where her emotions, her memories, can not be voiced. She is betrayed by language as a human patriarchal construct. As the novel opens and the group moves through the border of northern Quebec, the nameless narrator states that

"My throat constricts, as it learned to do when I discovered people could say words that go into my ears meaning nothing. To be deaf and dumb would be easier" (*Surfacing*, 10)

The thought of demolishing word structures, syntax and the semantics of a language becomes more prominent not only because the narrator is being made to speak English in a French part of the county which gives her "A strangling feeling and paralysis of throat" but also because the language as a whole fails her. The more time she spends in wilderness thinking, rethinking and reconsidering her thoughts and feelings, the more isolated and helpless she feels in expressing herself. This helplessness is well illustrated when Joe, her lover asks her, if she loved him and in answer to the question she states,

"It was the language again; I couldn't use it because it wasn't mine. He must have known what he meant but it was an imprecise word; the Eskimos had fifty two names for snow because it was important for them. There ought to be as many for love." (*Surfacing* 119)

This inability of the speaker to fit her expression in a logo centric frame work where there has to be an answer in binary, makes the expression even harder for her. Yet another incident when she gets back to her senses immediately from a vision where she sees her father drowning, her boyfriend Joe comes to look out for her and she states

"I touched him on the arm with my hand. My hand touched his arm. Hand touched arm. Language divides us into fragments, I wanted to be whole" (*Surfacing* 159).

This desire of being a whole, to migrate and relocate the pre-oedipal stage in her fictional universe where she may turn into an whole, turns out to

be strong to such an extent that subsequent to having culminated her adoration in wild, she envisioned that she may have gotten pregnant with this semi god/semi animal like creature .While imaging this she reflects that

“will never teach it the words” (*Surfacing* 177).

While simultaneously escaping from both, her friends, so they won't be able to find her and language, by not responding when they call her name, the disposition from the language is marked when she says

“It's too late; I no longer have a name. I tried for all those years to be civilized but I'm not and I'm through pretending” (*Surfacing* 185).

The existing order of assigning a name to a person along with the father's name is an act of civilizing a person according to the societal Marxist norms which is again enormously phallogocentric in nature .Her attempt to “clear a space” extending from banishing language and mirrors to burning the pages of book is illustrated by

“To burn all through the words would take too long” (*Surfacing* 197).

She gets closer to an event rather than a state as the protagonist becomes a part of nature. She now has a totally new vocabulary, as the novel reveals

“In one of the languages there are no nouns, only verbs held for a larger moment. The animals have no need for speech, why talk when you are a word. I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning...I'm not an animal or a tree, I'm the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I'm a place.” (*Surfacing* 209)

In conclusion it will be fair to remark that language is Phallogocentric in nature where women find it hard to express their authentic selves to the world and to the people around them .There seems to be an asymptotic relationship between language and expression. The women are made to construct their discourse in form of a language they seem not being able to relate to and instead of addressing and accepting this inadequacy of language depicted through various excerpts from the novel, this text is read in the light of a condition where its probed that the narrator / protagonist is psychod into a fit of madness . In fact this text has been read so many times under the genre of hysteria novel/ literature. It is probed that because of undergoing an abortion the woman who is the protagonist has gone entirely bonkers .

Accepting this inadequacy of language as a mode of translating women, who think differently, write differently, feel differently will be a baby step in recognising women and their struggles with language. Margaret Atwood's novel provides storyline open to such comprehension, while the nature and substance of their prose both praise the *second sex* or female body and its expression of the non-linguistic references. However I would like to establish and as Julia Kristeva asserts, abandoning language as a whole and creating an alternate articulation acceptable and comprehensible, this abandonment of language is; but impossible henceforth to be heard and understood as point where articulation has to be created and where women feel free to express whatever and however they write. This paper concludes on reasserting the question, "Can there be Gender sensitive translations without categorizing them in the frame work of mere hysteria."

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Reconfiguring the 'Self': The Trajectory of a Woman's Trauma and Triumph in Volga's *The Liberation of Sita*

Prinka Kumari & Surekha Dangwal

Abstract

The Indian nationalist models of reform and 'development' from the last two decades have made women writers rethink about the status of women in India. Alongside, it discards the idea of woman. In this way, considerably, gynocritical writing has displayed the "inner" world of woman. There is a space for awful memories, introspection, retrospection, flashback, and foreshadow that are colored by pain, wound and trauma. This study offers a rising hunger to interrogate, re-investigate, recast and revisit the old myths and reinvent new myths in order to construct the idea of 'self'. It further explores how women saw their roles as contributing (or not) to her identity and meaning, the complex ways to articulate their subjectivity, and challenge the societal roles, negotiate the traditions and formulate a literary and feminist aesthetic. The article subverts the traditional binary (of good woman or bad woman) by relocating social reality of mythical archetype Sita, who after getting abandoned by *Purushottam* Rama, embarks on an arduous journey of self-realizations interestingly, and is helped by the stigmatized characters who occupy center-stage. This is how women gain new maturity and create a room of one's own. Therefore, bringing *this* study into a modern-day milieu, Volga's *The Liberation of Sita* serves as an important tool in conveying ideologies of political configurations of gender.

Keywords: Archetype; Mythical; Subjectivity; Subversion; Trauma.

Introduction

Over the centuries, literature is considered a male's property where masculine discourses have been the dominant and the stronger ones. Hence,

women suffered neglect due to male chauvinism and had found no space in literature. Similarly, the work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions. But as the time went on, women writers were able to inculcate the emotions of female in their writings in India. Emerging literature including mythological works such as Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*, Kavita Kane's *Maneka's Choice*, Samhita Arni's *Sita's Ramayana* and many scholars have separated themselves from the traditional literary structures by recasting the mythological characters as real women in literature with their idea of existence and liberating ease. This paper is an attempt to explore the women's strenuous journey with particular reference to *The Liberation of Sita* written by an activist cum writer P. Lalita Kumari, a Telugu feminist, better known by her pen name Volga. She won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2015 for her slim collection of five stories *Vimukta*, originally written in Telugu which is further translated as *The Liberation of Sita*. by T. Vijaykumar and C. Vijayshree.

Conceptualization of the Research Article

Volga emerges as an eminent writer with this compilation of short stories which narrates *Ramayana* in a different light and its female characters with great wisdom. The article also examines how gender manifests itself within the framework of trauma which remains an extremely queried term and become the prominent theory in literature. This term (trauma) has gained significant attention in Cathy Caruth's work *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma Narrative and History* (1996). It has sought to emphasize the extent of profound sufferings of an individual and many functions of literature. An exceptional emphasis of trauma studies has re-imagined many modern reciting of women too in a way where unspeakable void can be located. It enables us to understand women's trauma and suggests that our understanding of trouble has traditionally been coloured by masculine discourses. Similarly, we witnessed an increasing fascination with trauma and memory in the concerned text. Therefore, this study concerned with speaking cause of the wound in female character's mind. With this, voices of all women characters (in the concerned text *The Liberation of Sita*) who were abandoned by their husbands and dwelled in the forests are also situated. At first, they all felt only disdain and anger for each other but later they had realized that the pain, oppression, anguish in their lives was similar, and felt a companionship with one another.

Sita (consort of Lord Rama) is one of the main characters of *Ramayana*,

known for her dedication, self-sacrifice, courage and purity. In her article of the *Contemporary Influence of Sita*, Anju P. Bhargava calls her the "pativrata", the ideal woman, "for many immigrant women." Sita's exile in the deep forest took her to the Ashram of Valmiki, who took her to his shelter where she encounters with four marginalized and most overlooked women characters of the epic: Surpanakha, Renuka, Urmila and Ahalya. These four women who are representative of the suffering of their own kind, are in search of the self-identity. They appear in Sita's lives at different times and help her assert her individuality. Their conversation with Sita helps her, shapes her, liberates her in difficult situation. The text undertaken study also questions the strong patriarchal system and resonates some women who were strengthened under the given circumstances. Therefore, to study and understand the patriarchal practices is important. It is necessary to have specific studies, in order to build an adequate theoretical basis.

"Valmiki has gone to the extent of saying there would have been no Ramayana without Kaykeyi and Surpnakha", says Motisagar who is the son of Ramanand Sagar, directed the teleseries in the 1980s. The very opening of the text reflects upon significant aspects of motherhood. In Volga's narrative, Sita raises her sons by herself in Valmiki's ashram. Upon their return to Ayodhya, Sita was abandoned by her husband (Rama) when the natives of Ajodhya questioned Sita's purity. As a dutiful wife, she obeyed him but always tries to get new forms of values. It is the new episode in her life which begins from trauma to self-actualization. Her actions and worries as an ideal mother are not overlooked when she says, "they would normally return by this time every day, bringing some wild flowers with them...What was the reason for the delay?" (2). She heaved a sigh of relief with her children who normally return bringing some wild flowers for their mother.

It was Shrupnakha whom Sita had confronted in the first part of the concerned work entitled "The Reunion" that mainly unfolds her harrowing conditions while living in the forest. This part clearly uncovers the politics of Hindu folklores, traditions, mythologies where women are merely reduced into a frame that has left women with nothing. In Hindu folklore and mythology, two types of women appear, such as Sita who is generally considered pure, light, good, auspicious, and subordinate woman, whereas Surapnakha is dark, inauspicious evil, and defiant. Sita is the chaste good woman; Surapnakha is the 'loose' bad woman. Here lies peculiarity in Volga's portrayal of its women characters, more specifically Surpnakha.

she is not embodied as a demonic princess, but reimagined as a beautiful princess who is not rival to Sita. Otherwise, who have imagined Surpnakha as a friend of Sita. Why Sita and Surpnakha could not be friends? How she had become inauspicious and unchaste for expressing her love for princes of Ayodhya? At this point Volga has provided us with a character of Surpnakha who as a guiding force strikes Sita's consciousness and helps her in achieving liberation. Therefore, Surpnakha articulates:

[D]on't look at how I am today and imagine the all this happened easily, Sita I have become tough by facing upto the challenges the life threw at me. I have been able to find happiness in trying to find the very meaning of beauty. (20)

This makes Sita realize that why the women alone have to face the brunt of unjust society even without any reasons. The reason for which Surpnakha has to face mutilation, can be found common on the part of males of a society too. Hence the perspective of looking onto these mythological validations in relations to women's life in general, could be either inverted or altered. The study is based primarily on the idea that gods were human beings who do follies by making choices of life-style and opinion. They adhere to orthodox beliefs as reflected in an another part of the text entitled "The Music of the Earth." This part explains the retellings of Ahalya and her meeting with Sita in the forest. She enlightens her with the popular notions of female chastity. She narrates her accounts of sufferings as victims of patriarchy. She articulates:

Indra lusted after me. Like everyone else, he too looked at women as if they are meant for men's enjoyment. Knowing that I wouldn't surrender to his desire, he came in the hour of darkness in the guise of my husband. Did I see through his disguise? That is the question that bothers many people in this world. But to my husband, the question was irrelevant. It was the same to him either way . . . there is no scope in them for truth and untruth. (26)

Ahalya genuinely exposes her understanding of *Pativratyam* dharma before Sita and says, "All men are the same, Sita. Especially in the matter of their wives" (27). The discussion between the two reflects the psyche of Sita who, being a devoted wife, initially neglects her by saying that "My husband is not such a person. He will enquire into truth and untruth" (27). Her adoration for Rama can be witnessed when she heard about the slaying of Ravana by her husband. This summary filled her heart with joy. She feels excitement in her and become impatient to meet him. So she thinks: "How would she react on seeing Rama? His affection, love, touch . . . she was going to have it all again" (30). But soon her rejoice turned into futility

and barrenness when she is asked to prove her chastity by going through fire says. Here, Lakshman says:

Sri Ramchandra wants you to undergo a chastity test, Sister-in-law . . . [he] has no misgivings whatsoever, Sister-in-law. It's only for the sake of the people. Justice alone will prevail in the trial. Truth will triumph. Everyone will applaud your character once you withstand with the test. Sri Ramchandra has asked me to convey this to you, Sister-in-Law.(31)

Sita considers her emotional sufferings given by her husband as her fate or destiny. She, therefore, bears her trauma without posing even single questioning to Rama for 'his' treatment for her. But the account of Lakshman made her recall words of Ahalya. Thus, the image of Ahalya began to flash across Sita's mind who once meets Sita in the forest and tells her that a woman's loyalty is not the issue but what is, is that a man's ability to question and put it to test, be it for any reason: "What does conducting an inquiry imply? Distrust, isn't it? Wouldn't it be better, instead; to believe in either your innocence or guilt?" (31). These questions from Ahalya to Sita enlightened her about the complex riddles of female chastity.

