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*Editor-in-Chief*

**Dr. Mukesh Ranjan Verma**

**Retd. Professor & Head, Dept. of English,  
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## Editorial

The world is slowly emerging out of the black shadow of Covid-19 epidemic, though it is still not completely free from it. A large number of people died and those who survived suffered from traumas of different kinds. The epidemic hit severely not only economic and social activities but also academic activities all over the world. The much-awaited annual conference of the Association for English Studies of India was deferred during this period, and so was the publication of The Indian Journal of English Studies. The fifty seventh volume of this prestigious annual journal had come out in 2020. We are now publishing Vol. LVIII in 2022.

The response of the academicians, scholars and writers has been encouraging and we have been able to publish a considerable number of good research papers, book reviews, poems and even a short story. Following the tradition of IJES, the research papers in this volume also cover a wide area of English studies. While the scholarly paper of Pramod K. Nayar discusses the link between literature and democracy and asserts that the function of literature and literary studies is to prepare us for a democracy-to-come, that of Susheel Kumar Sharma makes a plea for decolonizing English studies in India. Postmodernism has opened the gates of literary studies to what was earlier considered unfit to be given entry into the high portals of literature. So the present volume includes a research paper by N. Khurajam and N.B. Devi which presents critical observations on crime thrillers and popular culture. Prasoon Banerjee has presented an analysis of the

distortions of history in popular Indian serials and films. Quite a few papers cover the area now called Subaltern studies, after Gayatri P. Spivak. They include expositions of works on Adivasi community, representation of women with disability and Mahasweta Devi's contribution to theory and praxis of subaltern studies. Cultural studies is another area that is reflected in some of the research papers. Veerendra Mishra discusses the 'cultureme' of language and literature. If a recent novel to win the Booker Prize, Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* has been analyzed by Sanket Kumar Jha and A.K. Bachchan, Ram Bhagwan Singh discusses the first historical novel in Indian English fiction. Pankaj Kumar presents a critique of a well-known but less discussed folk dramatist, Bhikari Thakur's two plays. Discussions of poetry—such as those of Binod Mishra and Sameer Kumar Sharma—, of American literary renaissance—N.K. Ghosh, of Gandhian philosophy, and of many more areas make this journal worthy of reading.

**M.R. Verma**

IJES, Volume LVIII, 2022

## Democracy/Literature/Democracy/ Literature

\*Pramod K. Nayar

### Abstract

This essay examines the link between Literature and democracy, arguing that the function of Literature and Literary Studies is to prepare for a democracy-to-come. It does so by, first, formulating possible worlds, in which people unlike us may live. Second, Literature produces a public. And finally, it defines the idea of the Human and therefore the subject of Human Rights.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Difference, Literature, Reading, the Human

This essay examines the alliance, real or virtual, actual or potential, between democracy and Literature. It chooses as its points of departure the following statements:

“No democracy without literature, no literature without democracy...”<sup>1</sup>

“Literature... exceeds the actual but includes its possibilities, opening their condition of possibility.”<sup>2</sup>

“We, the faculty of the Cornell English Department, pledge to support and do our utmost to protect members of our

---

\*Pramod K. Nayar, Professor of English and UNESCO Chair in Vulnerability Studies, Department of English, The University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India.

community who are discriminated against, unjustly treated, or otherwise targeted because of race, religion, gender, sexuality, immigration status, and other forms of difference. Recognizing that words and symbols can be manipulated into violence, we renew our commitment to direct the force of language toward large and small acts of learning, alliance, imagination, and justice.”<sup>3</sup>

The essay argues that literature prepares for the democracy-to-come in its very foundations and methodologies.

Literature and Literary Studies is concerned with possible worlds, and not just the worlds we live in. Further, Literature, as Geoffrey Galt Harpham proposed, is fundamentally concerned with “outsiderhood,” and therefore with the excluded: the alien, the stranger, the foreigner, the new.<sup>4</sup> Since Literature and Literary Studies enables us to engage with people *unlike* us, it enables us to acknowledge and understand rather than fear difference. If democracy is built on the negotiations of difference and plurality in order to plot a common narrative for the nation, then Literature is the domain in which both difference and plurality find their strongest articulation.

Literature enables us to define the public *as* public. It performs a public of reading and consumption because, as Christian Novetzke has argued, listening and consumption and not only rational debate and conversation, can also be the means of forging a public sphere.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, in an age when we cannot have enough of Human Rights, it is in Literature and Literary Studies that the idea of the Human is defined, contested, expanded, and therefore lays the groundwork for Human Rights.

“Literature” here is the making of imaginary storyworlds in words.

### I. Literature and Freedom

Jacques Derrida announced: Literature is that “strange institution” which gives “*in principle* the power to say everything”.<sup>6</sup>

He elaborates: ‘the institution of literature ... is linked to an authorization to say everything, and doubtless too to the coming about of the modern idea of democracy.’<sup>7</sup> Derrida is signaling not the *content* of literary texts or the set of texts we have come to identify, through certain institutionally approved processes, as imaginative. Rather, he is signaling the *freedom* to speak and therefore write about anything and everything. In his later essay, ‘Passions: ‘An Oblique Offering, ’’ he would develop this linkage more clearly:

Literature thus ties its destiny to a certain noncensure, to the space of democratic freedom (freedom of the press, freedom of speech. etc.). No democracy without literature; no literature without democracy... And each time that a literary work is censored, democracy is in danger, as everyone agrees. The possibility of literature, the legitimation that a society gives it, the allaying of suspicion or terror with regard to it, all that goes together-politically - with the unlimited right to ask any question to suspect all dogmatism, to analyze every presupposition, even those of the ethical or the politics of responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, Literature is tied, in principle, to a certain *guarantee* of freedom, whether this is the freedom to state an opinion or ask a question. Equating freedom with democracy, then, we can see how envisioning Literature as the enunciation of the space of freedom, in effect, enables the marking out a space as democratic.

The space of enunciation itself is, again in principle, open to all: we are all entitled, in Literature, to speak without fear. Then there is the content of the enunciation itself. Democracy and Literature are about both the above. Derrida’s insistence on the sense and enactment of freedom *in* Literature therefore equates, also, enunciation as the marker of democracy. Literature marks out this space, and its enunciation (writing, verbalizing) provides the content for the space. The *vox populi* principle on which democracy is built is in fact an *enunciatory* principle. The theme of censure of Literature in Derrida is not about the shrinkage of

spaces that Literature marks out but the refusal of rights of enunciation itself.

## II. Literature and Difference

In any democracy there exist citizen-subjects, who are, as Jonathan Culler points out, “calculable.”<sup>9</sup> But it also hinges on the opening up of democratic rights to more such subjects, whose identities and natures cannot be calculated or predicted in advance, just as in fiction, we cannot know how a subject *will* behave. It is this uncertainty of future subjects that links both fiction and the democracy-to-come. This democracy-to-come envisages the extension of rights to more subjects, about whom the state or the present citizenry, as yet, knows nothing. Such an envisioning of democracy as preparing for the impossible situation of *assuming* future subjects who will need/demand rights means that true democracy, if there is such a thing, is predicated upon opening up the space of democracy to *one whom we do not yet know*. In other words, the subjects-to-come of the democracy-to-come may very well be subjects *unlike* us. Democracy’s responsibility “can extend to animals and to the inanimate world.”<sup>10</sup> That is, the plurality and multiplicity of subjects is the characteristic of democracy. Geoffrey Bennington writes:

This irreducible element of plurality ... will give the concept of democracy its always curious and eccentric position in political thought... Just because of the irreducible *factum* of plurality, there are different possible ways of organizing that plurality, which would scarcely be a plurality otherwise. But among the spread of possibilities this opens up, democracy has a privilege, in that in a sense it names *just this plurality or dispersion itself*, in a way that other regime names do not.<sup>11</sup>

Plurality and difference, then, is built into the very idea of democracy.

If Literature allows one to say anything and everything, it also enables us to speak of things not yet here, plausible worlds and

people unlike us. Literature, especially fiction, invents worlds and subjects. The ability of Literature to construct alternate worlds, and therefore world views, cultures and peoples, is a significant contribution to democracy because, just as democracy brings together different elements of the *demos* in order to create a commonly accepted/acceptable identity, Literature brings difference to our consciousness. The response and responsibility to the act of reading Literature is the *acceptance* of the very uncertainty of the literary subject. Literature is the experience of and encounter with the unknown/unknowable subject, but also of plural and multiple subjects, many of whom are (likely to be) subjects unlike us. Literature is the domain of possible subjects, to phrase it differently. Reading Literature, like democracy, demands that we disperse our reading consciousness among plural/multiple subjects, all of whom make demands on our consciousness: they demand we acknowledge, assimilate different subjects. Literature organizes plurality in the depiction, especially in fiction, of multiplicity. Like in a democracy, there is a considerable element of uncertainty, of risk-taking, when we start reading: *we do not know in advance the subjects of the novel*. True and responsible reading demands that we accord equal respect to the literary subject even though we do not know where this subject comes from, what language she speaks or what personality she possesses.

Literature's concerned with "outsiderhood" enables it to engage with all forms of the excluded: the alien, the stranger, the foreigner, the new. Reading Dickens enables us to hold the image of the pickpocket, the factory worker and the capitalist industrialist of nineteenth century London in our head. Reading fiction from Indian subaltern authors like Bama enables us to see how the 'outcast' colony, which otherwise would not impinge upon our consciousness, lives. Reading Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* brings to our awareness the possibility of human clones becoming the new slaves in the future. Disturbing the familiarity of the normative human, Literature enables us to recognize the difference *within*

humanity. It prevents reification of humans by demonstrating how, even as there exist other races, ethnicities and cultures, people the world over—people unlike us—suffer trauma, lead precarious lives, and experience the range of human emotions we experience too.

Literature is the only domain in which we are actively immersed in worlds and environments completely different from our own. Literature is geophagy, the consumption of the world, and the world is not the same everywhere.

### III. Literature and Reading

Yet, for this consumption of Literature to be linked to democracy, even democracy as a philosophical-political ideal there has to be a methodology. In a recent essay, the novelist and academic Tabish Khair wrote:

Despite the fact that different religious fundamentalists seem anxious to chop off each other's heads, they share two features. Of these, one I have written about in the past: a bid to control women. But there is another feature that is shared by all of them, and even by their secular counterparts. This is their common tendency to reduce texts, including their own sacred ones, to a singular message...

Not only do they want to ban certain texts, but even the ones they accept are reduced to limited, sometimes singular, messages. Secular fundamentalists do this too, as the Communists did with Karl Marx's complex texts in the past, and as neo-liberals are doing today, by reducing even capital to only one of its forms, finance capital.<sup>12</sup>

Khair calls for an attention to a basic feature of stories:

No significant literary text offers only one message. In that sense, the trend to append simplistic morals to literary works is a serious misreading. Even early religious texts — such as the Indian epics — make full sense only in the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations that they offer.<sup>13</sup>

He concludes:

The antidote to this trend is not to offer other messages but to learn again how to read — and hence think — with complexity. Facile as it may sound, the best way to counter fundamentalism is to teach our children the skills of literary exegesis.<sup>14</sup>

Khair's point, I think, is something larger. A text yields one reading that fits in with the tradition. Orthodoxy and authority determine that this reading should be the only one. Yet, the irony of Literature is that there is always another meaning, a secret meaning that is not so visible, but more importantly is *divergent* from what the orthodox concur with and about. Literature encourages, indeed demands, divergence, plurality and the multiple, not orthodoxy.