The third part of the book entitled "The Sand Pot" illustrates the tragic life of another mythical woman of the Ramayana named, Renuka. She too shares the common sufferings as Sita and Ahalya does. Her experience is particularly appalling on so many levels. This part of the text reveals the meetings of Renuka and Sita in the forest. She tells Sita that it is totally futile for women to make men the centre of their lives because she was brutally killed by her own son Parshurama under the order of his father. Neither husband nor son is able to feel the pathos and cry of Renuka Devi. Thus she explains, "He ordered our son to kill me. Parasurama came forward to do it. He began chopping my head. When my head was half-cut, my husband's fury abated." After her self-realization only, she tries to project the fragile nature of women and links herself and woman to a pot, which can be broken anytime. Thus she warns to Sita, "if they understand their *paativratyam* and fidelity are like these sand pot, they will be able to live in peace" (50). It is Renuka, who implants seeds of independent thinking in Sita's mind by posing questions to Sita, "Does a woman have a world other than her husband's? Is there a higher meaning to a woman's life than motherhood?" (52). The discussion between Renuka and Sita seems so intense that demonstrates not only her sufferings but of contemporary women too. Renuka has questioned the basic institution of marriage. More particularly, she dared to question about basic institution

of bearing children because she has realized all through in her life that she is no more important for her husband and similar things happens with Sita. Thus Renuka explains to Sita:

A situation where children ask their mother who their father is or where a husband asks his wife who fathered her children comes only in the lives of some women, Sita. Think of the predicament of those women and you'll understand my words. (55)

Initially, Sita felt only contempt for Renuka and opines her, "Your truth and mine are not the same" (54). But she grasps the conveying of Renuka only when Ram asked Sita to return to Ayodhya on the condition she declares her innocence in the royal court. Therefore, she asks him: Do I need to do that? Is there any sense in such an effort?" (64). Instead, she decides to live with her mother – Mother Earth. This act of Sita describes the steps of Indian woman also who are unaware of the restrictions, insults, and violence they are subjected to. They are unaware of the patriarchal unjust. There is no doubt that the institution of motherhood is quieting even the most rebellious woman. A change in woman's consciousness is obvious when we generally ask 'which mothers?' instead of talking about 'mothers.'

"The Liberated" is the fourth narrative of the concerned text that too offers the interesting account of an encounter between Sita, who returned to Ajodhya after fourteen years of vanvaas, and Urmila, who lives all those years in a self-imposed penance. This part reveals more painful psyche of Sita about her sister, Urmila. In Sita's words: "To be separated from one's husband – isn't that the most miserable ordeal to suffer?" (70). There was continuous war like situation in the mind of Sita after knowing the battle inside Urmila's mind. Later in Valmiki's ashram, when Sita comes to know that Rama is performing the Aswamedha Yag, she feels terribly disturbed by the thought that Rama might have taken another wife to become eligible to perform the ritual. Urmila calls it foolishness to get anxious and said to her:

"Don't swallow. Don't even let it enter your mind. You must liberate yourself from Rama... Each of those trials is meant to liberate you from Rama. To secure you for yourself. Fight, meditate, look within until you find the truth that is you". (81)

Sita had learnt a lot from experiences of Surpanakha, Ahalya, Renuka and Urmila – each one had a story of her own and followed a path of her own. Every story filled with miseries of married life, womanhood and oppression getting worse in each stage. In this way, the present article is

an attempt to raise important questions regarding the issue of women's rights from ancient times till today. It also offers a renewal of the struggle for the equality and freedom of women.

Mythology serves as an aid to male gods, as Armstrong once argues that It is a commonplace in the study of Vedic religion to observe that "the goddesses played only a subordinate role in the pantheon; the principal deities were exclusively male, and it was solely by virtue of their positions as consorts of these male deities that the female deities acquired their influence" (45). But the fifth and last part of the narrative entitled "The Shackled" ultimately brings the uncertainties of Ram who realizes that he has no self-determination, that his identity is wholly conducted by his role as ruler and an advocate of Arya Dharma. For the first time Ram came to know that he has no personal freedom. He articulates, "Mind? My mind? I who execute the Arya Dharma without a second thought, do I have a mind of my own? He wished to embrace the life he had consumed with Sita. He came to apprehend that her wife, Sita, had sustained a wound for his sake. Therefore, we can see a sense of concern and regret in the character of Ram for Sita. As he enunciates:

A wound that would never heal.

A wound that would hurt every day.

A wound caused by the throne to the love of Sita and Rama.

He could forsake Sita; Sita belonged to him. (94)

He realizes that the time spent in the forest with Sita the only time he practiced true freedom. He laments to Lakshman: "My exalted nobleness is my handicap. With this political power, I have lost power over myself. I have lost my Sita" (88). This time Ram feared the matter Sita choose to take into her own hands. She declined every request of her husband and handed over their sons to him. Therefore, Sita articulates, "These children are not just my children, Rama. Thus are symbols of the life force of this universe. I have realized that they belong to the whole universe. Of course, you, and they too, believe that they belong to Ayodhya and are the heirs of Raghu Vamsa. You should act according to your belief" (40). This part of Sita indeed serves the best purpose for the whole womenfolk. It explains how she rejects the ideals of 'womanhood' and chooses to go back to where she came from; to her mother Earth. She liberates herself but Rama remains shackled who can never be liberated from his world. He is tied to the throne, to politics and his kingdom. His life is tied to his dharma as a king and a ruler of his people. But Sita has no fascination for authority. She stood up for herself. Her decisive insubordination in the end lets Sita

gains her lost selfhood.

The article is an attempt to comprehend that even in the olden times, an opinionated woman was treated differently by the patriarchal society which mostly looks down upon a woman who stands up for herself. It elucidates how the female characters were denounced politically and bears stigma in the Hindu Mythology. It enabled us to grasp the idea of "demythification" of the original myth. Hence, Volga has proved that Indian mythology is a new and an essential medium of choice for feminist narratives because this retelling is an endeavor to question and subvert the stereotyped in ages of women in mythology by bringing women together. Women is speaking of how war of patriarchy has affected them. In binding them together within a single sentence— "Do women exist only for men to settle their scores with each other's? (4). A bond has created between the two characters, as women oppressed and manipulated by male egos, and as women together battling patriarchy. In this way the study has promoted the idea of 'sisterhood.' Usually described as envious and feeling aggrieved for other women, Volga's depiction of women folk is a break from this absurd myth and promotes sisterhood. The strong binding factor between the women is their ability to speak their husbands as an individual in the end, and negotiate their terms and conditions. The study has deeply explored a key point that to have a power on ourselves and not operating it on others, will bring fraternity, liberty into this world.

Findings

In *The Liberation of Sita*, the writer has focused on the injustice done to womenfolk throughout ages. Different tales of different mythological characters are depicted on the themes of unknown psyche of females, and we can witness many such stories where sufferings of mothers and wives are portrayed. The complexities in a man-woman relationship has portrayed. The writers have tried successfully to explore the psychological aspects of the lead protagonists. In this way, this study is an important endeavor to spread modernism and feminist statements.

Political and social life in the country (India) in the last decades has given rise to a variety of questions. It interrogates the nature and resilience of patriarchal systems in a postcolonial society. With this, the image of women in fiction has also undergone a change from the last few decades. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women toward conflicted female characters searching for the identity. The women are no longer characterized and defined in terms of their victim status. Unlike earlier novels, female characters are

defying marriage and motherhood in contemporary literary fiction. The women writers in India also re-interpret mythology by using new symbols. In conclusion, the present text undertaken research is significant in providing a medium for self-expression and, thus, rewriting and recasting the History of Indian women. Hence, it is noteworthy to see how women and womanhood are inserted into, and affected by mythology, patriarchy, ideology, and social change. With this, we are able to relook not only the history of feminism but also how both 'tradition' and 'modernity' will continue to fuel the biased ideologies in India.

She must be redefined, reorganized, recast, regenerated . . .

Koylaschander Bose,

"On the Education of Hindu Females," 1846

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it has become essential to ponder over the orthodoxy of the Hindu tradition. The study is an attempt to revisit mythology to fathom how and why women are articulated as *Shakti* in Indian mythology. It also questioned the customary binaries that labels women as the vessels of either creative or destructive powers. The notion behind labelling women with divine becomes clear through emerging women literature. It provides a little room for woman. The identification of women with creative and destructive label them either with saint or sinners, as Arshia Sattar, a Ramayana scholar, who has an acclaimed prose translation of the Ramayana to her credit, says in an essay, "*Sita and Surpanakha exemplify two types of women . . . Sita is good, pure, light, auspicious and subordinate, whereas Surpanakha is evil, impure, dark, inauspicious and insubordinate.*" This has created a dichotomy of black and white in the perception of women, without leaving any room for the grey in between. There is no space left in between for them. Thus It would be more appropriate to deal with the present study without any binary. Through these exploration, we attempt to analyze Ram's behavior, and the behavior of the society towards Sita in many contexts. At last, by presenting Sita as a strong woman can really inspire women readers to create a room of one's own. There is a need to relook the Ramayana from a woman's eyes. It is a perfect take on the inner strength and resilience of women and how they don't always need a man to feel themselves complete. Similarly, sita declared: "I am the daughter of Earth, Rama. I have realized who I am the whole universe belongs to me. I don't lack anything. I am the daughter of Earth". (41) Volga's Sita has acceptance of self, others and nature. She has feelings of *gemeinschaftsgefühl*, which is a sense of oneness with humanity. Therefore, in *The Liberation*

of Sita, woman passed through all levels of revealing her 'self' like, her character is tested through exile, abduction, ordeal by fire and banishment but at the end, she listens to her own feelings in evaluating experiences instead of the voice of the tradition, authority or the majority.

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Bodies in the Autobiographies of Ved Prakash Mehta and Firdaus Kanga

Narender Kumar

Abstract

In his work, *American Lives: An Anthology of Autobiographical writing*, an American writer Robert F. Sayre states that, "Autobiographies...may reveal as much about the author's assumed audience as they do about him or her, and this is a further reason why they need to be read as cultural documents, not just as personal ones" (Sayre 13). In my present study, I would like to examine the autobiographies of two Indian writers *Face to Face* by Ved Prakash Mehta and *Trying to Grow* by Firdaus Kanga. Both the writers are settled in the U.S.A. and the U.K. respectively and happen to be writers with physical differences, which make their writings more important and interesting to read and work-on. Life-writing is not a new genre in literature though when it comes to the disabled life writing, there are only a few names around the world with biological-differences whose life stories are documented. In these two autobiographies, we will critically analyse the representation of differently-abled bodies and how that contributes in construction of identity. Ved Prakash Mehta's autobiography was published in the year 1956 just a few years after India's independence when majority of Indian population was uneducated and full of superstitions whereas Firdaus wrote his story in 1990 when majority of Indians were mature enough to understand physical differences. The paper also aims to understand how these authors that belong to two different epochs respond differently to society's perceptions on disability.

Keywords: - Autobiography; Body; Disability; Life- writing.

Introduction

In literature, Disabled bodies have been looked at through three different approaches. The first one which is also the oldest in all disability approaches is the "Religious" or "Karmic" approach. Neither eastern nor western cultures of the planet Earth has been thoughtful in representing the disabled body. Not only that, they are equally respon-

sible for constructing stereotypes and prejudices towards disability and disabled bodies. Generally in literature, disability is illustrated as a kind of physical deformity and is often linked with crookedness, fraud, demones, and evil-spirit. Ahab and Richard III are characterized as demonic cripples in the Canonical secular literature. In the Old Testament, people with any kind of disability like being blind or deaf are represented as disfavoured people from God because of their sins. However, the New Testament regards the same people as cursed or possessed by evil (Shapiro, 1993), such attitudes (faith healing) are practiced, advertised on T.V. shows and can be seen in some of the Hollywood films even today. One of the best examples of this kind of attitude is visible in the Hollywood film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. In that film, the protagonist of the film Benjamin was suffering from a rare disease of ageing and was not able to walk. Benjamin then was taken to the faith healing to cure his disease. At his turn, the priest said something very loudly and fell all of a sudden but Benjamin was able to walk afterwards. This incident in the film shows how religion was used as a tool to make fool of the common people in the name of curing their illness or disability. This is how religious people have been successful in constructing all kinds of prejudices towards disabled bodies. Paul Longmore in his work *Screening Stereotypes: Images of Disabled People in Television and Motion Pictures*, tries to explain the unconscious attitude towards disabled bodies:

Giving disabilities to villainous characters reflects and reinforces, albeit in exaggerated fashion, three common prejudices against handicapped people: disability is a punishment for evil; disabled people are embittered by their "fate"; disabled people resent the nondisabled and would, if they could, destroy them. In historical and contemporary social fact, it is, of course, nondisabled people who have at times endeavoured to destroy people with disabilities. As with popular portrayals of other minorities, the knowledge hostile fantasies of the stigmatizers are transferred to the stigmatized. The nondisabled audience is allowed to disown its fears and biases by "blaming the victims", making them responsible for their own ostracism and destruction. (Longmore 67-68)

The above cited examples from different religious, other literary texts and by any other means of media like films and Television shows are more than enough evidences that show how disability has been depicted in the history of literature. And in few other fictive writings and films the same people are represented as angelic souls with extraordinary powers who can overcome any kind of struggles. This shows disability is dealt in an unthoughtful way in the media.

The second approach or model of disability is called 'Medical Model' of disability. In this model of disability, disabled bodies are regarded from the medical or clinical point of view in which disability is an individual biological problem which can or cannot be treated with the help of medication or the other means of medicine. In this approach, disability is treated as an individual problem and biological limitation. Hence this model is also known as 'Individual Model of Disability'.

The third perspective through disability is called 'Social Model of Disability'. This model of disability is the very recent one and coined by a British academician, author and disability rights activist, Mike Olivier in 1990. Social Model of disability is looking at the world developed by people with disabilities. This model of disability explains that people are disabled due to obstacles and barrier in society, not because of impairment and physical differences. These obstacles can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets and it is because society is developed by nondisabled for nondisabled. It can be caused by the attitudes of nondisabled towards physical differences. This model does not find any problem with an individual, instead it locates the problem in the environment which impaired people are not able to access. This model helps to recognise the problem that shows life is difficult for people with the disabilities. And it helps them in making environment barrier free which offers disabled bodies independence and control of their own bodies.