Khair does not take his argument that far, yet, I believe, what he is proposing is that literary texts carry within them the germs of their own deconstruction, of divergent meaning, of secrets and of heresy. All Literature may then be said to serve the purpose of heresy, which is linked etymologically to divergence, as Jacques Derrida has noted (heresy from *hairesis*, bias, inclination, hence departure from a doctrine):

to the extent that this heresy always marks a divergence or departure ... keeping itself *apart from* what is publicly or commonly declared . . . it . . . destines responsibility to the resistance or dissidence of a type of secrecy . . . responsibility *insists on* what is apart ...and kept secret.<sup>15</sup>

David Wills elaborating Derrida's interpretation of the secret of Literature argues:

every utterance has the potential to be literature, that potential being realized and recognized, as such, to the extent that its secret effects are "developed," to the extent that, and according to the manner in which, its sense remains undeterminable, in retreat, locked away, resistant or dissident. We might therefore presume

the only purely nonliterary text or utterance to be one that is purified of all secrecy ...Literature comes—Derrida speaks of the reader “sensing” or even “smelling” it coming ...]—in proportion as its secret is “sealed and open like a purloined letter” Secrecy is another name for undecidability.<sup>16</sup>

Wills suggests that literary “reserve” is about its secrets, and therefore about heresies:

heresy as a “divergence within a doctrine, divergence within and with respect to it, with reference to an officially and publicly stated doctrine” [28]. Heresy puts distance between itself and the orthodoxy it departs from, and so retreats into a recess, a place apart, that has the structure of a secret. And conversely it will be that which the orthodoxy represses as its own secret. If the secret carries with it that sense of heresy, then literature, inasmuch as it is structured by the secret, would be ruptured by its own effects of heresy, carrying its own heretically secret reserve within it. Every form of indetermination or undecidability, on its surface or in its depths, would disrupt its coherence not just in the ways that we have come to understand, but specifically as forms of resistance or dissidence that would have to be called political.<sup>17</sup>

Wills concludes this above-quoted paragraph with a declarative: “a reading that is a heretical response conceived of as opening to secrecy also amounts to the becoming literary of the text being read; commentary becomes a form of *literarization*.”<sup>18</sup> And later: “literature is always already in heresy and in dissidence.”<sup>19</sup>

I take the idea of Literature as inherently secretive and heretical to mean what Khair terms “complexity”: layers of meaning, paradoxes, irony, ambiguities that are hidden in a text, but hidden out in the open, as an open book (Derrida’s reference is to Poe’s famous “purloined letter”). That is, Literature carries within it the potential for disruption precisely because many meanings lie hidden in the open, and because there are varieties of meanings. To read Literature is to come to face with heresies,

with ideas and meanings divergent from orthodoxy, stereotypes, established conventions. To *be* a literary text is to not be pure of meaning, but to possess difference within itself, as Wills notes. To read Literature is to put oneself at a distance from established “truths.” Reading is, or ought to be, heretic.

#### IV. The Reading Public

What does reading heresies or Literature (since they are one and the same, as we now know) do in terms of a public, or a *demos*?

Traditionally, the public sphere, following Jürgen Habermas’ formulations (1989), has been seen as the space of rational debate and open deliberations. Studies of medieval publics in India have argued that there also occurs a public sphere built around consumption, affect and feeling:

By a public, here, I mean an open, social audience, one that attends to, but does not necessarily participate in, a capacious and circulating discourse within a given region, language, or other social context. This is a context of mutual intelligibility and access. Publics are constituted primarily by passive attention, and people often participate in them through consuming discourse and reflecting their engagement through affect. A public is defined by its open-ended address, available for attentive reception. A public is a social formation that is reflexive and organized by the circulation of a particular discourse of mutual concern. A public can be of almost any size; it may be situated in a given historical time or geographic space, or it may be transregional and transhistorical. In most cases a public is maintained through media such as literacy, visual culture, art, or performance, though any medium for the circulation of ideas will do. And so a public is an open conversation.<sup>20</sup>

Novetzke’s argument offers a way of thinking about the public as constituted through acts of consumption. If we think of a public built through the consumption of Literature, absorbing – assuming there is a fair level of literary competence, of course – the heresies

within, then the *demos* on which democracy relies acquires a different dimension altogether.

The statement from the Cornell University English Department declares as an act of faith: “recognizing that words and symbols can be manipulated into violence, we renew our commitment to direct the force of language toward large and small acts of learning, alliance, imagination, and justice.”<sup>21</sup> The statement is about reading practices, and what a more egalitarian reading practice can do to the public and its formation itself.

Literature teaches us, even or especially when we consume stories, how to relate to the world. If science teaches us specific modes of doing so, Literature trains us in what Martha Nussbaum has called “narrative imagination.” Nussbaum defines it as:

the ability to think what it might belike to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have.<sup>22</sup>

She continues: “works of art are frequently an invaluable way of beginning to understand the achievements and sufferings of a culture different from one’s own.”<sup>23</sup> Now it is possible to argue that listening to or reading stories does not necessarily induce sympathy for the racial or cultural Other. Nussbaum argues that it is easy to feel sympathy towards characters who are *like* us and can refuse it to those unlike us.

Through the imagination ... we are able to develop our ability to see the full humanness of the people with whom our encounters in daily life are especially likely to be superficial at best, at worst infected by demeaning stereotypes.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, she proposes, it is essential to ensure that there is sufficient Literature that encourages empathetic *understanding* of the Other. She writes:

The imaginative activity of exploring another inner life, while not the whole of a healthy moral relationship to others,

is at least one necessary ingredient of it. Moreover, it contains within itself an antidote to the self-protective fear that is so often connected to egocentric projects of control.<sup>25</sup>

Nussbaum is aligning democracy with two specific aspects of Literature and its consumption: to introduce texts (in education) that demolish myths and stereotypes about our racial and cultural Others; to read those texts carefully to generate, first, an empathetic understanding and then perhaps sympathy for people unlike us. The call is, therefore, to school the imagination differently, a project that can only be realized, Artificial Intelligence efforts notwithstanding, through Literature.

The eponymous protagonist Elizabeth Costello of J.M. Coetzee's novel proposes, controversially, that the Holocaust was the result of the *failure to imagine*: of the Germans and Polish bystanders watching the cattle cars go by with their cargo of Jews destined for the gas chambers. Costello declares:

The heart is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share at times the being of another ... There are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else ... and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it ... there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination.<sup>26</sup>

Coetzee and Nussbaum echo each other uncannily as they speak of a *demos* that refused to imagine.

Since a *demos* is often made up of people and cultures very different from each other, as is the case with India, then the making of an empathetic, sympathetic and moral imagination (the terms are often used interchangeably by Nussbaum, Richard Rorty and other philosophers) directed at different people becomes a way of making sure that the *demos* is not internally conflicted.

However, as critics have pointed out, Nussbaum assumes we can understand the message by examining the text rather than the

audience<sup>27</sup> (Stow 2006: 414). There is also an implicit suggestion in Nussbaum that all members of the audience will take away the same message, or interpret the text in the same way. Stow writes:

implicit in the claim that texts have clear meanings that they transmit to their readers is the assumption that a failure to see the text in the prescribed way arises from a deficiency on the part of the reader. This is, perhaps, no way to conduct our business in a liberal-democracy. (414)

Stow argues that discussions of Literature and literary characters/events can work when citizens are able to work with abstractions rather than their own personal states of being. That is, as they talk about the lives of literary characters, they engage with the political in their own lives without being too distressed about them.<sup>28</sup> The distancing when speaking about Literature, then, serves the useful purpose of directing attention at specific political issues such as patriarchy or race without necessarily forcing readers to turn the spotlight onto their inner lives. Stow sharpens the argument about Literature and democracy by proposing that we see reading and meaning as contingent:

Literature might then function as the ostensible subject matter in an ongoing, potentially transfiguring dialogue about politics in which the contingency arises from the recognition that differently situated people may interpret the same text in different ways. Recognizing that another's reading may emerge from a different life experience might well be a step towards reaching some kind of recognition of another's status as "fellow citizen" or "fellow human being," something that might serve to temper potentially hostile or incommensurable debates by breaking down some of the moral distance between otherwise disconnected citizens.<sup>29</sup>

Stow proposes a "solidarity out of the multiplicity of possible textual readings."<sup>30</sup>

While I find Nussbaum's insistence upon the empathetic and sympathetic imagination born of reading Literature a useful way

to think through the idea of the reading public, I see the problem of assuming that all members of the public generate one meaning. Merging Nussbaum with Stow's argument, I propose instead that reading practices, say in classrooms, that encourage dissent, dissident and divergent reading of texts teach us about racial and cultural differences. This need not be a personalized mode ('I read this way because I am from...'). Rather, the very principle that a text can be read differently, that its politics can have different levels and forms of appeal to students and readers, *should* suggest that difference is built into the text, the interpretive mode and the reading public. Sharing the fragmented politics of the text *should* signal the fragmented political spaces individuals and communities occupy: it is from these acts of recognition of fragmentation and the political that solidarity may emerge.

Thus, the reading public is not a uniform mass passively consuming texts and taking away *the* core meaning. Rather, the reading public is an unstable, inchoate and divided set of individuals who embody the very condition of *demos*: difference. It is by making the readers' difference a given, by acknowledging the openness of texts to multiple and plural readings, and then seeking an empathetic understanding for difference that we can use Literature to frame a democracy.

#### V. Literature, the Human and Democracy

As noted above, Literature introduces us to difference. More importantly, it alerts us to a category, 'the Human', often ironically by depicting those who are excluded from the category: disabled, injured, broken, outcast 'bodies' whose status as humans and as persons has been denied them. Literature, by exploring milieu, bodies and inner lives, defines the human for us.

Scholars have noted that the very idea of Human, and therefore of Human Rights, comes to be defined within novels and narrative traditions.<sup>31</sup> In other words, those who make up the *demos* of a democracy are defined as subjects within Literature for us to recognize them as such, especially when they are denied

their rights as Humans or persons. As Elizabeth Anker puts it, “concepts of human dignity and bodily integrity simultaneously require for their legibility the threat of bodies being violated, broken, and defiled,” and stories about Human Rights violations begin in “inverse images of corporeal unmaking and abuse.”<sup>32</sup>

In this process of documenting broken and excluded bodies/ persons, Literature also moves from depicting individual persons to collectives and cultural rights. That is, from the inner lives of character-subjects, who may or may not have been accorded the political status of persons, Literature – and one only needs to think of novels dealing with genocide and war such as *Anil's Ghost*, *Murambi: The Book of Bones*, *Maus*, among others – documents the conditions in which personhood may be denied. The failure of the cultural apparatus of Human Rights – from welfare measures to the legal system – is then the ‘subject’ of the novel.

If the human were to be reinvented in the age of cyber technology, posthuman technologies of embodiment and cloning, this reinvention will be defined, discussed and critiqued in Literature. Take a novel such as Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (2005). In a future world, clones are built to serve as human cadavers: they are alive so that they can donate organs for the humans to live: “all clones ... existed only to supply medical science . . . Shadowy objects in test tubes.”<sup>33</sup> And elsewhere:

Your lives are set out for you. You’ll become adults, then before you’re old, before you’re even middle-aged, you’ll start to donate your vital organs. That’s what each of you was created to do . . . You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided.<sup>34</sup>

And:

Their [the humans’] overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neurone disease, heart disease. So for a long time... people did their best not to think about

you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us.<sup>35</sup>

In England, where the novel is set, these clones have predetermined fates. As I have argued elsewhere, the bodies of these clones are essentially organ farms. The clones are *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998): are bodies and lives that may be terminated by humans through legally and socially accepted procedures, in hospitals without attracting punishment, but they may not be sacrificed.<sup>36</sup>

Now, in the novel the organs donated by the clones are not from foreign bodies (i.e., not xenotransplantation): the organs survive within humans, adapt to human bodies so that human biology assimilates the clones' organs.<sup>37</sup> Thus we come full circle here: the clones are created from humans, they are brought up and treated as the Other but their organs are harvested and assimilated into humans so that eventually the clone body and the human body become one.<sup>38</sup> Ishiguro ponders over a social order where new forms of slavery emerge with technology and advances in medical science.