Life-Writing (Autobiography)

It cannot be true to say that all the means of literature are equally responsible for constructing the stereotypes and prejudices against disabled bodies and stigma attached to them. All sorts of life -writings like autobiographies, memoirs have accorded great importance in challenging the age old discourse of disability. Hevey (1992) in his work *Creatures Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery* observes that "Disabled people, like black people/people of colour, women and so on, are aware that their bodies are constructed as the site of oppression...In my experience of being a disability photographer, disabled people need space to tell the story, the journey, of their body and in doing so, reclaim and be proud of themselves" (Hevey 117). In the quote above David Hevey questions the general image of people with disabilities constructed since ages through different medium and he advocates that autobiography can be a stronger medium than photography in challenging the conventional image of disability.

There is no doubt in that, non-disabled writers have lot more to say to cre-

ate the image of their disabled characters in their fictive writings, but disabled writers certainly will have much more to gain ground by narrating their life stories through different means of life-writings like autobiography and memoir, because these genres of literature are purely based on realistic approach. Hence non-fictional writings not only help the autobiographer overcome his/her own fears, insecurities and inferiority complex but it can contribute in improving the life surrounding him/her and the next generation that suffers from the same marginalisation; since the autobiographer, the characters and narration of autobiography are quite different from what we normally experience in fictive writings of any kind. And a marginalised autobiographer does not carry the unconscious attitude towards his/her own marginalisation unlike a mythical novelist and this is why autobiography became a stronger weapon to challenge the general assumption of people towards disability and disabled bodies.

In this study, I would like to analyse the two autobiographies *Face to Face* by Ved Mehta who is blind from the age of three and *Trying To Grow* by Kanga Firdaus who was born with brittle bones and experienced the locomotor disability. These texts are different for two reasons from other fictional disability writings which we come across generally: First is, both the writers were born with impairments or at least when they lost their limbs they were at a very early age of their childhood so there is no case of normalcy or abnormality because they look at their body the way they were born or at least they have seen themselves as they are now so that it became normal for the writers. Second reason is memory, from which a huge number of handicapped people suffer because they became disabled in a road accident or due to incurred illness, and they suffer from memory of attachment to the first part where they enjoyed their nondisabled selves. These elements can be very well observed in selected texts for analysis. In the own words of Ved Mehta from *Face to Face*: "It was good that I lost my sight when I did, because having no memories of seeing, there was nothing to look back to, nothing to miss" (Mehta 4).

While comparing the two writers coming from the same marginalised background we look at Kanga Firdaus' autobiography *Trying To Grow* to see how they share the same experience about disability. Here is the quote from *Trying to Grow*: "It's so much worse for people who are beautiful and then something happens, an illness or an accident, and they're suddenly ugly" (Kanga 55).

If we look at both the statements above we feel there are little elements of memory authors are sharing with their readers through their autobiographies and that is very clear and easy to identify in the first quote, but it

is little complicated in second one, because here the auto biographer is trying to convey the message of memory and normalcy at the same time exemplifying the third person plural, emphasising that the individuals who were 'beautiful' struggle more when they accidentally become ugly, because they're reminiscenced by their beauty. But that is not the case with both the authors Ved Mehta and Kanga Firdaus whose works have been taken for analysis in this study. Rather, they appreciated the way they were born or the moment they lost their limbs, because they have no memory attached, or if at all they have any memory that would've been for very short period, which they've experienced as a child and unable to recollect. So they enjoy being what they are and they take lot of pride in their bodies in the way they look. There is another incident in the book *Trying to Grow*, in which the author seems positive about his disability. We read the line in the auto biographer's own language: "No,' I said, 'my name is Daryus. I'm called Brit because I have brittle bones and I hope you are embarrassed" (Kanga 189).

This previous quotation from the text *Trying To Grow* indicates that author is not at all ashamed of the kind of disability he is experiencing. He is in fact making fun of the disability that he suffers from, thus he is representing himself as a brave and courageous person who is able to take his disability very lightly. This representation of disability of author is very unusual and contradictory to the image that we come across in any other kind of literary fictive genres like novels and mythical texts because usually the nondisabled writers position his\her disabled character at two extreme poles either making him/her very brave or rendering him\her an object of pity depending mostly on attitude and understanding of author about disability. And there are other things to be noticed in the text that not only the author but the author's entire family also took his disability not as a burden but a problem which can be resolved because author's pet name Brittle was given by his family members. And among all the family members, the author's mother was very brave who treated his child like normally any other mother treats her child without being very sympathetic towards but with extra care. There is another very interesting incident depicted in the text that shows the bravery of a mother on the birth of disabled child. Here is the conversation between doctor and author's mother on the day of the author's birth from the text *Trying to Grow*:

I am afraid I have bad news for you, Sera,' he said, looking down at his pudgy fingers. 'Your boy is born with bones brittle as glass. The ones in his legs are delicate as test tube; I doubt he'll ever walk. He'll probably be toothless, too; his teeth will break as soon

as he bites into anything hard.'

'Anything else, doctor?' said Sera with a mysterious smile. 'This is no laughing matter, I assure you...But he's not going to walk.'

'Then he must use a wheelchair,' said Sara. (Kanga 28)

This incident is a clear indication that despite being born with multiple disabilities, the author was not understood as any kind of cruse on his family and he was not treated as a burden on family but he was welcomed with lot of warmness. Even the doctors were quite worried, nervous and anxious concerning the medical fitness of the new born child but his mother was very hopeful about the life of her new born child and somewhere in deep she knew that her child will survive like any other human being in the world so the author's body was seen and accepted positively by his family members like any other new born child body. This shows the positive and empathetic behaviour of family towards a disabled body member.

Now, we look at the incident showing how Ved Mehta's disability was seen by his family members. Here we have narration from *Face to Face* in Ved Mehta's own language: "She did not have the medical experience of my father, and she blamed something in her past for the tragedy" (Mehta 4).

The text *Face to Face* was published in the year 1956 when more than half of the Indian were not even literate and it was very normal for common people to have this type of traditional and karmic or religious approach towards disability. But then Mehta was not understood as any kind of cruse or burden on his family but Ved's mother blamed herself for his disability because she was not educated enough to understand the bodies and illness of body based on medical approach. Ved Mehta's autobiography *Face to Face* basically focuses on medical model of disability and he spoke very less about his blindness. Other than that he spoke lot about his surroundings and he narrated incidents from 1947 partition. We have discussed how disability body was treated by both disabled and within their family and now we will see how author's body were seen in the society then. And here is an example taken from *Trying to Grow*: "To a lot of people you seem stupid because you are so short and, I know it's absurd, because you can't walk" (Kanga 68).

In general, that cannot be denied that we tend to judge people based on their appearances and vice versa most of us are judged by people based on the way we look. Most of the time people with disabilities were ignored and were looked down upon because of the conventional and very negative portrayal constructed by the different means of media since

ancient times. Till date, people are carrying the same negative images of people with disabilities because of lack of education and unawareness about reasons of disabilities and strong belief in religious texts which are main reasons of constructing the negative image of disabled people. There are other incidents in the book *Trying to Grow* where disabled body was a symbol of weakness and was treated as inferior and seen asexual despite all these problems and obstacles were faced by writers in these two autobiographies, they love their bodies the way they are. One among few incidents show how Firdaus's body was looked at by his surroundings except his family members:

What do men want?' she once asked.

'Love,' I said.

'Food of course!' snorted Dolly.

'A firm hand,' said Sera, smiling grimly.

'Money!' spat Defarge...

'Wrong!' said Jeroo. Wrong as a moron's answer sheet. Its sex, sex and more sex!

'Now, do be sensible,' Sera whispered fiercely... 'So sorry!' said Jeroo. 'I forgot about your son. You understand, when I say men, I mean-men. Not like you, Brit.'

I wasn't male. Not to them. The magic mirrors of their minds had invented a formula: osteo= sexlessness. (Kanga 40)

This description from the text *Trying To Grow* is a very vivid picture that shows that Firdaus was seen as a sexless person by the society he was surrounded. That very statement from the text *Trying To Grow* by Firdaus Kanga trying to explain that how people with any kind of impairments have been looked at as sexless irrespective of their genders since ages. These perceptions have been constructed through various means of media. And because of these age old perceptions and conventional images of disability, people with any kind of disabilities irrespective of their gender have been considered sexless person who do not have any kind of sexual desire and if they do then it is understood immoral and not good for them. In some cases disabled people are represented punished or disfavoured people from God for some wrong doing in their previous life and in some other they were shown close to the God and favourite people. But they were not understood and depicted like their non-disable fellow humans. Few examples of this kind are very much evident in the text by

Kanga Firdaus *Trying To Grow*. Here we listen the author's own words in the text *Trying To Grow*:

They were discussing us, as if were the clouds or the sea or the rocks. 'What does she see in him?'

'Pity?'

'God will reward her.'

'May be he is rich.'

'I wouldn't take him if he were rich as the Birlas.'

'This is how the Christian must have felt in the Colosseum,' I whispered to Amy. (Kanga 253)

In the citation above the oldest of all the approaches towards disability "Karmic Approach" is very much visible and which is learnt and taught at every home, school, church, and practised by almost majorities of the worldly culture on daily basis. But here, the author is trying to explain this is how religion and religious people look towards person with any kind biological limits because they were taught to have sympathy towards weak and disabled people, and women, and for that they will be rewarded in paradise after their death. Religious people irrespective of any religion of the world have made life of people with disabilities very worsen knowingly or unknowingly constructing disabled narrative using religious texts to portrays their images in front of society making them favoured and disfavoured people of God but they have never been seen and treated same as any other non-disabled person. And one another thing is to be noticed in pervious passage that person with any kind of biological problems have never been understood a perfect romantic partner let it be a men or women. If a non disabled person be it a men or women marry to a person with disability then generally people have a certain prejudice toward that person thinking that s/he married to that person because s/he is rich or maybe it is done out of sympathy but it will not be seen as an usual marriage.

Through these sentences, the author is trying to explain how disability is looked at through different spectrum like religious, capitalist etc. This conversation from the book 'Trying To Grow' shows that generally, people don't really understand the bodies and functions of its rather they become judgmental about a disable body. All these prejudices come from what they have read, what they have been taught, what they have listened about disability since ages but they don't have their own understanding of about body. In modern times too these old religious narratives

against disabilities keep influencing not only common individuals but privileged people like teachers, doctors etc. which we might come across in previous pages of selected works or we might find evidence of them in coming passages of selected works for this research paper. If we look deep into the matter and go through the citation given above these people's mind is not only corrupted by the religious texts but capitalism also influenced their thoughts very much. This is why people with any kind of physical or mental deformities have been considered burdensome on the healthy economy of a nation. And the second last phrase "I wouldn't take him if he were rich as the Birla" of the previous passage from the selected work *Trying To Grow*, it can be observed that this sentence is full of hatred towards impaired people and the very source of this sentence is nowhere but in religious narratives, mythical and fictive writings on disabled bodies since the history of human writings. And this is how all kinds of fictive writings, be it mythical or religious, are able to construct the narrative against disabled bodies.

There are few lines from the same text where we can see the author's disability was seen by society from a 'Karmic' perspective and he was made to feel bad, inferior and less fortunate than his human fellow in front of his own friends. And the author writes:

Such people,' said someone, 'are often God's favourite: that is why he makes them different.'

'You wrong, wrong. He is punished.'

'You mustn't laugh,' someone said to the urchins. 'Or the next time you are born, you will be unfortunate as him. (Kanga 253)

That is another example of 'Karmic Approach' illustrated in the text from which the author's disability has been seen by society. The Karmic approach which we have seen in the previous paragraph was usually used by Christianity whereas this approach is used by Hindu religious texts and people to show sympathy and cruelty at the same time towards people with any kind of disabilities. According to Hindu belief, disability is a punishment given to the people for their wrong doing in previous life and at the same time they believe that if someone laughs at them or does something wrong to the impaired person that person will suffer from the same kind of disability in his/her next life. This is a common belief observed in Hindu religious scriptures or at least they practised in their day to day life. This shows the hypocrisy of religion or society, as on the one hand they were depicted as disfavoured people of God and on the other they are asking people not to laugh on them because they think that if they will laugh on their con-

dition in this birth then they will suffer from the same kind of suffering in the next reincarnation. This very statement is illogical and not able to convince a really logical person if a person is really disfavoured by God then it was God's own wish then other people's laugh is not going to make any sense because that was the God's own wish if it was at all but that is simply a senseless statement by religion to create fear in people's mind. And these are the same people who are asking people not to laugh on disabled people constructed those religious narratives against disabled body.

The above phrases from the text *Trying To Grow*, are trying to explain the same notion of pitying the differently-abled but in a little different way like there is common saying "Do good to them to get good". All these sayings are very common to use for any kind of differently abled person. There is another thing which gets very clear here from the previous passage's conversation among the strangers that people do not respect and not want to respect the disabled bodies but they are simply mentally scared of stupid and senseless narrations of various religious texts. "Karmic Concept" is oldest among all the approaches of disability which influences almost all the Indians including literate, educated: doctors, teachers etc. and many privileged individuals. People, in India use this approach bluntly without even realising that their sayings might leave an individual with disabilities traumatised. Here we look at an incident which happened with the author in a rendezvous with an oculist. How the body was seen by doctor and how author is looking at his own body being a disabled person. Here is conversation between the author and the doctor: "The oculist glared at me, his mouth doing a jig. 'I know why you are this way,' he said, his eyes joining the dance. 'You are a wicked boy and God has punished you'" (Kanga 144).

This incident from the text clearly shows that how the oldest of all the religious approaches of disability 'Karmic Approach' have been influencing people since the history of human life. And that shows how strong this notion has become with time and keep influencing our day to day life. This became so deep rooted in our culture even Nobel Professionals like doctors are not able to avoid it. But one good thing we notice here is that no matter how bad he was made to feel bad about his body using different religious narratives, common saying and capitalist thinking against disability but all the time he overcame from all kind of inferior complicity. That shows that how author was brought up and his body was seen by his parents and the kind of emotional support he got from his childhood which made him the kind of person now he is. There is an incident that took place with the author when he was sitting at the beach

with his female friend. Here is what the author has to say about that from the text *Trying To Grow*: "At least they should not come out, such people. Then loving in public -It's too much" (Kanga 253).