Do clones, nurtured *as* humans, have human rights? If clones provide organs for the survival of humans, and humans live solely because the transplanted cloned organs keep them alive, then what distinguishes the clone from the human? How, in other words, do we define and delimit the human? Bioethicists may debate the ethics of cloning, but Literature calls upon us, as Ishiguro does in his brilliant novel, to think of the *unique* features that constitute us *as* humans. If the clones exhibit the same characteristics – emotions and desire, for instance, in *Never Let Me Go* – as us humans, then do they merit human rights? Is a social order ethically correct in treating them as sub-human when human lives depend on them? If, as Lynn Hunt and others have proposed, the definitions of humans have evolved within Literature, Ishiguro's text asks us to meditate upon the posthumans' status within the regime of 'human rights' especially in a society when posthumans

are being constructed as slaves, and humans live on as cyborged posthumans.

Narrative theorist Wayne C Booth has argued about the self:

What is essential about that self is not found primarily in its differences from others, but in its freedom to pursue a story line, a life plot, a drama carved out of all the possibilities every society provides.<sup>39</sup>

In the case of the Literature of the posthuman, such as Ishiguro's, there is, then, no self because there is no freedom to pursue a life plot or story line: the humans determine the life plot of those regarded as less than human. If selves are narrative selves, as philosophers propose (Booth, cited above) then the denial of narrative is effectively the denial of voice and therefore of the self. Literature is the voicing of, and the voices of, the selves that constitute the demos. When the human selves cannot narrate themselves, they are narrated for, as is the case of testimonial fiction. As James Dawes summarizes it: "human rights work is, at its heart, a matter of storytelling."<sup>40</sup>

The denial of the human voice ensures the erasure of the demos. K Narayana Chandran writes:

Our understanding of ourselves as *human* begins within a community of imagination, a belonging we are eager to attest by contributing to its stories ... We realize that the only way to record being and meaning *human* is by telling and retelling lives into being, both for the sake of ourselves and for the generations that later join us.<sup>41</sup>

For each of us, the demos is constructed through stories. Richard Kearney writes of the "world of action from which the text derives and to which it ultimately returns," so when we "engage with a story we are simultaneously aware of a narrator ... narrated characters ... and a narrative interpreter (receiving the story and relating it back to a life-world of action and suffering)."<sup>42</sup> It is when we "tell our life-story to ourselves and to others" that we attain a "sense of being a 'subject' capable of

acting and committing ourselves to others.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, it is when we listen to the stories of others that we imagine, understand and relate to the community. If we were to reformat Benedict Anderson’s famous argument (1991), and communities have to be imagined, stories enable us to *imagine* them.<sup>44</sup> This imagination of the community, via Literature, is at the heart of democracy itself.

No *demos* without Literature, and therefore, no democracy without Literature.

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## Decolonising English Studies in India

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### Abstract

The paper deals with the theory and praxis of decolonising English Studies in India. The paper suggests appropriate measures to pull out English studies from the Macaulayan paradigm and to recast the priorities in English Studies in the light of changing role for emerging India in the unipolar world realities, rising aspirations of the middle classes, democratic and egalitarian needs. The project of 'decolonising' education at the macro-level and English Studies at the micro-level has been discussed with reference to curriculum. Several measures have been suggested to make English Studies in India relevant to contemporary times, to save them from being derivative and to reshape Euro-American knowledge about English culture, Literature and Language from an Indian perspective. Practical suggestions to end the hegemony of the English and to decolonise curriculum have been made keeping in view the distinction between teaching literature and language in the first and the second language situations.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Decolonisation, Education, English Literature/ Language, Gandhi, India, Macaulay, Publications, Research, Teaching Methods.

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“... the official intelligentsia of post-independence India [eschew] their own culture and [turn] to Western, mechanistic dogmas, from Marxism to neoliberalism. Whether they worship the State or the Market, such intellectuals dishonour their [country’s] noblest traditions. They are as craven as those American and British academics who place politically correct considerations before the pursuit of truth and intellectual freedom. In the best of Indian popular culture, however, [one may find] an integrity, a latitudinarian tolerance and a connectedness to nature lacking in intellectual circles - and lacking in Western civilisation today.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Decolonization: Concept and Necessity**

The term decolonization has been a part of academic discourse since 1932<sup>2</sup> though it perhaps first appeared in 1836<sup>3</sup>. *Britannica* defines decolonization as “the process by which colonies become independent of the colonizing country.”<sup>4</sup> The process is “often long, tortuous, and violent, by which colonies achieve their national aspirations for political independence from the colonial metropolitan power.”<sup>5</sup> It involves a kind of “restorative justice”<sup>6</sup> in the form of racial, ethnic, social, cultural, legal, physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and spiritual well-being through the process of economic, cultural and psychological freedom. The term is also used to refer to the intellectual decolonization from the colonisers’ ideas that made the colonised feel inferior.<sup>7</sup> Because “decolonization is an interrogation of the European concept of territoriality”<sup>8</sup> true decolonisation seeks to challenge and change White superiority, nationalistic history and the colonisers’ “truth”. Bill Ashcroft et al. therefore, correctly describe decolonization as “the process of dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remains even after political independence is achieved”<sup>9</sup>

Gauri Viswanathan<sup>10</sup> rightly holds that the study of English and the growth of empire proceeded from the single ideological climate. “Valid knowledge” is different from “colonial knowledge”

because of their different objectives. While the goal of the former is to explore truth, the latter is a tool in the hands of the colonisers for the consolidation and perpetuation of their rule in the colony. Chinweizu in his “Colonizer’s Logic” puts it very cogently with a tinge of irony: “The Natives are unintelligent—/ We do not understand their language”<sup>11</sup>. Because the “civilized imperialist” pretends not to understand the “primitive colonised’s languages” the former undertakes the civilising mission, coupled with religious fervour zestfully, and uses his euro-centric knowledge to help “the natives come out of their ignorance and darkness in their lives”. With the emergence of postcolonial theory to the centre stage of theoretical studies in Humanities, the process of scrutinising various colonial institutions, including “knowledge” and “knowledge production” has been felt more intensely. Ngig) waThiong’o’s *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) and *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (2012) have accelerated the process of scrutiny that was started by Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). A close audit of “the institutions of knowledge production” that set the canon of studies is the crying need of the hour in postcolonial India, a society that happens to be the oldest surviving civilization of the world.

The project of colonial education in India was undertaken with a target to make the Indian mind “barren of any originality”<sup>12</sup>, to keep Indians perpetually “in ignorance” by “paralysing and stupefying [their] minds”, to feed Indian minds with stories of England’s greatness and “mission” in the world, and to obliterate their race-consciousness from their minds. The modern education system in India, the brainchild of Macaulay, is a highly respected colonial remnant which runs on the presumptive principle of the “intrinsic superiority of the Western literature”<sup>13</sup>. English studies in India greatly strengthen the Macaulayan presumptive principle. In India both of them (Education system and English Studies) continue to be highly derivative<sup>14</sup>; the only dent that has come to them since 1947 is because of the growing influence of the USA

in several spheres of life. While education, especially higher education in India was Anglo-centric earlier, as a result of the new political and economic order, it is Anglo-American-centric now. Even a cursory comparison of the course lists, items/ topics therein, the lists of prescribed and recommended books will prove my point. The decolonisation of the education including English studies in India is much needed if India has to stand on its own, to assert her identity in the world, provide some sort of vision for an alternative world and also, if “*bharat ko vishguru banana hai*” (India is to be a world leader) to use an expression from the right-wing rhetoric. Decolonising is to take place in respect of the following four main components of an educational system: Curriculum and Courses, Research and Publications, Medium of Instruction, and Examination and Writing. However, owing to the paucity of space I shall be dealing with only the Curriculum and Courses in this paper.

Both the teacher and the learner should ask themselves the following questions in order to decolonise the curricula of English Studies:

- Were my forefathers really fools in ousting the British from India?
- Has English ever been the *de jure* official language in Britain or the US?
- Is English really used by the largest number of people in the World?
- How many countries out of 195 in the world at present use English officially?
- Is it literature or English literature that matters for imbibing certain values?
- Do those who study of English Literature “receive more wisdom” from their curricula?
- Why does the curriculum represent only the English and not the other nationalities?

- Why does the curriculum represent only English and not Englishes?
- Why is the curriculum dominated by Christian authors?
- Why does the curriculum centre around the whites?
- Why does the curriculum centre around the males?
- Why does the curriculum present my/our forefathers as pigmies?
- Why is the curriculum reading centric?
- Why is the curriculum not life-oriented?
- Is Raja Rao's proclamation ("We cannot write like the English. We should not." *Kanthapura*: v) false?
- What makes one believe that a western outfit is better and trendier than an indigenous one?
- What makes me say, "Hello, Good Morning Professor" instead of wishing him in a more traditional way?
- Why smoking a pipe is a sign of cultured behaviour while smoking a *bidi* is uncultured?
- Why do some of my teachers praise a European street singer and condemn the Indian street singer as a beggar?
- Why does one look westward after taking this curriculum?
- Why did I take birth in "this dirty land"?

The answers to the above questions may lead one to conclude that the existing curriculum in English are neither largely inclusive nor egalitarian in character; on the other hand, the curricula perpetuate the hegemony of the coloniser in all walks of life; it is racist in nature. What is unfortunate is that the racism is being perpetuated by the natives, popularly known as "*kaleangrez*" (black whites), in the name of education/ modernization.

#### **Decolonise or Remain a Racist:**

The modern Indian education system has not only impacted our collective epistemological viewpoints but our society as a

whole has also been impacted; we seem to be a rootless society that suddenly came into existence in 1947 out of nothing. Racism is not basically about colour; it's about power. The present education system does not empower the Indians which becomes so visible in economic achievements. This is very clear from the statistics about imports and exports. "India's share of the world economy was 23 per cent, as large as all of Europe put together [when Britain arrived on it's shores, but] by the time the British departed [from] India, it had dropped to just over 3 per cent."<sup>15</sup> "India's share of global gross domestic product (GDP) rose to 7.09 percent in 2019"<sup>16</sup> The exports and imports of India in 2019 were: the total value of exports (FoB) was 323,251 million; the total value of imports (CIF) was 478,884 million."<sup>17</sup> This powerlessness can also be measured in terms of the meagre number of publications from the Indian universities on one hand and those from the western university presses like Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Durham etc on the other. It is so obvious that the opinion building power (soft power) rests with the West. Money minting power by way of the export of the books and ideas also lies with them. So, decolonising the curriculum is not needed solely for cultural or intellectual reasons but also for economic reasons. This is not being demanded by some Hindu chauvinist but is an economic necessity. If India has to be governed in equitable and non-partisan manner, power has to slip from the hands of the handful of "*macaulay ki aulad*" (Macaulay's children), the degenerated angelized Indians who wield the stick of English. One thing that every teacher/ student of English can do immediately is to denigrate it and stop being a part of its propaganda and propagation machine. Bourdieu refers to this process as the 'habitus' self-propagated and protected. It is quite understandable that no decolonised country can afford to dismantle the existing institutions like colleges and universities in a single stroke overnight but continuing to multiply such institutions even after gaining political freedom will be considered a grave mistake fraught with its own dangers of getting neo-colonised, if not colonised by the same/

different political power. The situation as a matter of fact has gravely led us to a neo-colonialised position: the influence of American system of education can very easily be perceived in the NEP-2020.

In Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August: An Indian Story*, Pultukaku objects to Agastya's choice of English as a subject saying: "Chaucer and Swift, what are you going to do with these irrelevancies? Your father doesn't seem to think that your education should touch the life around you?"<sup>18</sup> In the same novel, a senior IAS, R N Srivastav, expresses his contempt of the subject saying, "A useless subject ... unless it helps you to master the language, which in most cases it doesn't."<sup>19</sup> M K Gandhi on the basis of his own experience wrote:

"We had to learn several books of English prose and English poetry. No doubt all this was nice. But the Knowledge has been of no use to me in serving or bringing me in touch with the masses. I am unable to say that if I had not learnt what I did of English prose and poetry, I should have misses. I am unable to say that if I had not learnt what I did of English prose and poetry, I should have missed a rare treasure. If I had, instead, passed those precious seven years in mastering Gujarati and have learnt Mathematics, Sciences, and Sanskrit and other subjects through Gujarati, I could easily have shared the knowledge so gained with my habit of application and my inordinate love for the country and the mother tongue, made a richer and greater contribution to the service of the masses?"<sup>20</sup> (emphasis added)

### **Changing the Sensibility**

In India performance of public duty is highly praised and practiced too. Lord Ram has been glorified in this country for performing his duty in every role and in every walk of life. Similarly, Lord Krishna is revered by the Indians because he preached the doctrine of *Karma*, action/duty. Indians believe that duty is more important than caring for the personal relationships.

In India, we are also taught to forsake one's interest for a larger good.<sup>21</sup> For Ram his duty as a king (public duty) was more important than his duty towards his wife (personal duty). There are various examples of this in the past and the present. For example, for Arjun his duty as a warrior was more important than his personal relationships. Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Nanaji Deshmukh and A P J Abdul Kalam are some of the examples in the recent times to exemplify my contention. In India, even a *Riti Kaleen* poet Bihari scolds the king, Jai Singh, for being oblivious of his duties. He reminds him of his Kingly duties: "*nahiparag, nahimadhurmadhu, nahibikasuihikal, ali kali hi so bindhyaogaagekaunhaval*"<sup>22</sup>. In a country where so much of emphasis on "all for duty" and "duty for all" is there the teachers of English glorify "all for (illicit)love" in the classrooms. They glorify Dryden's Antony for his turning away from his duties as a king and justify his caring more for his personal love. I consider it to be a typical example of their effort of changing the sensibility of their Indian students. There are many more such examples which are not being given here for want of space. Thus, it is very clear that teaching of English literature leads to encouraging Englishism at the peril of Indian thought and culture and strengthens the idea of colonial notion/myth of Indian inferiority in matters of language, literature, science and thought. All this is done in the name of sticking to a canon of English Studies. They do not realize that the European canons are not universal in nature and they have also changed over the period of time. For example, no female poet was being taught in poetry paper I and II (i.e. from Chaucer to T S Eliot, a period from 1343 to 1965) of MA (P), Allahabad University. This was in conformity with the practice of *Norton Anthology*. But under the pressure of feminist movement several female poets have found an entry into *Norton Anthology* now though at Prayagraj and perhaps elsewhere too they are still being ignored. Similar is the case of a concept like Christian patriarchal<sup>23</sup> system against which women rose and a movement like feminism came into existence. But the Indian teachers teach them as if the

two concepts are typical of an Indian society, irrespective of any Christian reference. The Indian teachers do not realize that the European/ British sensibility is different from the Indian because of different backgrounds and mental make ups.

A theosophist and an Indianist, popularly addressed as *Kulapati* by his Indian friends, James H Cousins in his book *The Renaissance in India* (1918) has argued that the Indian sensibility being unique is different from the Europeans'. He has urged Indians to express it by maintaining their unique identity in their writings as well: "Be yourselves first: do not fall under the illusory notion that you are fulfilling your ideal in desiring to write as good blank verse as Tennyson, or as fine lyrics as Swinburne."<sup>24</sup> He further explains his position:

"If they *must* write in English, let it be in the English *language only*: let them keep themselves unspotted of its point of view, temperament, its mannerisms; for their repetitions of these will fail of conviction, which is one of the absolute essentials of art, since they can never disguise the fact that they are imitations, and Nature abhors imitation more that she does a vacuum: there is a chance of filling a vacuum, but none of turning an imitation into an original."<sup>25</sup>

The stand of James Cousins is almost a repeat of Edmund Gosse's advice to Sarojini Naidu. Gosse had commented, "The verses which Sarojini had entrusted to me were skilful in form, correct in grammar and blameless in sentiment, but they had the disadvantage of being totally without individuality ..." He could hear the mocking bird of English poets in them and so he advised her to "set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid populations of her own voluptuous, and unfamiliar province; in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of the English classics." Sarojini Naidu 'immediately accepted' Gosse's advice to her advantage and expressed "Eastern magic" in a "Western language" in her poetry<sup>26</sup>.

Here is a very realistic description from Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August: An Indian Story* where a problem has been raised and its solution has also been suggested:

“Dr Prem Krishen of Meerut University has written a book on E.M. Forster, India's darling Englishman — most of us seem to be so grateful that he wrote that novel about India. Dr Prem Krishen holds a Ph.D. on Jane Austen from Meerut University. ... What is Jane Austen doing in Meerut?

‘Or Macbeth in Ulhasnagar, and Wordsworth in Azamganj— no nothing, ... .’

‘We're publishing Prem Krishen because he'll fetch us lots of money. His book is entirely in a question and answer form. Students lap that up.’ ... ‘Why is some Jat teenager in Meerut reading Jane Austen? Why does a place like Meerut have a course in English at all? because the Prem Krishens of the country need a place where they can teach this rubbish?’ ... ‘Surely they can spend the money they waste on running the department usefully elsewhere.’”<sup>27</sup>

In the same vein, M Prabha suggests: “... UGC and HRD [should think] of eliminating the English faculties from all colleges and universities. Instead, this should be a discipline reserved for distance learning alone.”<sup>28</sup> On the basis of the above discussion, it may easily be concluded that in order to decolonise the English Studies in India, not only the curriculum needs a drastic change but the funding all literature teaching/ oriented departments might also have to be stopped forthwith. Only those Department that come forward to improve the communicative competence of their students need to be funded. At the most only a select few departments, as is the case with other foreign language literatures like Spanish, French and Portuguese, may be allowed to teach English literature. I know this suggestion of mine will draw flakes from the departments and I may be called a Kalidas who is ready to cut the branch on which he is sitting. But I have duty, truth and Gandhi on my side. It is not expected of a teacher, who is expected to explore truth, to push the entire country to permanent state of

(mental) slavery not just for the sake of his own survival but for his promotion, free air tickets, fellowships and seminars where wine is served freely.

### **English Literature vs. English Language**

The word “English” as a noun does not find a place singularly in the Constitution of India though the expression “English Language” finds a mention at fifteen places in the Constitution. English does not find a mention in the list of the Indian languages given in the eighth schedule of the Constitution. It is very clear from this that the role of English in the Constitution has simply been envisaged as a means of communication for different purposes. It is also to be noted that nowhere has it been specified that “English” stands for “British English” (or any other variety of English)<sup>29</sup> as a means of communication. It is an unwritten law/convention for the custodians of English in India, the university/college departments, the intellectual elites, and the authors that by “English is meant ‘British English’”. The reason for this hegemony lies in the colonial hangover which is continued and glorified as “tradition”. Though Braj B Kachru and his spouse Yamuna Kachru tried their level best to establish the identity of Indian English<sup>30</sup> as an independent variety of English their intellectually rich research-efforts neither got a support from the highly colonial Indian authors in English nor from the Indian academia. Little do the intellectual elites realize that it is the tradition of “intellectual slavery” that they have been cherishing and promoting. Whether this slavery springs up from historical positioning, ignorance, lack of synergetic language planning, lack of initiative and intellectual prowess or helplessness or some other factors is more a matter of common sense than of some deep research.

Most of the people who wish to join higher education in India need English language. People also see English as a passport to better jobs and better social positioning. Because of their ignorance, many of them do not make any distinction between English

language and English literature. R N Srivastava in *English, August* says, "... I began to read English on my own. I had to, because English was compulsory for the Civil Services exam. So I read Shakespeare and Wordsworth and people like that, very difficult. It's still important to know English, it gives one ... confidence.' ... ." <sup>31</sup> With the Government policy of taking higher education to the door-steps of people one finds universities and colleges in the remote corners of India. With this even English has also reached all the nooks and corners of the country. The teachers and the institutions either very subtly hoodwink or push the learners to join a course in English Literature. R N Srivastav says, "That a young man in Azamganj should find it essential to study *something as unnecessary as Hamlet, that is absurd*, no, but also inevitable, and just as inevitably, if we behave ourselves, in three generations it will fade." <sup>32</sup> Unlike the situation in Germany or Russia where a foreign student studies the language of the country in India a student has to study English for about 12 years before joining a university. Then the realization dawns upon him/her that (s)he is not sufficiently proficient in English to pursue a course satisfactorily. If our teachers could just compare 12 years to one year of training to teach a language.

While most of the universities in the EFL/ ESL situation do not lay emphasis on literature of the language, in India it is almost mandatory to talk of dated authors like Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden etc. in a course on English. Most of the universities have been awarding degrees in "English" or "English Literature" after teaching almost the same content. The course contents also consist of largely British Literature; there is hardly any paper dealing with teaching/ learning skills of a language. The result of this is reflected in the following sentence of a very senior teacher: "A student who writes ten pages about Hamlet's madness is unable to draft an application in English." This indicates to not only the quality of teaching but also misdirected effort of emphasising teaching English Literature in place of English Language against

the spirit of the Constitution. Our over-enthusiastic teachers either fail to grasp the basic fact or they pretend to ignore the fact that learning of literature in any language is possible only after some basic proficiency in the language has been achieved. No wonder our post-graduates in English literature fail to deliver what is expected of them. A fictional account of Agastya by Upamanyu Chatterjee in his *English, August* is sufficient to prove my point.

For the development of ELT and related issues, to improve the standard of teaching of English and to undertake relevant research the Government started/opened a new Institute, Central Institute of English in 1958 with the mandate: “instructional, research and extension facilities in the teaching of English and foreign languages and literatures in India”<sup>33</sup>. In 1972 it was converted to Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages<sup>34</sup>. With the passage of time, it became English and Foreign Language University, a Central University. However, this did not deter other universities to change their policies of teaching and propagating English Literature on a very unusually large scale in an independent country. In other words, the cultural imperialism of English Literature has kept on spreading undeterred even in independent India. The phenomenon is so powerful that even EFLU came under its influence and it has emerged as a new centre of spreading and disseminating English literary culture, spreading the idea of “inherent superiority of the Western literature” and colonise the India mind-set further.