This incident from the text reminds me of the story of Mahabharat where Dhritarashtra was denied the throne of Hastinapur because of his blindness despite being the eldest son of King. Here in the text too, people are looking down upon at person with differently-abled and they think that this world belongs only to the non-disabled beings and all the rights of enjoyment are made for non-disabled people. And being alive is more than enough for people with any kind of disabilities. They have no rights to make love and marry like their non-disabled fellow humans. The citation cited above representing the exclusiveness thought of nondisabled people towards differently abled because they have always been made others by excluding them from the main society. The tone of sentence is a very harsh which shows the barbarous and conventional thoughts of elimination of people with biological issues by main society. Most of us at least who research on disability studies know that in history children born with any kind of abnormalities were left alone to die in isolation. This sentence also talking about the same kind of notion of elimination of people with impairments from the society but in a little different way like they should not be appeared in the public place. There is an incident from the text *Trying To Grow* that shows how some nondisabled people carry their bitterness not only against people with disabilities but to the nondisabled people who are associated or connected to the disabled bodies in anyways. Here are few phrases of conversation between the strangers and the author near a beach where author and few of his female friends went for a simple walk from the text *Trying To Grow*: "Then the man in the dhoti said, 'Maybe something is wrong with her inside, we can't see it. That's why she has to marry this cripple. She can't find anyone else'" (Kanga 253).

In the above passage, the author is trying to show that how angry and full of hatred non-disabled people are towards disability and disabled body and because of that they have discriminatory and prejudiced behaviour not only towards the disabled people but also toward the people who are associated with disabled individual in anyway. Basically these people are influenced by religious approaches of disability and they think that people with disability are not lovable. When they saw the author kissing his female friend, they were shocked to see, a disable boy kissing a non-disable girl. And just to overcome from this incident they used prejudice as a defence mechanism against the author's female friend who is happened to be non-disabled. Both the writers Firdaus Kanga and Ved Mehta are trying to explain the idiocy and hypocrisy of all the re-

ligions of world same time through their texts *Trying To Grow* and *Face to Face*, respectively. Now we can observe the instance from 'Trying To Grow' by Firdaus Kanga:

Where are you taking him?' asked the old man, a total stranger. Father liked talking on buses; it helped him forget his itch to walk it out.

'To a witch doctor,' said father gaily.

'What?' quavered the old man, hastily...

'I was joking,' said Father, laying a hand on his snapping fingers. 'I'm taking him to a holy man, Wagh Baba. May be he'll cure my son.'

'Shame on you!' said the old man, his colourless skin suddenly daubed with purple islands. 'Don't we have Parsee prayers for children like these? (Kanga 3-4)

"Although their analysis and remedies differed considerably, they all agreed that by doing penance for her sins, my mother could improve my chance of regaining sight"(Mehta 5).

In general, we might have heard people saying that this very creation is created by God himself and He create everything in a unique and perfect way and if everything is created and by the Almighty himself while making such statements they should never forget that people with disabilities are also part of this world and they are also his own creation, are also perfect in their own way. But these lines from the texts *Trying To Grow* and *Face to Face* respectively seem very paradoxical in nature what usually people say about God and his creation, because on one side these people are saying that God create everything uniquely but on the other hand they are same people who are challenging God and his own existence or the creation by criticizing and taking a disabled child to a 'Holy Man' like Wagh Baba for cure. They just don't stop here, in order to prove the superiority of their religion they make such statements which contribute nothing in the life of a person with disability but show idiocy and hypocrisy of religious people. These citations above from both the texts are sufficient enough to show that no religion is lagging behind in worsening the life of people with disability, so here we notice one thing that how religious narratives were used against disabled bodies in dehumanising and portraying them as evils or demons like. But the difference between these narratives is that one religion might use "Karmic" approach and the other might use another approach which is convenient for their religion but will never accept disabled persons as their co-fellow human.

Conclusion

As we know, these two texts are autobiographies of two different writers, with two different religious backgrounds, in two different time spans. The first one, Ved Mehta was born in British India and got education in the U.S.A. and he wrote this book in 1956. It will not be wrong to say when that book got published more than half of the Indian population were illiterate. So there was no question of education for people with disability and especially an individual experiencing blindness. And the other writer was born in an Independent India, and produced his autobiography in 1990. That time not all but few educated Indians were sensitive enough to understand the issues like disabilities and this is why the first disability act came in to existence in 1995. Despite all these differences like - they were born in two different eras, were brought-up in two different surroundings and experienced two different types of disabilities too, but one basic thing which is common between two writers is: - they had to go through same kind of experiences and suffering, at some point of time in life, i.e.:somewhere paying homage to religious places for being a disabled body for cure. While going through these texts we find that authors were quite happy, positive and negative same time about their bodies like any other non-disabled being. They too feel low like everyone feels at some point of time in life but they are not very positive and not very negative unlike we have read and seen in some fictional stories, novels or films which are written and directed by an individual who never tested the disability in his\her life in anyways. And that is what makes these writings more natural unlike those fictional writings which we have been going through ages but all in vain and no test of real disability literature.

Both the autobiographies are very informative and interesting to read and do research from the point of view of disabled body which became a mile stone in contributing positive attitude in people with disabilities' life. In these texts, the authors used Medical and social model of disability instead of using religious concept of disability. Since these texts are written by two different authors who are experiencing two different impairments and sharing their personal experiences about disabilities. Normally few among us might have noticed that usually a nondisabled writer finds all the problems with bodies by making an impaired person an unfortunate individual instead of geographical location which was in reality made for nondisabled by nondisabled society. But these two autobiographies give us entirely a new and different perception about disabled bodies as comparatively fictive writings since these are written by the writers who experience disability in person that made all the differences. First

thing we just not only require to educate society alone but we need to focus on educating the impaired persons in particular. As we know that people believe and practice what they have been taught, told, read and listened in their life time so secondly we need to encourage disable people to produce more and more life -writings like :- Autobiographies, memoires etc. by sharing their experiences with their own bodies which will not only deconstruct the traditional approach of disability . But it will help them or their kind disabled bodies and nondisabled to understand their own body and its functions. In the end I would say we need more and more life writings from any marginalized section of the society to find the solution of their problems which will help in making society more inclusive that will result in more healthy and progressive nation. Because there is a saying "together we are, more progressive we will be".

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Over-the-Top Platforms and Covid-19: A Study on Usage and Impact among the Youth in India

Pushkar Patnaik & Paramveer Singh

Abstract

Over The Top service is the future of entertainment and music industry in our country. After the penetration of 4G Internet services in India, there is a sudden boom and rise of demand of OTT platforms. At the same year, Netflix, Amazon prime, Sony, Disney came to India and started commissioning content. The study aims to understand the usage and impact of OTT content among the youth. It is found during the study after the COVID-19 the youth are more into OTT platform watching contents. The amount of time spent in watching a video is on an average 1-2 hour per day. They do not prefer to share their screen with others and love to watch all the live match and online movie premiere. A slight amount of change in behaviour and a healthy routine. While it is also found that there is no change in their sleeping order.

Keywords: Binge Watch; New Media; OTT (Over the Top) Platforms; Piggybacking; Streaming Video.

Introduction

Globally, Over the Top service has become a prominent platform for consumption of music and entertainment content (Samtani & Jindal, 2018). Over the Top platforms are new way of entertainment in India (Thomas, 2018). Any application, which is providing the steaming service through the internet, is called Over The Top platform (OTT). Alibaba, Amazon Prime, Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, Voot, MX Player, Eros now, Discovery Plus, Jio Cinema, SonyLiv are some examples of OTT service providers in India. OTT represents the future of entertainment. As long as we have access to the internet either through a dongle or LAN or using mobile network, we can enjoy the content providing by the OTT platforms. OTT revolution was started in this decade after the launching of

4G internet service. Now Indian internet service providers are providing most affordable internet data in the world and cheapest mobile sets are available in our country. We have a large upper middle class population whose paying capacity is increasing. These factors make us the perfect market for Over the Top service providers. Access to affordable data, rural mobile phone penetration, rising affluence and service adoption across demographic sections are the key drivers for OTT industry to unlock its potential (Economic Times, 2018).

Over the Top platforms were started in India in the year 2008, with Big-Flix. It was brainchild of Reliance Entertainment. Now most of the Indian media conglomerates are offering OTT services to the Indian audience. Sony (SonyLive), Disney (Hotstar), Amazon (Amazon Prime), Netflix Inc. (Netflix), Eros International (Eros Now), Discovery (Discovery Plus) are some international players who are providing global as well as domestic content in our country. Indian companies like Balaji telefilms (Altbala ji), Zee (Zee5), Reliance (Jio Cinema & Jio TV), Viacom-18 (Voot), and Times Group (MX Player) are also competing very well in this business. It is expected that OTT service business will reach to Rs 35000 crore in the FY23 (Thomas, 2018)

The evolution of OTT platform in India came in the year 2008. When Reliance Entertainment launched Movie on demand. BigFix. In the year 2013, OTT gained a rise in the platform when Ditto TV (zee) and Sony Liv were launched in the Indian Market. The platform containing various shows from all media channel including Star, Sony, Zee, etc. nexGTV was the first app to do live streaming of Indian Premier League on mobile phones. Use of OTT started increasing in the year of 2015. When Hotstar entered the Indian Market, which owned by Star India as of 2018. According to the report by Hotstar Watch hour in the year 2018, 96% Of watch time comes from a video longer than 20 minutes. In 2019, Hotstar began in creating new original content such as "Hotstar Special". The maximum viewership on Hotstar comes from drama, movies and sports. After 2016, Netflix came to India and started commissioning content. According to the Morgan Stanley Research, Netflix recorded the highest average watch time around 120minutes.

Netflix has started its intent to invest Rs 600 Crore in the production of new exclusive content for the audience only. Netflix started facing tough competition with another OTT platform in India like Amazon Prime, Hotstar, Voot and Eros Now.

In last few year, OTT service providers like Netflix, Amazon, Disney,

Sony, Balaji and Zee etc. entice the Indian audience to subscribe their services. Price has been slashed and exclusive content is providing by these service provider to cater the needs of Indian audience. (Binged, 2020).

Review of Literature

India has second largest internet users market in the world. It is expected that there will be more than 907 million active internet users by 2023 (The Economic Times, 2020). After launch of Reliance Jio, there was a sudden rise in internet use and it is catalyst in the growth of OTT platforms in India. Digital content consumption is rising globally due to internet-enabled gadgets. Indians has been exploring across diverse platforms such as music, news, audio, visuals etc. It is noted that an Indian youth, on an average spend almost 17% of their monthly expenditures and 14% of their time on entertainment. An internet content user in India utilizes an average of 6.2 hours of content on daily basis out of which 21% of the time is used up on audio-visual entertainment. (Deloitte, n.d.)

India has a sound base of OTT services with 40+ Over-the-top platforms, 15+ active music streaming platforms and 40+ active podcast players and beyond. One third of the audience preferred to watch content in regional language and most preferred language are Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Bengali and Hindi. (Inc42 Media, 2020). Today domestic as well as international players providing OTT services in India. OTT market is growing at the rate of 21.8 % CAGR, from Rs. 4,464 Crore in 2018 to Rs. 11,976 Crore in 2023. FICCI-EY report 2019 proposes that market will reach to 24 million by 2023 (Lamba, 2020).

OTT platforms reduced the television watching time. Audience finds OTT platforms more convenient than traditional way of video consumption. (Dasgupta, 2019). Subscribers demand the personalized content on their gadgets, which they can watch on their convenient time. The streaming services have revolutionized to cater the demands of their subscribers (MICA, 2019). Content across the globe is available on these platforms. International and national OTT platforms providing the global content and converting the globe into a village in real sense. (Saini, 2020)

By increasing the penetration of internet, future of OTT is bright. People are spending money and time on these streaming platforms. OTT users are enjoying the content on lower cost. Globally OTT has shown the increase in Subscription. Time spent on watching streaming videos or OTT services has been drastically increased by 140% in 2018. It is indicating that customers are shifting from traditional tv sets to desktop, laptop or

smartphone. (Dasgupta, 2019, MICA, 2019).

After 2014, web series phenomenon began in India. The demand of web series in India are increasing day by day. The audience are now want to watch factual based content neither a Melodrama. The competition between various OTT platform for the good content also give rise to popularity in India. The future of web series is bright in India as audience now value content-based show. (Adlakha, 2018).

During lockdown, OTT content is most popular among the Indian urban youth. Content of OTT was used for entertainment by 70 percent of the urban youth in the country. Daily content consumption was also increased due to lockdown as 31% urban youth consumed the content for 4 to 6 hours daily while 14% youth consumed the same for 6 to 9 hours. Half of the youth used these services for 2 to 3 hours daily (Dentsu Marketing, 2020). Screen time has gone up during lockdown in India. Due to growing content availability on OTT platforms, flexibility & choice and lack of entertainment options Indian youth used these OTT platforms during lockdown. (Nijhawan & Dahiya, 2020)

OTT platforms have positive as well as negative effects on their audience (Majumdar, 2020). Violent content impacts on children for long term. There are several impacts like aggressive behaviour, aggressive thoughts, angry feelings, arousal levels and helping behaviour (Bushman, 2006). Indian youth are getting ideas for crime right from kidnapping to murder from online streaming video platforms. Several cases have the evidence where youth committed crime after getting idea from these OTT platforms. (Kumar, 2021).