From the above discussion it should be clear by now that Indian sensibility is different from the Western/ British. In the postcolonial world it is therefore imperative to save this sensibility that Macaulay was trying to destroy/ change to his empire’s advantage. To end the hegemony of the Core English the following strategies are being suggested:

- Decentre British/ Colonial literature (introduce multi-nationalistic texts)

- Decentre subject-object relations in Eurocentric relation (introduce non-white, non-Christian, non-Anglo-Saxon authors)
- Decentre British/ Colonial culture (introduce multi-cultural texts)
- Decentre British/ Colonial English (introduce multi-lingual texts/ translations)
- Decentre British/ Colonial English authors (introduce authors from the New Nations)
- Decentre British/ Colonial Canon (introduce texts that were banned by the colonial masters)
- Decentre British/ Colonial Singular Texts (introduce appropriate comparisons e. g. compare *Paradise Lost* and *Mahabharat*)
- Decentre Literature (introduce elements from culture/ linguistics/folklore/ film-studies)
- Decentre Multinational Publishing Houses (introduce texts published by smaller publishing houses)
- Decentre the English Pedagogy (replace lecture method by discussions)

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  4. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization>
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  6. “Restorative justice is an approach that offers offenders, victims and the community an alternative pathway to justice. It promotes the safe participation of victims in resolving the situation and offers people who accept responsibility for the harm caused by their actions an opportunity to make themselves accountable to those they have harmed.” [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/20-01146\\_Handbook\\_on\\_Restorative\\_Justice\\_Programmes.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/20-01146_Handbook_on_Restorative_Justice_Programmes.pdf)
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  10. Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1998.

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12. "England has applied three methods for the subjugation of India.
  1. *Conquest by trade*—India's trade and industry have been destroyed, all her wealth has been ruthlessly plundered, and India in all her nakedness has been made economically dependent on Great Britain which country owed her industrial supremacy to the spoliation of India.
  2. *Conquest by deliberate subjection*—All Indian aspirations and development of strong character have been suppressed. The Indian mind has been made barren of any originality, and deliberately kept in ignorance.
  3. *Conquest by paralysing and stupefying* the mind of the people like drugging a person. The people are kept under an illusion in order to make them more amenable to British control. The people's character is deliberately debased, their mind is denationalized and perpetually [*sic*] kept in ignorance and fed with stories of England's greatness and "mission" in the world, and systematic efforts are made to obliterate the race-consciousness." (The Indian National Party. *British Rule in India Condemned by the British Themselves*, London: The Indian National Party, 1915, pp. 8-9)
13. "Minute by the Hon'ble T.B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835", [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt\\_minute\\_education\\_1835.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html)
14. "It (Indo-Anglian poetry) starts as romantic poetry simply because it was born under Romantic influences. It becomes Victorian because English Romantic poetry became Victorian. It decided to go through a period of "Decadence" because the nineties were a period of "Decadence" in English poetry. After Decadence came the period of Georgianism and Indo-

- Anglian poetry, loyal as always, suddenly became Georgian. When English poetry became modernist, Indo-Anglian poetry had no alternative but to do the same.” (Sudhir K. Arora, *Cultural and Philosophical Reflections in Indian Poetry in English*. Vol. I, New Delhi: Authors Press. 2016, p.13)
15. Shashi Tharoor, *An Era of Darkness*, New Delhi: Aleph, 2016, p. 4.
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  17. <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/IND/Year/LTST/Summarytext>
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  19. *Idem*.
  20. M K Gandhi, *Harijan*, 9-7-'38, <https://www.mkgandhi.org/indiadreams/chap44.htm>
  21. त्यजेदेकंकुलस्यार्थेग्रामस्यार्थेकुलंत्यजेत् । ग्रामंजनपदस्यार्थे आत्मार्थेपृथिवींत्यजेत् ॥  
महाभारत, पर्व १ अध्याय १०७, श्लोक ३२,  
*tyajetkularthepurushamgramasyarthe kulamtyajet |*  
*gramamjanapadasyarthe atmartheparithivi mtyajet||*  
(*Mahabharata* 1, 107, 32) renounce one person for the sake of the family, a family for the sake of village; village for the sake of country and even the [kingdom of] earth for one’s own sake. The principle is valid even in the modern times as is clear from the following lines in the judgment pronounced by Kerala High Court in the WP(C). No. 35293 of 2018: “In every human relationship, there evolves an interest. In the competing rights, if not resolved through the legislation, it is a matter for judicial adjudication. The Court, therefore, has to balance those rights to uphold the interest of the dominant rather than the subservient interest. *The dominant interest represents the*

*larger interest and the subservient interest represents only individual interest. If the dominant interest is not allowed to prevail, subservient interest would march over the dominant interest resulting in chaos.”* (emphasis added) [www.legitquest.com/case/fathima-thasneem-minor-and-other-v-the-state-of-kerala-and-others/1D9784](http://www.legitquest.com/case/fathima-thasneem-minor-and-other-v-the-state-of-kerala-and-others/1D9784)

22. <https://www.hindwi.org/dohe/nahin-paraagu-nahin-madhur-madhu-bihari-dohe>
23. Patriarchy is a “[s]ocial system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, *moral authority*, social privilege and control of property. ... It is also the political, ideological, *religious*, and societal structure that places maleness above femaleness.” (Emphasis added), <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/patriarchy/52625>.
24. Cousins, James H. *The Renaissance in India*. Madras: Ganesh & Co., n. d., Preface is dated June 1918. Pp. 155-56. PDF. Retrieved from: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.20391419>.
25. *Ibid*, p. 177.
26. Arthur Symons, in his introduction to *The Golden Threshold* (1905), underlined “... in a sort of delicately evasive way, at a rare temperament, the temperament of a woman of the East, finding expression through a Western language and under partly Western influences. They do not express the whole of that temperament; but they express, I think, its essence; and there is an Eastern magic in them.” [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Golden\\_Threshold/Introduction](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Golden_Threshold/Introduction)
27. Chatterjee, Upamanyu. *English, August: An Indian Story*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988. p. 59.
28. M Prabha, *The Waffle of the Toffs: A Sociocultural Critique of Indian Writing in English*, Oxford & IBH, 2000, p. 209.

29. Eighteen international varieties of English are currently listed in a popular software platform, MS Office.
30. This variety has been accepted by MS Office.
31. Chatterjee, Upamanyu. *English, August: An Indian Story*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988. pp. 59-60.
32. *Ibid*, p. 60, emphasis added.
33. <https://www.efluniversity.ac.in/history.php>
34. The status of English in India—if it is an Indian language or a foreign language - is ambiguous. While Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, considers it to be an Indian language, in order to impart teaching of English Literature EFLU considers it to be a foreign language but in the Linguistics/ELT class-rooms in EFLU, English in India is considered to be a second language.

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## ***Sanjogita: The Princess of Aryavarta* The First Historical Novel in Indian English Fiction**

**\*Ram Bhagwan Singh**

### **Abstract**

K.K. Sinha's *Sanjogita : The Princess of Aryavarta* was first published in 1903. It is the first historical novel in Indian English fiction. Earlier Sohee Chunder Dutt wrote *The Times of Yore* in 1885 which is a collection of twenty four tales based on Indian history. As a novel *Sanjogita* is a historical piece written with a nationalistic purpose. Based on the twelfth century history of Jaychand's daughter Sanjogita who chose Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Ajmer for her husband against the will of her father. The writer's better purpose behind this historical episode is to rouse nationalist consciousness in the dormant Hindu state engaged in infighting and disunion. The writer reminds his countrymen of the glory and greatness of India's past and draws their attention to the direct causes of their fall, the glaring evil being disunion and infighting.

**Key words :** Disunion, Dormant, Swayamvara, Imminent, Invasion.

Bihar has an enviable position in Indian writing in English. We are proud of Dean Mohamad of Patna who is considered the first Indian author in English. His travels of Dean Mahomet written by

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Michael Press reprinted it under the title *The First Indian Author in English* in the year 1996. Similarly Bihar was the first to write a historical novel in English. It was K.K. Sinha of Patna who wrote two novels – *The Star of Sikri* in 1893 and *Sanjogita : The Princess of Aryavarta* in 1903. It is a pity that the Bihari novelist lay in oblivion until G.P. Sarma wrote about his novels in his book *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction* in 1978. In 2020 K.K. Sinha's grandson Prof. Rajpati Kumar Sinha got it reprinted after one hundred and eighteen years.

K.K. Sinha was one of the earliest novel writers in English. This was the period when Indian English fiction was being practised and groomed at the hands of Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Lal Behari Day, Toru Dutt, Raj Lakshmi Debi, Ram Krishna Punt and Shoshee Chunder Dutt etc. K.K. Sinha was the sixth among the known Indo – English novelists. His two novels are historical exhibits today, something Bihar can be proud of. The early novels in general were historical novels or historical romances, subjects that were open to them in the British raj. However, they found out some way or the other to voice their feelings for the motherhood. Mother India was conscious of her two subordinations— one under the Muslim rule and another under the British regime. The writers had to negotiate and choose a convenient way of presentation to express their innermost feelings.

*Sanjogita : The Princess of Aryavarta* is, by all means, a historical novel, the first in its content and design. Earlier Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *The Times of Yore* was published in 1885 which is a collection of twenty – four tales based on Indian history. S.C. Dutt wrote them in the form of stories with no specific purpose. K.K. Sinha's *Sanjogita* is a historical piece written with a nationalistic purpose. Here the story is based on twelfth century history in which Sanjogita, the daughter of King Jaychand of Kanouj had opted to marry Prithvi Raj, the Chauhan King of Ajmer against the will of her father. The two Hindu Kings vied each other over the throne of Delhi. Naturally Jaychand wanted to marry his

daughter to the King of Kalanjor to have him on his side in the battle over Delhi. Jaychand not only rejected his daughter's choice, he also humiliated Prithvi Raj by not inviting him to attend the swayamvara of his daughter.

And more, he got a gold statue of Prithvi Raj installed at the palace gate as a door keeper. Jaychand arranged a magnificent swayamvara for his beautiful daughter Sanjogita. Several Kings came to the swayamvara. Sanjogita was introduced to each one of them by her maid, she bowed to them in courtesy and passed on. Thus she rejected all of them and finally garlanded the statue of Prithvi Raj, her father's enemy who was hiding near about. Prithvi Raj then and there eloped with Sanjogita and rode away to his palace in Ajmer. This infuriated Jaychand and he decided to teach Prithvi Raj a lesson. Already there was enmity between the two kings. Jaychand went a step further by soliciting the assistance of Muslim King Muhammad Ghori of Ghazni to fight for him. The joint forces of Jaychand and Muhammad Ghori attacked Ajmer and killed Prithvi Raj. However, on request his dead body was sent to Sanjogita who died a sati on the pyre of her husband. The two Hindu Kings' internecine fight paved the way for the Muslim rule in India. This is the main plot, the historical facts for the basis of this fictional structure. While maintaining the facts of history K. K. Sinha has recreated the contemporary scene as regards Hindu Kings' infighting and their belligerent moves during the twelfth century India.

The novel begins with a preface in which K. K. Sinha lauds the past of India and laments the present state with people facing starvation, cultural degeneration and religious depression. The author says,

India was once great. Her ancient civilization was the glory of mankind. But she is now changed; all vestiges of her pristine greatness seem to have been swept away. When Europe was sunk in dark barbarism, India was blessed with bright civilization.

Explaining his purpose behind writing the novel the author makes it clear that he wants to remind his countrymen of the glory and greatness of their ancestors, to draw their attention to the direct causes of their downfall, to show up the glaring evils of disunion..... In the middle of the story the author asserts,

..... Please do not forget that it is not a typical romance that I am writing but a historical novel. I attempt not to create an unreal scene but to describe, with as much fidelity to truth as is possible in the circumstances, the Hindu people of a bygone age, the life they lived, the deeds they did and the manners they had. (p. 117)

The novel narrates the story of Sanjogita, “an uncommonly beautiful girl – a gift for whom an empire was lost and for whom were “burnt the topless towers” of Delhi and Kanouj. As the story opens in March 1191 we see Tara, a maid talking to her mistress Sanjogita whose mind is burdened with perplexing thoughts. She loves Prithvi Raj and wants to marry him but her father is dead against him because of rivalry. The fact is that the Raja of Delhi had declared the Raja of Ajmer to be his heir in preference to Jaychand.

The novel is divided into 29 chapters. Chapter II deals with a description of the city of Kanouj and King Jaychand’s proclivities. He is extremely obstinate and self – opinionated. Always under the spell of ganja, he is careless of his state affairs and regardless of the interests of his people. He is convinced that the King of Kalanjor is ready to live under his suzerainty. So Jaychand decides to marry Sanjogita to kings like a Lakshaman Sen, the Raja of Bengal, the Raja of Benares, the Raja of Kalanjor, the Raja of Kashi etc. besides the Raja of Ajmere. Jaychand’s queen opines that Sanjogita’s consent is necessary as “it is a well – established custom which is confirmed by the Shashtras which has grown strong by time to let the bride select her husband.” She doesn’t agree with her husband to give up the system of swayamvara. She sticks to the age old custom and family tradition both right

and religious. The King asks his wife to persuade Sanjogita to give up her choice of Prithvi Raj. Jaychand is adamant. He says, “I shall, I must keep the villain away. If he comes he will be spurned like a dog and shown the door. What will the girl do if the Raja, the wicked Raja is not allowed to enter the confines of my Raj.” (19)

Meanwhile Maharaja Prithvi Raj talks to his Prime Minister Sri Chander Shekhar Sharma about his problem and both discuss the issue of Sanjogita’s marriage. Then a close confidant of Prithvi Raj suggests to bring Sanjogita secretly to Delhi with the help of her handmaiden. Prithvi Raj summarily rejects the suggestion. He says clearly, “He is not a Kshatriya who fears a fair field. Let me do nothing which may disturb the ashes of my revered father, the Late Maharaja Someshwar Singh.” (43)

Maharaja Jaychand also has a meeting on the same issue. His Prime Minister Raja Jagat Prakash finds Maharaja Prithvi Raj to be the best match for Sanjogita since she has herself expressed her desire in his favour. Diplomatically also he feels that any disunion between Kanouj and Ajmere will prove disastrous to the interests of both states as Mohammad Ghorī will get an opportunity to attack. Therefore he finds Sanjogita’s marriage with Prithvi Raj desirable. In his own words ‘prudence commands it and justice demands it’. (47) But Jaychand’s Commander – in – Chief, Puran Rao opposes it. He calls Prithvi Raj enemy of Kanouj and pleads to wage a war with him. Dhaneshwar Singh also endorses his view and calls Jagat Prakash a traitor. Maharaja Jaychand dismisses his Prime Minister and says that his family had professed friendship for Mahmud of Ghazni and more,

I declare and I declare it publicly that I do not hate the Musalmans. Mine is a liberal creed..... I cannot support Prithvi Raj in his disgraceful movement against them. ... It is certain that I can’t give away my daughter to Prithvi Raj. (50)

Maharaja Jaychand decides to hold a swayamvara and at the same time perform Rajsuya Yag. To this Dhaneshwar Singh adds, "Let Prithvi Raj be invited and let him be given the post of door keeper, and if he does not accept the invitation. Let his statue be kept at the door". (50) At Delhi a meeting is held to discuss Jaychand's plan to perform Rajsuya Yag to establish his claim to the suzerainty of Aryavarta. It is made clear that only the Government of Delhi is entitled to the supreme position and today Maharaja Prithvi Raj is the representative and successor of Delhi. His Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar Sharma says unequivocally that they should oppose Jaychand's claim to suzerainty. In his opinion, the Maharaja should not attend the ceremony. He reminded that Kanouj had not joined the army in the fight against Mahmud of Ghazni. Another traitor, without naming he meant Raja Man Singh of the same Raj had befriended the Mohammedans and fought for them. Chandra Shekhar Sharman's express opinion for Maharaja Prithvi Raj is not to attend the Rajsuya Yag as it would ruin the country and destroy our religions. Prithvi Raj is anxious to marry Sanjogita, the princess of Kanouj. However, he accepts his Prime Minister's proposal and is ready to forgo the Rajsuya Yag but attend the Swayamvara.

Just then Prithvi Raj comes to learn that Jaychand had decided to give him the post of door keeper at the Swayamvara. The news greatly infuriates him. He seeks advice of the Council present. They find it most humiliating. Raja Gobind Rao, Maharana Samar Singh are in favour of a war with Jaychand. Chand Bardai, the court poet while agreeing to war being inevitable in the event of Maharaja Prithvi Raj refusing to attend the Rajsuya Yag, suggests a plan to prevent the marriage of Sanjogita with any other prince.

Princess Sanjogita is seen resigned and depressed to know that Prithvi Raj will not attend the Swayamvara. Tara, her maid suggests that the Wedding garland could be given to the statue of Maharaja Prithvi Raj. Sanjogita finds it the most practicable course in the given situation. She resolves to garland the statue of Prithvi Raj in his absence.

At Kanouj elaborate preparations are made for the Rajsuya Yag and the Swayamvara. Many Rajas and princes come on the occasion. Jaychand's brother Gobind Rao tells him that Prithvi Raj has challenged his suzerainty and will not come to the Rajsuya Yag. Jaychand feels so angry that he decides then and there to punish Prithvi Raj and so Rajsuya Yag is postponed. However, Swayamvara will go as already planned. The excuse for withholding Rajsuya Yag was given as Jaychand's resolve to avenge the killing of his brother Raja Baluk Rao. Dhaneshwar, another brother says that he has heard out that Prithvi Raj is going to attack Kanouj to prevent the marriage of princess Sanjogita. As such, he suggest that before attacks, the Swayamvara should be performed. Jaychand accepts the proposal and directs Bhan Jadab, the Prime Minister to issue necessary orders for the Swayamvara. No doubt, it was objectionable to hold a Swayamvara soon after the death of Jaychand's brother, but the Maharaja never respected such Hindu customs and took shelter under Buddhistic faith. He defied the Hindu public opinion and ordered Swayamvara.

The Swayamvara was scheduled to be held at the Yag shala. Elaborate arrangements were made for the celebration. The city was charmingly decked as if an exhibition. The gates and halls were decorated in royal style. The roads were overspread with valuable pieces of embroidered cloth. Rajas and Maharajas present in exalted glory were accommodated in palatial edifices. Sentries in rich uniform were on guard with servants in costly attire on duty. Rajas from Nawadih, Kalanjor, Kashi to Sindh etc. showed off their wealth and strength from their splendid outlook vying with one another.

At such moment Sanjogita was looking resigned, she was resolved to do the bidding of her well-meaning traditional mother. No doubt, she loved Prithvi Raj at heart, but being an ideal Hindu girl, she made up her mind to obey the order of her parents suppressing her innermost desire. She regarded it as the duty of a girl to act up to the directions of her parents. She could sacrifice

herself for her love but thinking of its undesirable effect on Maharaja Prithvi Raj, she desisted from it.

At night Sanjogita's maid Tara tells her that Maharaja Prithvi Raj will not attend the Swayamvara as her father has decided to assign him the duty of a door – keeper at the Swayamvara. The news is all the more baffling to Sanjogita but Tara shows her mistress a bright lining in the black cloud of her immediate future. She tells further that at the instigation of Dhaneshwar Singh her father has resolved to keep a gold statue of Maraja Prithvi Raj at the door. And that could give her an opportunity to please herself by garlanding the statue of Prithvi Raj in absentia. Sanjogita is convinced and decides to act upon it. Tara assures her to assist her in her plan.

The Swayamvara was arranged at Yagya – shala, a magnificent building decorated with gems and floral beauties. The golden pillars inside the Swayamvara were laid with precious stones and prettily glittering showing the wealth of the King of Kanouj. Rajas and Maharajas came followed by noblemen and gentry. Brahman priests from different centres of Sanskrit learning were present to conduct the ceremony. The Yag was fortified with warriors and one lakh soldiers. The gold statue of Maharaja Prithvi Raj stood at the gate. Princess Sanjogita accompanied by scores of personable girls came into the hall carrying a wedding garland in a gold plate. The entire hall was filled with the beauty of Sanjogita. The beauty and symmetry of her person, the grace and elegance of her movements riveted the attention of all present in the hall.

The Swayamvara was proclaimed by Raja Birchand, the uncle of princess Sanjogita. Tara led her mistress to the Rajas and Maharajas one by one giving a brief account of their wealth and valour. First, it was Maharaja Bholu Bheem Singh of Anhulwara, a great hero who had defeated Mohammed of Ghor. Sanjogita bowed to him in courtesy and quietly passed on. The Maharaja felt demoralized and defeated. A defeat on a battle is less mortifying than a rejection by a princess in full view of high placed

spectators. The next suitor was the King of Mundore. Tara introduced him as Maharaja Nahar Rao of a dignified dynasty and a friend of Kanouj. Sanjogita made her courtesies and proceeded. The Maharaja felt ashamed of his neglect. Then Tara introduced Maharaja Lakshman Sen of Nawadih, the capital of Bengal from the scion of the Sen family. Here also Sanjogita performed the courtesy and went on. Then it was Maharaja Govind Pal of the Pal dynasty from Magadh. Again, Sanjogita bowed to him and proceeded. Similarly, she politely passed Maharaja Parmardideva, the reigning sovereign of Kalanjor. Then Tara led Sanjogita from one prince to another – from the King of Kashi to that of Prayag, from the King of Guzerat to that of Kangra, Carnatic, Sindh, Malwa, Tripuri – each of them had his turn. Sanjogita courteously dismissed all of them in the same manner. When Tara came to almost the end of her journey, she turned towards the door and pointed out the door – keeper. The gold statue of Maharaja Prithvi Raj beamed in the eyes of Sanjogita. Tara announced the door – keeper as Maharaja Prithvi Raj, the virtuous ruler of Delhi who had defeated the Mohammedan invader, Shahabuddin Ghori, the one who had won the battle of Mahoba. He had defeated Parmaldeo of Buldelkhand. Tara's eloquent praise had great anger simmering in Jaychand. Amidst overall excitement Sanjogita made herself bold and with the help of Tara put the wedding garland round the neck of the statue and reverentially bowed to it. Jaychand stood up, princes rose from their seats seeing great commotion in the hall. Jaychand came to his daughter and cursed her in filthy words. Raja Birchand, his intelligent brother controlled the situation. Sanjogita was insulted and exiled, the statue was vandalised.

Maharaja Prithvi Raj held his court to discuss how to bring Sanjogita from her father's captivity in Kanouj. They consider waging a war on Kanouj but Maharaja Prithvi Raj thinks that Maharaja Jaychand might kill his daughter in the event of his defeat. The court poet Chand Bardai suggests sending a delegation

to persuade Maharaja Jaychand to marry his daughter to Maharaja Prithvi Raj and if he refuses, they should fight a battle. The plan appeals to Maharaja Prithvi Raj and they decide to send a group of respected persons followed by an army incognito. Maharaja Prithvi Raj has to be there in disguise.