Research based on online content consumers of France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States highlights that young users, between 18 to 35 years, spend 6 hours 48 minutes per week to watch online video content and 59 percent increase since 2016. Binge watching is increasing in India. Users of US spend 8.55 hours per week for online video content while Indian users spend 8.43 hours per week for the same (Market Research: The state of Online Video 2019, n.d.). Binge watch, watching many episodes in one sitting, is also increasing day by day. It has also several health issues such as obesity, blood clots in legs, illness and risk of heart diseases. (Birch, 2019). There are some other health issues due to over use of streaming media. It has negative impact on sleep and decrease the quality of sleep (Exelmans, 2017). Binge watching might hurt our health in 5 ways like physical inactivity, snacking & poor dietary intakes, social isolation, sleep

disorder or poor sleep quality and behavioural addiction (Scherer, 2020).

Research Questions & Hypothesis

This study is based on Usage and Gratification Theory of Mass Communication. The main reasons behind this research is to find the purpose of uses of Over the Top platforms by the youth and how they gratify their needs with these services? The main research questions are as follows:

RQ1- Why Indian youth are using OTT Platforms?

RQ2- How OTT platforms are using by Indian youth?

RQ3- What are the impacts of over the top platforms on Indian youth during Covid-19?

H1- Young Indian users are addicted to OTT binge watching.

H2- OTT platforms affect young users negatively.

Aim and Objective of the Study

The study intended to understand the usage and consequences of Over-the- Top platforms among youth

To study the usage of Over-the-Top platforms among youth.

To study the impacts of Over-the-Top platforms among youth during Covid-19.

Research Methodology

The data used in the study was Primary data and it was collected by conducted a survey among youth. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect the data in the study. The survey was conducted online. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Convenience Sampling method was used to conduct survey among 100 students. The random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. A total 100 students from different universities such as Central university of Punjab, IIT Bombay, Central university of Bihar, AIIMS etc. selected to include various educated young audience. Data is interpreted through simple percentage analysis.

Results

During this study mostly questions were close-ended with several op-

tions. Questions were related to usage of Over the top Platforms and its impact faced by the respondents. Results of this study are as follows:

Watching Over the Top (OTT) Services

The online video watching habit is increasing all around the global and India is not an exception. OTT market is rising swiftly in India and all segment of the society are adopting the OTT platforms. Study shows that 93% of the respondents watch content online and the remaining seven percent of the people did not watch content online. So on the behalf of the results, it can be said that Indian youth is using Over the Top Platforms. They have already adopted OTT platforms.

Gadgets Used

Smartphone technology has changed socio-culture and economic aspects of our life. Study reveals that the maximum number of respondents use smartphones to explore the content online. Young OTT users find smartphone most convenient gadget to watch the streaming content. Around 82.4% of the respondents use smartphones, around 9.2% of the respondents use a laptop to watch online content. 3.1% of people use desktop or PCs for watching online content. The remaining 4.1% of the respondents generally stream online content through their smart TV sets. Results shows that the smartphone is the main gadget to explore the potential of OTT platforms in India.

Preferred OTT Applications

Preferred OTT Application	Percentage of Respondents
Netflix	50
Voot	23
Amazon Prime	56
Eros Now	4
Alt Balaji	8
Jio TV	34
Jio Cinema	23
Sony Liv	24
Other	36

Netflix is the global leader in OTT business but Amazon Prime is the pre-

ferred OTT among Indian youth. Netflix is also one of the most preferred platform. Result shows that the maximum number of the respondents had Netflix and Amazon Prime Video applications in their smartphones and gadgets. Respondents are heavy users of mainly Netflix and Prime Video, 50% have installed Netflix and 56% of the respondents have Amazon subscription with them. JioCinema and Voot were used by 23% of the people. Jio TV is preferred OTT platform of 34% respondents. There were other online applications were also there *i.e.* 36% of the people have them. A very few people 4% had Eros Now and 8% of the respondents had ALT Balaji application in their gadgets.

Paying Money for OTT Services

Indian audience are paying time and money on OTT platforms. Result shows that the majority of young users pay regularly for watching online content through video streaming services. Around 58% of respondents pay for the OTT streaming services but the remaining 42% of the respondents do not pay for watching online content.

Objectives of Watching OTT Content

Variety of content is very wide on OTT platform. It can be said that content is available for every section of the society. Content from sports to documentary, short film to web series, Drama tonews, every format of the video program is available. Audience watch these programs for various purposes. The present study shows that why young Indian users use these online video streaming services. Above graph depicts that majority of the respondents use such services for relaxation. Around 42% of the respondents use such online services for relaxing or refreshing their minds. Around 36% of the respondents have the objective of time pass in using OTT services. A very few percentages of respondents *i.e.* 9% use such services for imagination and emotional release of their minds.

Preferred Programme-Genre on OTT

The above graph clearly shows that people like to watch rom-com genre or such type of content. With the maximum numbers, romantic comedy was preferred genre which people like to watch. 35% of the respondents watch content of this genre. People like to watch action and drama also on online platforms. 22% respondents like to watch drama and 24% respondents watch action based content on OTT platforms. Action and Drama are the two genre which were opted by respondents with a minimal difference. Romance is the least liked genre to watch by people *i.e.* only 3% people watch romantic genre content.

Time Spent on OTT platforms

The study shows that people generally consume their one or two hours daily for watching over the top content. 33% of the respondents consume one or two hours. 25% of respondents consume their two to three hours while watching such content or programs. 13% audience watch OTT content for 3 to 4 hours daily. There is a new term known as binge watch. If audience watch a program for more than 4 hours in a day that comes under the binge watching. 15% Indian young users spend more than four hours watching web-based content.

Habit of Screen-sharing

Sharing screen is also known as piggybacking. Present study reveals that Indian youth don't like piggybacking, means they don't want to share their screen with anybody else. The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of people don't share their screens while watching on-line content. Around 60% of the respondents don't use the screen share option in their applications. 18.4% of the respondents share their login details or share screens with their families or 19.4% of them use to share it with their friends. A very few *i.e.* only 3.1% of the respondents share their screens with their virtual friends.

Perception on Replacement of Traditional Ways of Watching, by OTT Services

Over the Top platforms are the new way of entertainment in our country and these services are replacing the traditional television and cinema watching. The above chart shows that the maximum number of respondents were agreeing upon it. Around 46% of the respondents believed that online platforms are replacing the traditional way of video consumption way. Around 22% of the people were strongly agreed upon the statement. Only 10% respondents believed that these services are not replacing the traditional ways of watching movies or content.

Perception on Censorship of Content

Central government issued a notification in the month of November, 2020 to regulate or censor the content of online streaming services. The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of people were agreeing upon the statement. Of 97, there were 34% of the people were in favour of the statement and 21.4% of the respondents were not favouring it. 12.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed upon the statement that there should

be censorship over OTT platforms.

Change in Behaviour

The above graph shows that people don't believe that they found any behaviour, attitude, tone or accent change after watching online content. Around 52% of the people were not favouring the above statement and rest 48% of the people felt such changes after watching online favourite content.

Perception on Sleeping-disorder

The above graph depicts, the maximum number of people disagreed, it means they did not feel any sleeping disorder. 31% of the respondents were disagreeing upon the above statement. Only 26% of the respondents were in the favour that they felt such sleeping disorders after watching online content.

Perception on Health-changes

The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of respondents were strongly agreed upon the above statement. Around 40% of the respondents were in the favour that health and mind are affected by watching online videos. Around 21% of the respondents were disagreeing that there is no mind or health change in watching online web content. A large number of respondents *i.e.* 27.6% were not able to decide over the above statement.

Impact on Day-to-Day Life

The above graph clearly shows that the maximum number of the respondents were not able to conclude on the above statement. Around 53% of the respondents were neither felt positive nor negative effects of OTT platforms. Only 9.2% of the respondents had a negative impact on these platforms and the remaining 37.8% of the respondents had a positive impact of OTT platforms on them.

Perception on Covid-19 & Watching Content on OTT Platforms

The above graph shows that the maximum number of respondents were agreeing upon the statement. Around half of the respondents were agreeing that OTT platforms are safe and easy to explore during this pandemic situation. 30% of the respondents were highly agreeing upon the above statement. A very few percent of people were disagreeing with the above

statement. Around 15% of the respondents were not able to reach on any final decision over the statement.

Perception on Behavioural Changes during Covid-19

The above graph clearly shows that the number of respondents was equal who were agreeing and disagreeing upon the above statement. Around 34% of the people saw behaviour change attributes while watching online content and around 32% of the respondents were opposing it that they did not saw any behavioural change after watching online content. Around 24% of the respondents were not able to reach on any conclusion of the above statement.

Discussion & Conclusion

Over the Top (OTT) platforms got hyped and popular in the year 2016. From then onwards, the media content has changed a lot. Many Entertainment Moguls launched their OTT platforms after Netflix and Amazon Prime came into the Indian market. It seems that there would be more competition between content creator and OTT service providers in the coming days. Reliance Jio's affordable price of internet connection played a booming role in the accessibility of the internet among the youth. OTT platform also started making content according to the habits and moods of young people.

The present study, however, felt that the new medium of OTT platforms is adopted by youth and after this COVID-19 pandemic, they are spending more time on it. Through this study, it was found that more than 94% watch online videos and they prefer to watch mostly on smartphones. Amazon prime and Netflix were the top OTT platform, which are mostly watched by the young audience. The main reason behind watching video on OTT platform is just for relaxation and time pass. The genre they prefer to watch is of romance+ comedy and drama. It is found that young Indian users are addicted to OTT binge watching because more than half of the respondent watch OTT for more than 2 hours daily. So it can be say that null hypothesis is valid and accepted. Even, an average youth also agreed in the censorship on OTT platforms. Piggybacking is not liked by the Indian youth. Maximum young users don't prefer to share their screen with another person. Young audience love to watch the live programs and new realised movie through these online streaming platforms. Indian youth believe that OTT platform is going to eat a traditional way of watching entertainment videos in the coming years and they too agreed OTT platforms are the substitute of all previous exist-

ing mediums. Young users are agreed that are OTT platforms are safe during this contagious pandemic situation and watching time has been increased during Covid-19. It is observed that during COVID-19, a behaviour change in their personality after spending their time on the platform. It was also observed a change in health and mind routine. It is also seen after watching OTT content, there is no change in their any sleeping order. So the second hypothesis is also valid because young Indian users face behavioural changes and some health issues after or while watching OTT content.

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हिन्दी सिनेमा और स्त्री सरोकार

उमेश कुमार

सारांश

स्वामी विवेकानन्द, राजाराम मोहन राय, ज्योतिबा फुले, सावित्री बाई फुले, महात्मा गांधी, डॉ. अम्बेडकर और अन्य अनेक समाज सुधारकों ने महिला समानता पर जोर दिया। महिला समानता के प्रयासों को असली गति स्वतंत्रता के बाद मिली। महिलाओं की साक्षरता पर बल दिया गया। महिलाओं के प्रति भेदभाव और अन्याय पर रोकथाम के लिए कई कानून बनाए गये। इन प्रयासों से महिलाओं में आत्मविश्वास जागृत हुआ। उनमें अपने अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूकता पैदा हुई। उनके लिए रोजगार के अवसर बढ़ाए गए जिसके परिणामस्वरूप उनमें आर्थिक स्वावलम्बन का भाव पैदा हुआ। सरकार के साथ-साथ बढ़ी संख्या में स्वयंसेवी संगठनों, महिला मंडलों, कुछ अन्तरराष्ट्रीय एजेंसियों, सक्रिय लोगों और सिनेमा ने महिला समानता पर जोर दिया।

बीज शब्द : आत्मविश्वास; महिला; समाज; समानता; साक्षरता।

स्वामी विवेकानन्द, राजाराम मोहन राय, ज्योतिबा फुले, सावित्री बाई फुले, महात्मा गांधी, डॉ. अम्बेडकर और अन्य अनेक समाज सुधारकों ने महिला समानता पर जोर दिया। महिला समानता के प्रयासों को असली गति स्वतंत्रता के बाद मिली। महिलाओं की साक्षरता पर बल दिया गया। महिलाओं के प्रति भेदभाव और अन्याय पर रोकथाम के लिए कई कानून बनाए गये। इन प्रयासों से महिलाओं में आत्म विश्वास जागृत हुआ। उनमें अपने अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूकता पैदा हुई। उनके लिए रोजगार के अवसर बढ़ाए गए जिसके परिणामस्वरूप उनमें आर्थिक स्वावलम्बन का भाव पैदा हुआ। सरकार के साथ-साथ बढ़ी संख्या में स्वयंसेवी संगठनों, महिला मंडलों, कुछ अन्तरराष्ट्रीय एजेंसियों, सक्रिय लोगों और सिनेमा ने महिला समानता पर जोर दिया। पहली सवाक फिल्म आलम आरा (1931) के दौरान फिल्में पारसी नाटकों से प्रभावित थीं। जो नाटक पारसी रंगमंच में मशहूर थे उन पर ही फिल्में बनाने का चलन था। फिल्मों की कथायें भी उसी प्रकार की ऐतिहासिक पौराणिक और रूमानी प्रकार की होती थीं। इनका आदर्श सैयद आगा हसन अमानत के नाटक 'इन्द्रसभा' था। हिन्दी सिनेमा की कथाओं में धीरे-धीरे परिवर्तन होने लगा। फिल्मकारों ने सामाजिक प्रश्नों को अधिक गंभीरता से उठाना शुरू कर दिया था। 1934 में समाज की भूल फिल्म बनी थी। इसमें विधवा के पुनर्विवाह के अधिकार का समर्थन था। इसमें दहेज और संपत्ति हेतु पारिवारिक संघर्ष को दिखाया गया है।

स्वतंत्रता के दस वर्ष बाद बनी फिल्म मदन इंद्रिया (1957) को स्त्री जागृति का उदाहरण माना जा सकता है। इसमें एक किसान स्त्री के संघर्ष को भारतीय स्त्री का प्रतीकात्मक संघर्ष बनाकर दिखाया गया है। यह हर प्रकार के उत्पीड़न का बहादुरी से सामना करती है। वह अपने परिवार को ही नहीं पालती बल्कि अपने गांव के विकास के लिए भी प्रयास करती है। इस विकास के लिए वह अपने पुत्र को भी गोली मारने से नहीं चूकती। इसमें अपने दौर का आशावाद भी झलकता है। हिंदी सिनेमा के फिल्मकारों ने चित्रयों से संबंधित सामाजिक सवालों को भिन्न नजरिये से दिखाने का भी प्रयास किया है। इस दौर में वेश्या, विधवा, बेमेल विवाह और बाल विवाह जैसे कई सामाजिक सवालों पर जागरूक फिल्में बनीं। साधना (1958), पाकीजा (1972) और अदालत (1976) आदि फिल्मों के माध्यम से फिल्मकारों ने यह दिखाने का प्रयास किया कि वेश्या भी इंसान है। यहाँ तक कि सत्यकाम

(1969) और पाकीजा (1972) फिल्म में ये वेश्याएं विवाह भी करती हैं। इसी प्रकार शारदा (1973) में बेमेल विवाह का प्रश्न उठया गया। प्रेमरोग (1982) में विधवा पुनर्विवाह का प्रश्न उठया गया है। इसी तरह धूल का फूल (1959), आसरा (1966) और हरे कांच की चूड़ियां (1967) आदि फिल्मों में बिना विवाह के मां का दर्जा पाने वाली स्त्री के जीवन के संघर्ष को दिखाया गया है। बीसवीं सदी और इक्कीसवीं सदी में ऐसे सामाजिक सवालों के प्रति फिल्मकारों के नजरिये भी बदले हैं। धूल का फूल (1959) की मां अपने बच्चे को समाज के सामने नहीं ला पाती है लेकिन क्या कहना (2000) की मां न केवल अपने बच्चे को समाज के सामने लाती बल्कि उस आदमी से विवाह करने से भी मना कर देती है जो उस बच्चे का पिता होता है लेकिन जिसने बच्चे की मां से विवाह से पूर्व में मना कर दिया था।

शेखर कपूर की फिल्म बॅडिट क्वीन (1994) एक वास्तविक चरित्र फूलन देवी पर आधारित फिल्म है। फूलन को ग्यारह साल की उम्र में अपने से तिगुने उम्र के पति द्वारा किए गए बलात्कार का सामना करना पड़ता है। बाद में गांव की उच्च जाति के लोगों के द्वारा उसे गांव में नंगा करके घुमाया जाता है और उसके साथ सामूहिक बलात्कार किया जाता है। फूलन को गांव में जगह नहीं मिलती उसे झकुओं की टोली में शरण लेने पर मजबूर होना पड़ता है। वहीं उसे जीवन में प्यार भी प्राप्त होता है। फूलन अपने पर अत्याचार करने वालों से प्रतिशोध लेती है। वह शर्त सहित समर्पण कर देती है। फिल्म यहीं समाप्त हो जाती है। यथार्थ में फूलन जेल से छूट जाती है। दो-दो बार संसद सदस्य रहती है परन्तु अन्त उसका झकझोरने वाला होता है। दिल्ली जैसे शहर में संसद भवन के नजदीक ही उसकी दिन दहाड़े क्रूरतापूर्वक हत्या कर दी जाती है। फूलन को जीवन भर हिंसा झेलनी पड़ी। दीपा मेहता ने स्त्री जीवन को केन्द्र में रखकर फायर (1998) फिल्म बनाई। इसमें उन्होंने शहरी मध्यवर्गीय जीवन के कथित नैतिक स्वरूप को चुनौती देने की हिम्मत दिखाई थी। इसमें स्त्री परिवार और विवाह नामक संस्था से स्वतंत्र होकर एक स्वतंत्र जीवन जीने का प्रयास करती है। इसमें दो शादीशुदा स्त्रियों के बीच शारीरिक सम्बन्धों को कथा का केन्द्र बनाया गया है। इसमें स्त्रियां त्याग, पतिव्रत और सेवा जैसे मूल्यों को ताक पर रख देती हैं और यौन इच्छाओं के प्रति अपराध बोध से पीड़ित नहीं होतीं। लेकिन ऐसी स्त्रियों के लिए पति के घर के द्वार सदा के लिए बंद हो जाते हैं। इसमें स्त्री, पुरुष की दासी बनकर जीवन बिताना नहीं चाहती क्योंकि उसे अपनी स्वतंत्रता का अहसास है। वह अपनी स्वतंत्रता और अधिकारों हेतु संघर्षशील है।

राजकुमार संतोषी की फिल्म लज्जा (2001) कई सवाल उठती है। इसमें कुल चार स्त्रियों की कहानी है। सारी स्त्रियाँ पुरुषों के समाज में अलग-अलग प्रकार से प्रताड़ित होती हैं, उन्हें अनेक बार सीता की तरह उसी अग्नि परीक्षा से गुजरना पड़ता है। चारों स्त्री पात्रों का नामकरण सीता के नाम पर होना फिल्म के अर्थ को मिथक रूप देता है। वैदेही का अपने पति की इच्छाओं के सामने नहीं झुकना, मैथिली का दहेज के दानवों के सामने नहीं झुकना, जानकी का पुरुषों द्वारा थोपित सामाजिक मर्यादाओं को स्वीकार नहीं करना और रामदुलारी द्वारा ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में गरीब स्त्रियों के लिए साक्षरता को बढ़ावा देना आधुनिक नारी चेतना के उदाहरण हैं। लेकिन समाज द्वारा निर्मित रास्ते पर नहीं चलना और उसका विरोध करना इनके लिए खतरा साबित होता है। इसकी कीमत इनको चुकानी पड़ती है। वैदेही को अपने ही पति से अपनी जान बचाने हेतु परेशानी उठनी पड़ती है। मैथिली को दहेज के दानवों का सामना करने की कीमत अनिश्चित भविष्य के रूप में चुकानी पड़ती है। जानकी का समाज में स्त्रियों की स्थिति को लेकर सवाल करने की कीमत अपने गर्भस्थ शिशु की हत्या के रूप में चुकानी पड़ती है। रामदुलारी के बेटे का एक उच्च जाति की लड़की से प्रेम करना पाप बन जाता है और उसका प्रतिरोध लेने के लिए रामदुलारी के साथ बलात्कार कर उसे जीवित जला दिया जाता है। लेकिन यह फिल्म दिखाती है कि आधुनिक स्त्री झुकेगी नहीं। वह अपना धर्म अब संघर्ष करना समझती है। मदर इंडिया का आशावाद इक्कीसवीं सदी में बनी मधुर भंडारकर की चांदनी बार (2001) में दिखाई नहीं देता है। चांदनी बार की नायिका मुमताज दंगों की शिकार होकर मुंबई में आकर बस जाती है। वह मेहनत करके आदर की जिंदगी गुजारना चाहती है लेकिन उसे जीविकोपार्जन के लिए बार में नाचने वाली और शराब परोसने वाली का काम करने के लिए विवश होना पड़ता है। घर में वह अपने ही मामा के शोषण का शिकार बनती है। जिंदगी गुजारने के लिए वह एक बदमाश से विवाह करने को विवश होती है जो पुलिस के साथ फर्जी मुठभेड़ में मारा जाता है। इसके बाद भी वह अपने दोनों बच्चों को

सभ्य सामाजिक नागरिक बनाने का प्रयास करती है। वह आशा रखती है कि एक दिन उसका बेटा पढ़-लिखकर उसे यहाँ से बाहर निकालेगा। लेकिन युवा बेटे को पुलिस इसलिए पकड़ लेती है क्योंकि वह अपराधी युवकों के साथ देखा गया था। बाद में पुलिस को यह पता चलने पर कि वह बार में नाचने वाली और पुलिस के हाथों मारे गये गुंडेका बेटा है तो निरपराध होते हुए भी उसे छोड़ने से मना कर देती है। बेटा जेल में फँसे दुर्व्यवहार का शिकार होता है। बेटे की जमानत के पैसे की खातिर माँ को अपना शरीर बेचना पड़ता है और जवान बेटे भी उसी नरक में जाने का मजबूर हो जाती है। जिसमें माँ अपनी बेटे को बचाना चाहती थी। अपने साथ हुए दुर्व्यवहार का बदला बेटा बाहर आकर लेता है और उन युवकों की हत्या कर देता है जिन्होंने जेल में उसके साथ दुर्व्यवहार किया था। इस प्रकार एक माँ की आशा सदैव-सदैव के लिए समाप्त हो जाती है। न तो वह उस नरक से निकल पाती है और न ही उसके दोनों बच्चे। चांदनी बार की सीमा यह है कि वहाँ भविष्य धूमिल है। ऐसी धूमिलता लज्जा में नहीं है। लज्जा में स्त्रियों के संघर्ष की आशापूर्ण समाप्ति एक उदारवादी पूँजीवादी समाज में दिखाई गई है। फिल्म स्वयं अपने ही सचे यथार्थ के खिलाफ खड़ी हो जाती है। इस प्रकार लज्जा की आशा और चांदनी बार की निराशा एक तरह के यथास्थिति में परिणत हो जाती है। अनवर जमाल की स्वराज : दि लिटिल रिपब्लिक (2002) फिल्म तमिलनाडु की एक यथार्थ घटना पर आधारित है। जिसमें वहाँ के एक गाँव की स्त्रियों ने सूखे की पीड़ झेलते हुए अपने गाँव को बगैर बाहरी सहायता के पानी के संकट से उबारा था। इस यथार्थ घटना को अनवर जमाल ने राजस्थान की पृष्ठभूमि में प्रस्तुत किया है। तमिलनाडु की यह यथार्थ कहानी राजस्थान की पृष्ठभूमि में भी इतनी ही यथार्थ लगती है। राजस्थान का एक गाँव जहाँ पीने तक का पानी नहीं है। पानी के टैंकर गाँव में पानी लाते हैं। मुफ्त में पानी बँटने के लिए आता है, लेकिन यह भी भ्रष्टाचार का माध्यम हो जाता है। पानी की आपूर्ति लगातार नहीं होती और एक-एक बाल्टी पानी के लिए पैसे देने को मजबूर होना पड़ता है। रूँ तो गाँव में पंचायत है परन्तु उस पर बलशाली सवर्णों का अधिकार है। इस अधिकार को ठकुर साहब (राजेंद्र गुप्ता) के माध्यम से दिखाया गया है। पंचायत गाँव की आम भावना की कद्र नहीं करती बल्कि ठकुर की भावना की अभिव्यक्ति करती है। पंचायत में शामिल स्त्री प्रतिनिधि भी सवर्णों का विरोध नहीं कर पाती। यथार्थ में यही स्वराज : दि लिटिल रिपब्लिक की कथा है।

इन स्त्रियों के जीवन के भयावह नरक के लिए कौन जिम्मेदार हैं ? क्या स्त्रियों को इस शारीरिक और मानसिक शोषण से मुक्ति मिल सकेगी ? यही सबसे बड़ा प्रश्न है और इसका उत्तर यही है कि स्त्रियों को भी घर, परिवार और समाज में उसी प्रकार की स्वतंत्रता प्राप्त हो जिस स्वतंत्रता की प्राप्ति पुरुष अपने लिए करता है। जो स्त्रियों की तुलना में सभी वर्ग के पुरुषों को अधिक प्राप्त है।

यह प्रशंसा के योग्य है कि हिन्दी सिनेमा ने स्त्री के शोषण और सबलीकरण के मुद्दों को अपनी फिल्मों का विषय चुना। फिल्मकारों ने अपने दौर के सवालियों की ओर ध्यान दिया। लेकिन अधिकांश फिल्मों में इन प्रश्नों को जितनी गंभीरता से उठाना चाहिए था, नहीं उठवाया गया है। सिनेमा में महिलाओं में आत्मविश्वास तथा स्वावलंबन का भाव जागृत करने तथा पुरुषों की सोच में परिवर्तन लाने पर जोर दिया जाना चाहिए।

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Book Review

Santosh Gupta

Title : *Interpreting Cinema : Adaptations, Intertextualities, Art Movements*

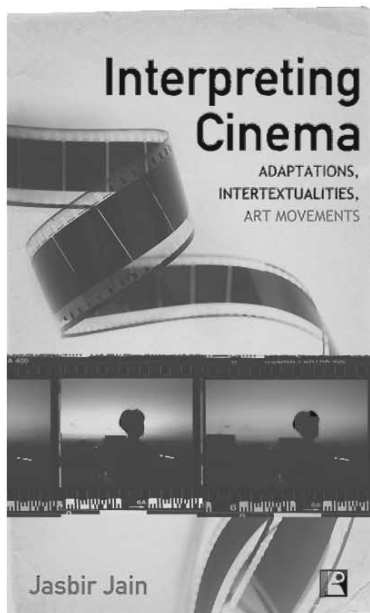
Author : Jasbir Jain

Publisher : Rawat Publications

Year : 2020

No. of Pages : 281

Price : ₹ 1295



Jasbir Jain, a well-known critic of both, literature and cinema, has made a fresh critical exploration of the multiple interconnections between Cinema, literature and culture in her new book *Interpreting Cinema : Adaptations, Intertextuality, Art Movements*. The book examines a variety of film adaptations of literary texts, Experimental and Parallel Cinema as modes of artistic creative cultural products. For the modern age Cinema has become one of the most easily available and affordable forms of entertainment, offering a rich diversity - of themes, styles and technical virtuosity. The acceptance of Film Studies in the universities is the Academia's recognition of its formal institutionalization. This new book provides well researched and carefully argued analysis of films as being closely woven into the public imagination and its participation in the making of public discourse. Taking up for the most part films produced in Hindi, in Mumbai, the book raises several issues and questions around culture and the making of art.