The designated cavalcade led by Chand Bardai reached Kanouj. Chand Kavi pleaded with Maharaja Jaychand to marry his daughter to Maharaja Prithvi Raj but of no avail. Soon Jaychand came to know from his spies about the identity of Chand Kavi's disciple who was Prithvi Raj in disguise. His camp was besieged by a large Kanouj army. A battle was fought between the two armies of Maharaj Jaychand and Maharaja Prithvi Raj. Sanjogita watched the scene with a sense of pride for her hero Prithvi Raj who was fighting a battle for her. With help from Tara Sanjogita managed to escape from her captivity and join Prithvi Raj who was standing at the outer gate. Prithvi Raj mounted the horse alongwith Sanjogita. The armies of Jaychand followed. A fierce battle was fought as she was being led to Delhi. After five days of hard fight Prithvi Raj reached the metropolis of his empire leaving his pursuers behind. Sanjogita also fought bravely like true Khatrani. At Delhi the two were enormously greeted with joy. Delhi was wild with excitement, it was delirious with joy. Preparation for the regular marriage between Prithvi Raj and Sanjogita were ordered and arrangements were made elaborately.

The ceremony began at 8 a.m. in the month of June. It was attended by forty rulers of different kingdoms that owned the suzerainty of Delhi. The learned Brahmans were conducting the rituals. The bride, the beautiful Sanjogita in brilliant wedding dress was sitting by the side of Prithvi Raj. The marriage was solemnized. Jaychand felt tremendously humiliated and defeated. He was in a rage. The failure of the Yug which could establish his suzerainty had angered and agitated him. He had a burning passion to destroy Delhi and avenge Prithvi Raj. His councillors concurred with him in his desire to destroy Prithvi Raj. He was

further supported by Abdulla Khan through Srichand found it needless to draw out the war which had naturally come to an end by the marriage of the princess with Prithvi Raj. Jaychand made up his mind to avenge Prithvi Raj. He wrote to the Mohammedan ruler Ghyasuddin to fight for him. However, the queen Rup Sundari felt horrified at the idea of waging a war.

She was apprehensive that the invitation meant the preface of a 'Yaman' over a Hindu spelt the utter ruin of her son – in – law. She argued with her husband but Jaychand was adamant.

At Ghazni there was a discussion between Mulzuddin and Sultan Ghyasuddin regarding extending support to Maharaja Jaychand in the battle against Maharaja Prithvi Raj. They ponder over the pros and cons of the issue. It is noted on the one hand that Hindus have great regard for their motherland and on the other that Jaychand was anxious to establish his suzerainty in the country at any cost. Thus, Ghyasuddin finally decided to collaborate with Jaychand in the battle against Delhi. Earlier during hunting Prithvi Raj had mistakenly disturbed the peace of a hermit who had pronounced his death in the coming days. It had such a demoralizing effect on Prithvi Raj that when the news of the imminent attack by Jaychand with Ghyasuddin came, Prithvi Raj took it indifferently. He entrusted the reins of government to the hands of his minister and passed his days with his wife in religious observances. His Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was more an ascetic than a statesman. Prithvi Raj's brother – in – law Rana Samar Singh of Mewar came to awaken him. Prithvi Raj rose to the occasion. He took leave of Sanjogita and got ready to battle. He was reminded of his duty as Kshatriya and the precept of Chanak to sacrifice one's all for the motherland. His wife Sanjogita also insisted on joining him in the battle field as a brave Kshatrani. Prithvi Raj convinced her that it was not prudent for her to go with him to fight with Mohammedans. Finally she relented.

Prithvi Raj had to face a number of setbacks. The Rajas of Kashi, Anhilwara, Mandor and Patan and some others had left

him. Many of his might chiefs had died in the battle of Tirouri and in the encounter following the kidnapping of the princess. The Mohammad of Ghor demanded unconditional allegiance and acceptance of Islam. Prithvi Raj was not made to surrender. Previously he had captured Mohammed of Ghor in the battle of Tirouri but released him out of his charitable disposition. Today Ghor was stronger than Prithvi Raj. The battle started. In the night Mohammedans played a trick to outwit them by making a fire at place to convince Prithvi Raj that they were camping there. Prithvi Raj's army was taken unawares in the night. In the fierce battle many of Prithvi Raj's chiefs were killed, still he fought bravely, finally his sword was broken and taking up another from a soldier he fought till he lay down dead.

Prithvi Raj was killed in the battle. Many of his Kins and chiefs were also killed in the battle. Through the courtesy and kindness of Mohammed of Ghor Sanjogita got the corpse of her husband. She lived only a few month's married life. Her own father proved her enemy. She was disowned by her father, neglected by her mother, bereft of earthy possession, but she never shrank back from any sacrifice for the good of her husband; a hundred difficulties she bravely surmounted. It was her iron will and determination that none else but Prithvi Raj should be her husband. Her father stood in the way of her marriage, her mother supported her father. She quietly bore up all difficulties and suffered the miseries. Even after his death Prithvi Raj was alive in her memories. She was anxious to meet the disembodied soul of Prithvi Raj. She was determined to die a sati. Many people remonstrated but she was firm. She died a sati with the name of her lord on her lips and the image of her love in her soul.

At the end by way of an epilogue the novelist has recorded his comments and exhortations. The story of Sanjogita is an exhibit of the India of the twelfth century when it was on the decline. Though during the age of Jaychand the light of Hindu glory had not much faded, the days of Rajput chivalry had not wholly disappeared. (185) To quote further,

But alas ! his days are gone. Gone are the saintly Brahmans that sanctified our soil with their extraordinary spiritual purity. Gone are the Kshatrya heroes that were second to none in courage or bravery and that lived and died for the uplifting of their race..... But times have changed; the wheel of fortune has taken an unfavourable turn. India has fallen into a depth of misery. Heroes of Aryavarta, have you passed away for ever ? Is there nothing to infuse life into the dead ashes ? Mighty sons of Ind, where are you gone? ..... Will you not be reincarnated for the advancement of our race ? (185-86)

The writer's words speak of his nationalistic fervor who laments the present state and exhorts to improve it for the restoration of its past glory.

The novel *Sanjogita* can be analysed and appreciated on several planes. First, it is a historical novel. K. K. Sinha wrote this novel when the Indian English novel was taking shape. As a historical novel, it is, if not the first, substantially it is the second in English in India. During British rule they wrote generally on domestic subjects and social reality. Historical romance was also open to them but patriotism was still a far cry. It needed one's courage of conviction and tack to encroach upon the forbidden territory. Though already there were patent intimations of nationalism and a craving for freedom, still nobody wrote patriotic novels. No doubt, H.L.V. Derozio was the first to write patriotic poetry in 1827 lamenting the present state of 'my fallen country' inspiring people to recover the 'beauteous halo that circled round thy (India's) brow'. Similarly K. K. Sinha without mincing words provokes his countrymen to gird up their loins to regain their superiority in the world. He wants 'to infuse life into the dead ashes' to take on the challenges in the way. That way *Sanjogita* is, to all intents and purposes a historical novel as much as a patriotic novel. To hear from the horse's mouth,

..... please do not forget that it is not a typical romance that I am writing but a historical novel. I attempt not to

create an unreal scene but to describe, with as much fidelity to truth as is possible in the circumstances as, the Hindu people of a bygone age, the life they lived, the deeds they did and the manners they had. (117)

The story of Sanjogita and Maharaja Prithvi Raj Chauhan's kidnapping her after Sanjogita chooses him for her husband by garlanding his golden statue in his absence is a historical fact. Jaychand's invitation of Sultan Mohammad of Ghor to fight for him in the battle against Prithvi Raj is also a historical fact. With a sense of anguish and regret the novelist says, 'Jaychand made up his mind to write to the Mohammedan ruler and thus to turn the current of Indian history.' Though some of his councillors advised him otherwise. Srichand told him, 'Maharaj, it will not do for us to seek the help of a Mohammedan invader. Our country will be lost.' But Jaychand rebukes him and rejects his advice. Even Bhanjadab puts in, 'But Maharaja Sahib, I am afraid Aryavarta will then be devastated and the homes of our fathers will be overrun by Mohammedans.' Jaychand overruled him.

*Sanjogita* is a historical piece also in the sense that it reflects the contemporary social order and manners of the people. Those were the days of Swayamvara; the girls were free to choose their husbands out of the suitable suitors arranged by their parents. More than a system marriage was a sacred affair, a religious duty for the parents to marry their daughters and for daughters to get married. Sanjogita did not marry the prince of her father's choice as she had already made up her mind to marry Prithvi Raj Chauhan. However, she would not go against her parents. Sanjogita loves Prithvi Raj, 'her sentiments of love were strong but they could not disregard the prescriptions of religion. The religious instinct could not be uprooted; it was intertwined within her existence; her love was not profane nor irreligious; indeed it was nurtured by religion.' (120) Sanjogita is equally obedient to her parents. She will not refuse to choose the man of her parents' choice. She says clearly, 'Tara, my path is clear; and my resolution

is formed. If my parents will insist on my choosing Kalanjor I shall do so, but shall bid adieu to the world immediately after; but if they leave me to myself I shall recognize in the statue a true representative of my – Maharaja Prithvi Raj and give it the wedding garland.’ (90) That shows Sanjogita’s obedience as well as her determination.

The novel also informs us of the prevalence of Sati system. The Rajput wives in particular immolated themselves in case of their husband’s death or defeat in battle. They also fought battles. Sanjogita, too, offers to go to battle with Prithvi Raj but she is advised not to do so in a battle with the Mohammedans. But after the death of Prithvi Raj she dies a sati on the pyre of her husband. The element of religion pervades the novel with salient characteristics of Hinduism. The very term Aryavarta refers to Vedic primordialism. ‘Religion emblazoned the standard of our ancestors.’ ..... Religion was with them the regulative principle of action. At Delhi we see some people bathing in a tank; some sanctifying their bodies by using the holy and fragrant sandal wood, others are chanting the Vedic Mantras in beautiful temples that remind us of the remark that the Hindus “sleep religion drink religion and eat religion” (34) People’s extreme attachment to the cow and their highest regard for the cow is an essential element of Hinduism. The very custom of having a council for administration had religious origin approved by Manu, the great law – giver. Similarly, the custom of Swayamvara was a well – established custom confirmed by the Shashtras reinforced by time to let the bride select her husband. The novelist is eloquent enough to characterize the Hindus in the following words,

The Hindus were an exclusively spiritual nation and in matters sensual and mundane, their ambition never soared high. They never became a conquering nation and could not very well defend themselves against the attacks of those that were anxious for worldly wealth and worldly pleasures ..... It was because the Hindus never tried to gain worldly ends; their attention was wholly concentrated on the highest

spiritual developments of which man is capable. The Hindus were, in the language of Max Muller, a nation of philosophers; they were never a set of cruel conquerors and heartless tyrants. (86)

About the aim of religion Maharaja Prithvi Raj says, 'self – sacrifice is the root point of the Hindu religion; and the Hindu's one aim was to merge the individual self in the universal self.' (117) The Rajsuya Yag (Yajna) was practised by Hindu Rajas to establish suzerainty over other Kingdoms. Maharaja Jaychand with this motive had planned the Rajsuya Yag which however did not materialize.

Though a Hindu Maharaja Jaychand never respected Hindu customs and took shelter under the Buddhistic faith. He defined the Hindu public opinion as he had ordered Swayamvara of his daughter though his brother had died only recently. Usually people in such a situation abstain from happy celebrations. Jaychand was addicted to ganja; he could not do without it. He would say, 'My head becomes giddy hence I do not smoke; it clears my brain and helps me in ordering my state affairs.' (9) In many respects he was different from Prithvi Raj.