Taking films to be an important mode of "Cultural representation" as well as "means of cultural production", Jain considers the diverse ways

in which films reflect "power relations, political conditions and social disturbances..." Films, she says, use "the individual psyche as a medium of expression" of the human emotions, the "unconscious of the nation" (cover page blurb).

The impact of cinema upon the public imagination is derived, Jain argues, to a large extent from the use of well-written, well-known literary texts. When woven together the two art forms reflect existing socio-political and cultural situations, the emotions, and moral values of people. She traces out the recurrence and continued readaptations of characters, songs and themes from popular films - acquiring at times an independent status. Such intertextualities - between films, and films and literature are probed in detail. Divided into sixteen chapters, the book looks into the diverse ways in which films portray the themes of creativity, its suppression, and articulation within the power structures within a patriarchal society, religious and political shifts in the post-partition India, and, the emergence of terrorism in the late twentieth century. Raising issues related to women's condition within the society Jain examines how films deal with conservative values related to marriage and women's sexuality, only some daring to challenge the conservative views. The discussion of "Fathers and Daughters: An Enigmatic Bond" highlights a relationship usually ignored in such critical studies. The author's sensitivity towards such unusual aspects of relationships is seen throughout, exploring such silences and nuances

The discussion of adaptations (of films and literary texts) brings out that no "set formula" is followed by all. Adaptation revises, and erases, adding and transforming the earlier text. While some of the films discussed are not adaptations, some films, Jain points out, have resulted in the writing of a new text, the film *Water* being an example. The films selected range from the 1934-35 ones, like *Sulochana* and *Pehli Nazar*, down to recent ones like *Krrish* (2008), *Dev. D* (2009) and *Delhi Belly* (2011). Jain's familiarity with the wide variety of films from which she has selected and her critical organization makes the book an impressive and inclusive study. The attractive cover page and the flawless production make the whole reading experience a pleasure!

In the history of film making in India the several remakes of texts like Sarat Chandra's *Devdas*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* stand out as favourites of directors and the public. Jain brings out, through a close comparison in the chapter "Travelling Memories", the differences of treatment of the emotional currents and cultural values that are reflected in different remakes. She relates the changed public sentiments, with the changes in pri-

orities and national atmosphere and shows how they affect the re-adaptations, showing how the director's decision "to treat classics, literary texts, folk tales" and others emerge from a variety of artistic personal intents (18). The diversity of method seen in Satyajit Ray's use of Prem Chand's short story for the film *Shatranj Ke Khilari* (1977) and the use of Mahasweta Devi's story by Kalpana Lajmi's in the film *Rudali* (1982), Deepa Mehta's use of Bapsi Sidwa's novel for the film *Earth 1947* (1990) are critically juxtaposed. Satyajit Ray adds some new narratives to the original story, making it a more inclusive depiction of that political and historical moment (79-81). Putting together the different remakes of *Devdas* from over almost a century Jain elaborates upon the ways the new director's remake reflects the cultural atmosphere of his own times, these remakes relating the romantic hero to the divergent postcolonial and postmodernist eras.

In some films Jain finds the significant erasures that change some of the literary texts' political meanings. In the film *Ek Chadar Maili Si* (1962) where Rajinder Bedi's novel written in 1962 with same title, the change of a character's identity is pointed out as a mode of changed religious mood of the nation, and Punjab in 1980s (60-64). Through a careful study of the details in films and texts she comments upon noticeable shifts in the power equations between diverse social groups, and in the nation, on the whole.

Hindi cinema enjoys a huge popularity among wide spread audiences, now even on a global scale. One of its most important features is the regular appearance of songs and dances, which Jain recognizes, bringing together the music, lyrics and their visual presentation play in Indian films. She points out their dramatic use in building up the film's emotional atmosphere. Many chapters in the book refer to the popular music, beginning with films from the earliest period, including *Mirza Ghalib*, *Baiju Bawra* and others. A detailed analysis of a song sequence in *Lamhe* shows the continuing popularity of film, music and its central place even in personal lives. Her own fondness for older films, songs will definitely find an echo in the hearts of many senior readers!

A film that draws attention to the construction of the urban culture in metropolitan cities, and the decline of some of the values upheld earlier, *Jagte Raho* (1956) is an entertaining and deeply moving portrayal, and in Jain's discussion the film's restrained social satire and artistic finesse are foregrounded, in the chapter "Surrealism in an Anonymous city : Raj Kapoor's *Jagte Raho*". The treatment of physical disability is linked, with cultural difference as she deconstructs the concept of difference in the chapter "Constructing the Nation through the Semiotics of Difference". She brings together films like *Aurat* (1940), and *Mother India* (1956) both by

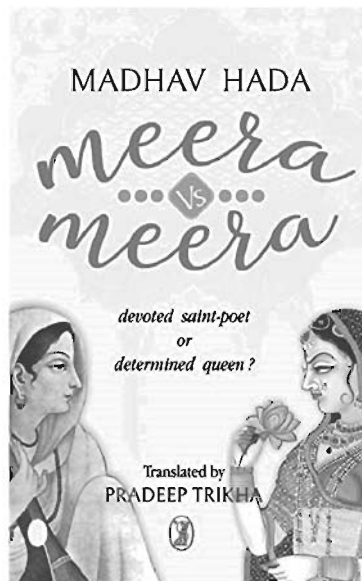
Mehboob Khan, *Upkar* (1967), *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989), *Fanaa* (2006), and *Maine Gandhi ko Nahin Mara !* Quite a heterogeneous lot ! In films like *Dor*, *Maachis*, *Panchwati* and *Mirza Ghalib* questions about women's new perspectives on their self construction, the relation of political turbulences of the present and past are raised. Questions are raised, disturbing settled approaches to these matters. She uses judiciously perceptions from the film theories, Gaze theory and other theoretical stands such as Postcolonialism, Feminism and theories of nation construction. As she believes that "Films are not self enclosed narratives" and that they "draw on real life's individual experiences, the localized narratives" which "counter the dominant interpretation prevalent in the society (66), she treats films as serious matter, critiquing and reflecting the cultural tunes to which they belong.

The last chapter deserves a line to itself, as it deals with autobiographies and biographical material on some sensitive fine cine artists like Balraj Sahni, Hansa Wadkar, and Guru Dutt. This inclusion highlights once again Jain's interest in the individuality and personal thinking of the cinema related persons. The book is adequately equipped with a very detailed Bibliography and list of films, in "Filmography". A highly engaging book, it will be of great value to further research on Cinema and its role in culture.

Book Review

Neelima Kanwar

Title	: <i>Meera vs Meera: Devoted Saint-Poet or Determined Queen</i>
Author	: Madhav Hada
Translator	: Pradeep Trikha
Publisher	: Vani Book Company
Year	: 2020
No. of Pages	: 237
Price	: ₹ 399



Reflected in the literatures of the times is the contours of a culture or civilization. Sometimes these literatures acquire the status of truth – when it becomes difficult to challenge the literary representation. Certain figures, in literary works, rooted in stereotypical traditions which have been canonized in a revered image are the most onerous to talk about. In a multi-religious country like ours Meera occupies a space in this definite canonized form. Meera who belongs to all, emerges from Bhakti literature and has long engaged the devotee- readers as well as feminists. In the recent time academics too have started to engage themselves with her persona- a mystic saint (as established), as well as, a human being. This is where one can place a well researched book of Madhav Hada *Panchrang Chola Pahar Sakhi Ri*.

The scholars of English literature too have not been able to remain away from the lure of Meera. Emerging from the brittle core of Indian culture, reading Meera has fascinated many. In the contemporary scenario of the

academic research the translation of *Panchrang Chola Pahar Sakhi Ri* as *Meera vs Meera* by Prof. Pradeep Trikha has surfaced as a much needed work to be referred to. An engaging trans-creation of the Hindi version, Prof. Trikha's book has given us deep insights on Meera's spiritual quest to merge into Krishna. Meera emerges as a reticent/ resolute woman defying gender discriminating norms with conviction and grit. The latter, always overshadowed by her canonized image, finds its unfolding here.

The book *Meera vs Meera*, divided into six sections – 'Life', 'Society', 'Religious Narratives', 'Poetry', 'Canonization' and 'Image Construction'; attempts to show how Meera's poetic oeuvre along with her saint poet image, has engulfed her being which belonged to the corporeal world as well. The first two sections justifiably place Meera a saint-poet in the mediaeval history of Rajputana. These sections disclose how Meera is rarely mentioned in historical writings, but has visibility in devotional and religious biographical sketches. *Bhavishya Purana*, *Bhaklaimal*, etc, alongside historians/ writers like Harinarayana, Purohit, Gopinmath Sharma, Hermann Goetze, et al focused on Meera objectively. Meera's childhood, married life, pilgrimages are mentioned in the history of Rajputs to give the readers a sense of context. It also corrects the misconceptions on the social positioning and status of women in the medieval era. Popular culture - films, songs, comic-picture books have cemented the image of a "saintly, feminine love-lorn" woman. The book acts as a critical discourse to challenge the fortified religious representation of Meera by a society that is engrossed in spiritual and religious structures.

Prof. Trikha's incisive vocabulary and aesthetic decisions, retain the flavor of the original even in the section which uncovers Meera's exemplification in various religious narratives- oral, folklore, historical sources as Khyat , bahi etc. and Hindu devotional literature. Not only has her Bhakti/ devotion been instrumental in securing a place in religious literature, but also her use of regional language add to the charm of being a saint- devotee. This section establishes how history can be re-traced through her – Meera as a woman resisting patriarchy and a "plethora of stereotypes". The book adequately mentions religious writers like Prabhudas, Raghavdas Priyadas, Shri Hariharan Vyas, et al who exalt Meera as a woman in addition to being a devotee. These narratives sometimes incorporate miracles in Meera's life events which actually is a common trait of devotional biographies. In fact, how she refuses to follow a sect unlike other saint- devotees allows her a distinct presence. Nevertheless, her reverence for fellow devotees needs a special mention and appreciation. Moreover, there is a reference also to people who tried to malign her (Ramdas, Krishnadas) for not following the religious dictates, making the book retain its objective

unbiased, stance.

The section on poetry interrogates Meera's contemporary position as a poet – saint, and romantic writes, yearning for Krishna. It reveals how her poetry views patriarchal ideologies and its constraints while also highlighting her love for Krishna. Her language belongs to the common people though she was a member of the Royal family. This makes her poetry popular. Her verses reflect a distinguished "feminine identity, psycho-spiritual needs, and her struggle for dignity and freedom" as well as "... reveals her corporeal self, torn by divine longing" (161). Further, her imagery of earth, river, ponds, trees, sky, animals, sea, castle, jewelry, clothing, etc.. reveals that only select facets have received attention, ignoring others like remarks/ observations on the feudal system, religious institutions and public relations. Though the focus of Meera's poetry is certainly faith and devotion, yet undercurrents of sensual aesthetic life can also be seen. Her worldly sufferings, pleasures, relationships also find expression in her words. The book also mentions other women poets like Daya Bai and Sajha Bai, thus , adding a comparative perspective upon Meera.

The last two sections focus on the canonization and image making of Meera. Col. James Todd, whose interest in history and authentic recording secure his position as a historian, in case of Meera "relied on tales and poetry" passed on orally. His work on her, developing out of folk memory, popularized her as a saint, cemented her devotee image and became conducive to her "canonization". This book carefully deliberates on her canonization where the human Meera has been eclipsed by the mystic poet. Other scholars like Munshi Deviprasad too could not carry out individual research and under the colonial influence only added to Meera's stereotypical aura that of a saint- devotee. Todd's construction of Meera also develops the fact that he did not wish to offend the feudal lords of Rajputana and hence, ignored Meera's engagement with the corporeal world. "He transformed her multifaceted life and identity into a unidimensional love story full of romance and mysticism" (195).

"Meera's image is based more on speculations and inferences than actually on facts" (200) and in effect has been constructed. The colonial historians have played a major role in this and even Indian scholars were influenced by their viewpoints. Emergence of publishing houses has contributed towards an already existing image of Meera as a mystic saint. Even popular books, newspapers, magazines, Amar Chitra Katha (with the intention of familiarizing children with Indian mythology), Diamond books, Cinema, too, did not deviate from Meera's formulaic representation. *Meera vs Meera*, nevertheless, establishes Meera not just as a poet,

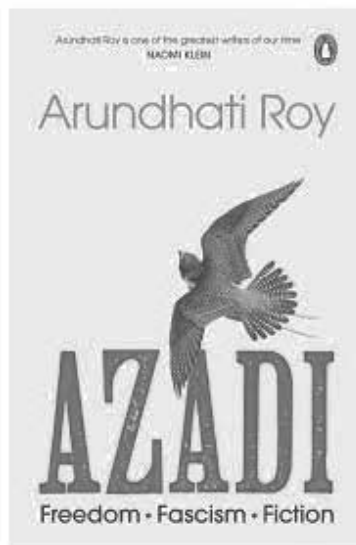
saint or legend from folklore, but rather as a woman with both courage and vulnerabilities.

As a translated work, *Meera vs Meera* remains true to its purpose- to expand the literary boundaries and locate Meera in an appropriate perspective. It offers a new vitality to the existing critical discourse on Meera. Prof. Trikha's book , an excellent translation with cultural flavours retained, aesthetics of language customized and emotionality of Meera preserved, makes an interesting and engaging read. In addition, credit goes to the publisher Vani Book Company for an excellent production in terms of the cover page and the paper quality that make the book reading an experience worth the time spent on it!

Book Review

Bhagvanti

Title	: <i>Azadi: Freedom • Fascism • Fiction</i>
Author	: Arundhati Roy
Publisher	: Penguin Random House India
Year	: 2020
No. of Pages	: 249
Price	: ₹ 499



"May tomorrow be more than just another name for today."

Arundhati Roy quotes Eduardo Galeano to kick open her latest release, *Azadi* subtitled as *Freedom • Fascism • Fiction*. The quote encapsulates a vision which is coupled with hope while the fear generated by the under-defined urgency is not to be ignored. The author sets out to conquer the fear and for that to happen the source from which it emanates has to be expressed first with all the right however controversial details. The task is challenging in the contemporary sorry state of affairs on our planet, where an 'Argumentative Indian' like Roy is increasingly gaining the status of an endangered let alone threatened species. The author launches her piercing prose to dissect the coercive politics bubbling below the façade of muscular nationalism which oscillates between feudalism and religious fundamentalism. Situated within the interstices of a threatening reality of increasing violent polarization of polity and the cherished heritage of the ideals envisaged by the constitution, the book offers a keen critique of the macabre that we have created or have come to accept.

The author lays bare a picture of crippling India. We, as a nation, are di-

vided like never before and there is no metric left to evaluate the extent of damage done to the integrity that we dreamt. Roy has really come a long way since her debut with *The God of Small Things*. Her meticulous dissection of grand stealth fascist agenda coupled with skilled whining is illustrative her chiseled craft. She does it again in *Azadi* without diluting the seriousness of the damage, and questions our mute vacuous acceptance of ghoulish politics. What matters to her is 'freedom with responsibility' which to her is 'real unfettered azadi. The highlight of this literary piece is the raw intensity and the unapologetic enumeration of the recent riotous happenings handpicked from the prominent news dailies, dyed with her fierce individual perspective. The compelling interplay of well gripped narrative delineating the debilitating petty politics and the plight of the marginalized and poor makes one weigh the havoc that we have wreaked on our planet and the deprivation of justice to the marginalized that we have come to normalize and accept.

The questions raised in the essays are compelling because what's being unprecedentedly threatened are the ideals of constitution that we dreamt. The imperfectly realized reality is totally antithetical to our cherished vision. The exponentially expanding mob bigotry is scary enough to anticipate any possibility of envisioning a secular republic India. The author attacks the politicians for adroitly parleying the lynching into petty political advantage to rule the roost. She launches a fierce polemic at the bare roots of coercive nationalism for being coy of all the forms of inclusion and for blatantly departing from the notions of secular republic. The manipulation and curtailing of democratic rights are cause of grim concern for Roy and so are they for every thoughtful Indian. She urges the readers to be vigilant, to protect India's democracy and constitutional value come what may.

The book is neatly divided into nine segments the last of which is written at the onset of the pandemic. The very first essay defends the cause of language and sets the tone of the book which is fierce, unapologetic and intriguing all at the same time. She begins by celebrating the language of her pen as the language of privilege and exclusion, as well as the language of emancipation. Roy goes straight to the elucidation of the question posed by Pablo Naruda, In What language Does the Rain Falls on The Tormented Cities, and Translation is Roy's answer to him. She builds this answer to shoot a scathing satire on the exclusion policy of the bigot regimes, who prefer depletion of language, over enrichment, and she compares it to a boggling desire of replacing an ocean with an aquarium. What follows next is a series of thought-provoking questions, caricaturing and Roy reeking sarcasm at her opulent best,

The pages where the writer unleashes the structured working of ideology with its institutionalized cruelty to demonize and ghettoize the minorities may sound exaggerated and hackneyed to some. But Roy succeeds in giving your brain a capsule of her radical critique. From the interference of government in the academia to the ill treatment meted out to the voices of dissent, from the exhilarating speed of unbridled free market fundamentalism to hegemonic religion being made the vehicle of social mobilization and lynching by tv, she doesn't skip anything, nor does she spare anyone.

Azadi charts language's power of breaking away with barriers. It's this very language with which she records her burning gutsy denunciation of the intimidating nationalism-

"The bomb is India. India is the bomb. Not Just India, Hindu India. Therefore, be warned, any criticism of it is not just anti-national, but anti Hindu.... not only can the government use it to threaten her Enemy, it can use it to declare war on its own people. Us..."

"Election Season in a Dangerous Democracy" is one of the most defiant essays in the book which reminds you of the recent headlines in your daily newspapers. It's so very bold of Roy to take a dig at the popular arrests, extra judicial executions and assassinations, lynching attacks, false flag attacks and riots which fracture the integrity of India. She accuses the regime of adhering to 'divert and rule' policy. She objects the falsification of history, youth immured in prisons charged with sedition or incitement to violence without any proper trial. Roy's pen is sensitive for the vulnerable who according to her are being cordoned off and silenced, she registers her stance for the vociferous who are being incarcerated. The sad spectacle of living conditions of the marginalized and of poor speaks for itself. The essays hope to aim at creating a social upsurge against the treatment reserved for minorities. Roy's zesty investigations are instigated to expose the perfidy of the politicians who don't leave any stone unturned to sculpt and advance their careers in politics even if it costs the lives and fortunes of the innocent public.

The sick jeopardizing of the constitution and the blatant dismantling of the democracy is horrid, but what is most horrid is its normalization. She attacks the architecture of fascist mob occupied India and lets the readers to explore the divergence between what India could have been and what it has become. The frenzied bigotry fed to masses, the poignant rendition of problems faced by Kashmiris, the imminent annihilation of identities, she records the current empirical reality from her individual perspective which is fierce and powerful. She wants a world where nobody should be

lynched, marginalized, imprisoned or criminalized. Some of the essays have been published previously but they are as pertinent a reading now as they were before. She indeed is at her passionate best when she takes a jibe at the demonetization, the immigrant crisis brought upon by NRC, and the recent calamitous lack of planning to prevent the pandemic.

It might not work for dreamers of heyday but it is not the voice of a doom-sayer but of a realist. The unmasking of constructed quality of culture and identity can be of interest to students of cultural studies. Roy has skillfully created a dichotomy between who knows how to think and who knows how to hate. Falling in hate is the most palpable feelings and Roy has penned it ebulliently. The book is fantastically insightful, refreshingly emotional and absolutely irrepressible all at the same time. Roy's fierce polemic swings from insecurity and fear in one instance to anger and assertiveness in the next. She touches upon the fuzzy edges of dismantled democracy while registering her take on the politically contentious issues. *Azadi* is indeed a masterful foray into the Indian political theatre of our times.

And for this she deserves kudos. Of course, it is fine for people to disagree with Roy, or blaming her for India's disintegration. But the book is unputdownable. However grim or somber it sounds; the reader can relate to each of the events mentioned. Some of the readers might find the essays replete with blind bias or accuse them of being written with intention to malign her targets, but to those who concur with her ideology it's the bold truth that needs to be stated and heard.

Depending on one's mental make-up, one may choose to broaden his/her horizons or continue to hate. The book is meant for those who dare to accept the severity of reality and want to take a vow to accept their role in bringing the change while the rest can continue to be mired in their respective ideologies. Wafting across the cataclysmic waves of coercive nationalism the real India is getting zoned off to sleep in inertia, it has to awake widely before it reaches a point where it won't have any skin left in the game. For the book at its core is directed at nothing but-

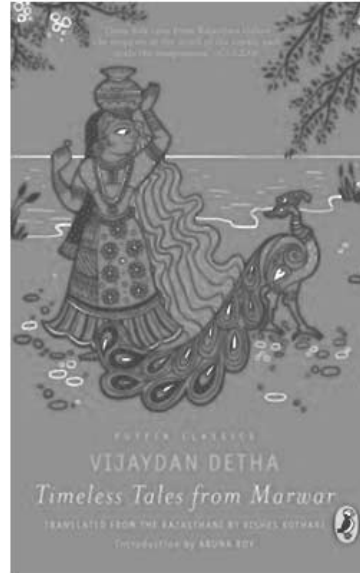
"Reimagining India

Only that!"

Book Review

Shrutika Methi

Title	: <i>Timeless Tales from Marwar</i>
Author	: Vijaydan Detha
Translator	: Vishes Kothari
Publisher	: Penguin Random House India
Year	: 2020
No. of Pages	: 235
Price	: ₹ 250



Timeless Tales from Marwar is a retelling of Vijaydan Detha's collection of magnificent folktales from the land of Rajasthan. It was originally written in Rajasthani language by Detha in his magnum opus, '*Batan ri Phulwari*' or '*Garden of Tales*' and translated in English by Vishes Kothari. This book consists of seventeen stories enriched with the wisdom and farsightedness of the diversity living in the Thar. These tales are originally part of oral tradition. These stories are packed with wisdom that has proliferated through these folktales into generations through oral culture. This collection of short stories was launched at the inaugural session of the *JLF's* 2020 edition. The book contains an introduction by Aruna Roy, a social activist.

Vijaydan Detha was a distinguished Indian writer of the Rajasthani language. He is popularly known as 'Bijji'. He was recipient of the *Padma Shri* award, the *Sahitya Akademi* Award, and the *Rajasthan Ratan* Award. He was the co-founder of Rupayan Sansthan. His stories and novels have been adopted in theatre and films also. He transformed the process of storytelling into a creative exegesis. Shakespeare of Rajasthan is his sobri-

quet. His works have been translated into English and Hindi which makes his work accessible to a wider audience.

The short stories are written in an epigrammatic style and have employed magical realism into the narrative style which produces astonishing imagery. There are a gamut of characters from personable Raj Kanwar (Prince), witches, thakars (Landlords), and personified animals and insects and so much more to tickle our imagination. Every character has their space and respect. The tales are rooted in the tradition and culture of Rajasthan. These stories are of commoners and bring forth experiences of their lives. The different social strata of society are represented in this collection. These stories are packed with wisdom and humor. The age-old wisdom is relevant for all the time and ages to come.

The titles of the stories are themselves engrossing. Some of them are 'The Kelu Tree', 'The Joo's Curse', 'Naagan, May you Line Prosper', 'The Thakur's Ghost', 'To Each His Own', 'Jaraav Masi's Tales', 'Jheentiya', 'The Tale of Tell and Don't Tell' and many more. The short stories have minimum space but abundant information to provide. These stories find their source to be the women of Detha's village and nearby surrounding, whom he considers to be the great storytellers.

Detha transports the reader into a fantasy land. These stories are an array of wit, wisdom, emotions, and morals. There are awe and wonder which is woven in the narration that readers find the joys of the bedtime stories. At the beginning of each story, their source is mentioned, to bring home their origin and authenticity. The use of the supernatural machinery is brilliantly coupled with the use of onomatopoeic words that retain the essence of the oral narration. The local dialect along with onomatopoeic words creates a musical effect that attracts the reader's attention most.

'Kiska Jheentiya, kiska tam?

Chal meri dhamki, dhamaak-a-dham!

'Who is Jheentiya, who are you?

Come on my dhamki, go dhamaak-a-dham!

(Timeless Tales from Marwar, 26)

The wisdom inculcated in these stories is unknown to the English-speaking world. Many of them are beast fables. Animals and plants talk and behave like humans. They transcend humans in their moral and virtuous instance, their farsightedness and ever-growing relevance. The human and natural environment becomes one with each other in the story. 'The

Leaf and the Pebble' is a story of friendship, love, and loyalty. The inanimate object leaf and pebble are provided life which brings forth the lesson of the bond of friendship.

This short story collection has ecocentrism at its core. From living creatures to non-living aspects in the environment had given equal importance, values, and morals. Stories present the whole spectrum of human-nature binary, both are complementary to each other. This symphony of human – nature depicted by Detha comes as the sharp contrast to contemporary times, where there is no respect and value left for the environment and other living creatures.

The translation of the stories has been done with the utmost precision. The oral culture and regional flavors of the land are encapsulated succinctly, bringing Rajasthan's folk culture alive in the twenty-first century.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

IIS (deemed to be University) Journal of Arts (JOA) invites Papers presenting original research in the field of Arts (including English Literature and Language, French , German, Hindi, Jewellery Designing, Journalism and Mass Communication, Performing Arts , Textile Technology and Visual Arts) . Papers are subsequently peer-reviewed , in consultation with our Editorial Committee . Scholars interested in getting their work published in JOA are urged to carefully read the detailed guidelines before submission.

Submission Guidelines

Manuscripts are invited in the following categories : **Research Paper, Review Article, Comment, Research Note, Monograph, Book/Film Review and Author-Interview.**

The manuscript should be typewritten (Times New Roman-12 font size), double-spaced , with one inch margin on all sides . A clear and specific title should be given to the manuscript. The pages should be numbered serially throughout the paper . Illustrations and other materials reproduced from other publications must be properly credited.

Categories of Manuscripts

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Journal Article

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Borges , Jorge Luis. Foreword. *Selected Poems, 1923-1967*. By Borges. Ed. Norman Thomas Di Giovanni. New York : Delta-Dell , 1973. xv-xvi.

Essays or Chapters in edited Books / Anthologies

Brado, Susan. "The Moral Content of Nabokov's Lolita ." *Aesthetic Subjects*. Ed. Pamela R. Matthews and David McWhirter. Minneapolis : U of Minnesota P, 2003, 125-52. Print.

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