*Sanjogita* can be regarded as a novel with a purpose. Though in those days there was no such formal category as novel with a purpose but literature as a whole was meant for life. The stories, too had a moral, a normative orientation. K. K. Sinha's choice of the history of the twelfth century story of Sanjogita is a means to throw light on the contemporary history of India in the north with local Kings' rivalry and infighting which led to the Mohammedan invasion. The novelist has a nationalistic purpose to write a historical novel. First, it is a quest of India's past heritage. The writer begins the Preface – India was once great. Her ancient civilization was the glory of mankind. When Europe was sunk in dark barbarism, India was blessed with bright civilization. Far beyond the age when Plato preached his philosophical principles in the Academy, Rishi Badarayana taught his Vedantic doctrines on the banks of the Ganges.

Long before Pathogoras was born at Athens, the theory of the transmigration of soul was well known to the Hindu people. The writer laments the sorry state of India at present i.e., while writing this novel, the India under British rule plagued with famine, disease, illiteracy and superstition. The Writer's purpose is to remind his countrymen of the glory and greatness of their fall, to show up the glaring evils of disunion and to stamp the manly virtues on their minds.' And there he champions the cause of freedom. He provokes and challenges his countrymen saying, 'Heroes of Aryavarta, have you passed away for ever? Is there nothing to infuse into the dead ashes?' That's his clarion call to the youth to rise to the occasion and liberate the country. For this his sane advice is – in union lies our salvation. Here he also adds union between the Indians themselves and Union between the Indians and their rulers. His advice to be united with the ruler seems to be a clever device to save the book from being banned by the British ruler. So, 'no line should separate one community from the other and all the different elements should act in perfect concert' was a must for liberation as well as for restoration of India's past glory. Only unity between the Hindus and Muslims can liberate India and stand as one nation free and dignified. It is important to note that the novelist is an advocate of secularism though he is sore with the Mohammedan invasion of India. Here under the British rule the writer stresses on concerted effort on the part of Hindus and Muslims to liberate India. Hence, 'Let the Hindus and the Mohammedans proceed hand in hand; Let the rulers and the ruled be united to retrieve the lost position of our fathers.' It may sound rather self – contradictory but that was the need of the hour. During British rule one had to be accommodative and compromising with the ruler. Another contemporary of K.K. Sinha, Babu Avadh Behari Lall wrote poetry about India's past, its natural assets, its seasons, people, customs and the kindness of the British government in the same breath. His apparent approach was both nationalistic and loyal to the then government. It was wise to take the line of

least resistance. Even Tagore talked of freedom in a broad sense inclusive of freedom of the country.

Something about the formal structure of *Sanjogita*. In India the novel came from the West. We had poetry and drama in ancient literature but no novel. The novel as such came into being in the seventeenth century. Generally Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) is regarded as the first novel, in India it was *Rajmohan's wife* (1864) by Bankim Chandra. K. K. Sinha wrote *The Star of Sikri* in 1893 and *Sanjogita* in 1903. Whereas *The Star of Sikri* is a social novel, *Sanjogita* is a historical novel running into 187 pages. Salient features characterize this nascent fictional episode. It has been written in the third person omniscient narrative technique. The narrator tells the story. Characters act and interact with each other. However, here in the Preface the author K. K. Sinha has assumed the role of a commentator. In fact, the Preface is the author's mouthpiece. But here he has kept himself detached and referred to the author as an outsider. Thus, ..... the author has given prominence ..... The Author has received..... The Author is glad ..... (Preface) This is unusual now.

*Sanjogita* begins with a Preface. It is meant to inform the reader about the aim and purpose of writing this novel. In an explicit way the writer has dwelt upon the past glory of India in relation to the world at large. He has outlined the history of Indian from ancient times to the British regime via Mohammedan rule. He regrets to write about the pre – Mohammedan chunk of India's history when due to disunion and infighting the Hindu regime was destroyed. For specimen, he has chosen the story of Maharaja Jaychand and Maharaja Prithvi Raj whose internecine jealousy and infighting heralded the Mohammedan rule. Jaychand's daughter Sanjogita was made the butt of the royal devastation. The Writer's purpose of writing this novel is 'not an anxiety for vulgar fame or a desire for ignoble advertisement.... but to remind his countrymen of the glory and greatness of their ancestors, to draw this attention to the direct causes of their fall, to show up the glaring

evils of disunion and to stamp the manly virtues on their minds. ....  
(Preface).

The novel has been written in 29 chapters. Each chapter begins with a quotation from a renowned poet or scholar. The citation has some direct or indirect bearing on the particular episode. For example, the very first chapter has a quotation from Milton describing Eve's graceful steps and heavenly eyes and dignity and love in her every gesture. By implication the novelist eulogizes the beauty of Sanjogita and present her on the scene. Beginning a chapter with a quotation was the prevalent style of writing. It added to the beauty and substance of writing. Here we have quotations from Shakespeare, Homer, Coleridge, Dryden, Tennyson, Scott, Swift, Goldsmith, Rongfellow and so on. In a way such quotations work as dramatic chorus as they signal the coming events as well as somewhat comment on the ongoing events.

Another significant fictional feature noticeable is the pleasant description of nature. In the beginning itself *Sanjogita* has a description of a charming scenery as a therapeutic balm to a troubled brain, here the ambivalent state of the mind of our heroine. The novelist has described several fruit trees and flowers. Here we have trees like cypress, orange, pomegranate, mango, lichee, plantain and flowers like hily, lotus, Kamini, marigold etc. Description of nature seems to be the prevailing practice of writing. Devakinandan Khatri begins his *Chandrakanta* (1888) with a description of the evening and the crimson sun and the hero sitting on a hill. Here also nature serves both as decorative and purposive design. We also find elaborate description of palaces, gardens, ornaments, jewellery, dress etc. These are the essential elements of royal grandeur and eloquently speak for majestic opulence. Among other remarkable features of writing mention must be made of the relevance of Buddhism. It may not have been the most dominating influence but it was there in practice. Jaychand's brother Baluk Roy was a Buddhist. When Jaychand meant to deviate from the Hindu practice, he takes resort to Buddhism and

rationalizes his action. It is perhaps because of his Buddhistic allegiance that he says, 'I declare and I declare it publicly that I do not hate Musalmans. Mine is a liberal creed. I have respect for every creature of God. (50) But all the same he wants to perform Rajsuya Yag, a Hindu practice. Jaychand's religion, in one word, is just a religion of convenience.

One more point regarding the writer's style of writing. Though written in the third person, the writer comes in between the course of events and takes liberty to make authorial comments. For example, towards the end of chapter IV he says, 'We have given the reader a glimpse into the plots that were being hatched at Kalanjor'. (28) The Chapter VII begins with the writer's direction, 'We have to withdraw our attention from Delhi and direct it to the Council chamber of Maharaja Jaychand.' (45) Similarly in Chapter XV he says, 'Reader, please do not think that I am partial towards my heroine or that I am evolving a model of beauty out of my own imagination.' (102) Again, he concludes Chapter XVI with the words, 'We must drop the curtain and let the reader take breath. (110) Such comments and directions are just simplistic and hardly intrude upon the course of action. Now-a-days both writers and readers have far advanced in conception as well as delivery of ideas and plots.

As a whole, *Sanjogita* is a historical novel written with a purpose to remind the reader the causes of India's slavery being disunion and infighting among the local Kings and to arouse the countrymen from slumber and inertia to regain their past glory. The writer is proud of his country. He says, 'Aryavarta was at the height of worldly prosperity and was far and away the richest land on the face of the earth '(15) As regards the historicity of the story the novel stands on a firm ground. The main story is based on the facts of history. However, all names of characters may not be true. Similarly, the hunting episode may be a fictional attachment though not irrelevant in the context. In totality, *Sanjogita* is both historically realistic, fictionally interesting and morally motivating.

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## Ralph Waldo Emerson: Visionary Architect of America's Literary Renaissance

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### Abstract

Against the political, literary and cultural backdrop of America before and after the American Revolution that culminated in *The Declaration of Independence* signed by the founding fathers on July 4, 1776, the paper explores and examines the stellar role of Ralph Waldo Emerson in ushering the nineteenth century American Renaissance. The addresses of Emerson and his essays revolutionized contemporary American thought that had hitherto remained circumscribed by English traditions and practices of the erstwhile British Colonies. Emerson's Address "The American Scholar" and his unique essay entitled "Self-Reliance," that are elaborately dealt with in this paper, set the scene that emphasized the imperative of autonomy in ideas, thoughts and actions of both the individual and the nation. The enduring appeal and contemporary relevance of Emerson's prophetic utterances have also been taken into account.

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What we know today as the most advanced nation and the most powerful democracy in the world was, predominantly known, a little over two centuries and a half ago, as the cluster of thirteen English Colonies, each one independent in terms of economic as well as political governance but still owing common allegiance to the King of England and observing all traditions and customs essentially British in nature and origin. The idea of America as a nation evolved when these thirteen Colonies, hitherto loosely bound by common economic interests, joined hands to oppose the imposition of the “Stamp Act” by the British Parliament on March 22, 1765, on the Colonies. The act of joint rebellion by the Colonies became evident with what is historically known as the “Boston Tea Party,” an incident that saw the Americans throwing (instead of unloading) 342 chests of tea belonging to the East India Company into the Boston Harbor on December 16, 1773. This unprecedented act of protest set in motion the great American Revolution against what they called the tyrannical rule of the King of England. In the realm of thought and ideas, a large share of motivating the rebellion must go to the Englishman Thomas Paine, whose 47-page pamphlet entitled *Common Sense* (1776) addressed to the “Inhabitants of America” gave the clarion call for severing their ties with the mother country:

Small Islands, not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care; but there is something absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems: England to Europe, America to itself. (Paine 69)

According to Susan Manning, *Common Sense* "made instantaneous and innumerable converts to the cause of American independence" and The American Revolution became "the country's political Great Awakening." (Manning 21)

With the adoption of the *Declaration of Independence* by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, the thirteen united Colonies were absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown and were given the status of free and independent States, which came to be known as the United States of America. The *Declaration of Independence* recommended the dissolution of all political connections between America and Great Britain. Bound no longer either by political or emotional ties with Britain, the citizens became an integral part of the newly constituted American nation, a feeling that found beautiful expression in Robert Frost's famous poem "The Gift Outright," which the poet himself recited at the Inauguration Ceremony of the 35<sup>th</sup> U.S. President John F. Kennedy on January 20, 1961: "Such as we were we gave ourselves outright/To the land vaguely realizing westward/ But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,/ Such as she was, such as she would become." (Frost 246)

It is evident that the *Declaration of Independence* gave the United State of America the freedom to assume the separate and equal station of a nation independent in all respects—social, economic, and political. But the fact remains that in the sphere of literature and culture this autonomy remained in abeyance for over half-a-century with independent America continuing to speak to the world in the language of the English tradition.

Thomas A. Bailey mentions in his book *The American Pageant* how a British critic questioned the very existence of an indigenous literature: "'Who reads an American Book?' sneered the British critic Sydney in 1820. The painful truth was that the nation's rough-hewn, pioneering civilization gave little encouragement to 'polite' literature. Much of the reading matter was imported or plagiarized from England." (Bailey 371) Similarly, communicating

with *The Tribune*, Margaret Fuller wrote from Rome in 1847: “Although we have an independent political existence, our position towards Europe, as to literature and the arts, is still that of a colony, and one feels the same joy here that is experienced by the colonist in returning to the parent home.” (Spender 7)

These observations do indicate that the shadow of the colonial existence continued to haunt the American writers whose preference for the British/European tradition did not seem to wane. However, it is significant to point out that a few exceptions like Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), Washington Irving (1783-1859) and James Fennimore Cooper (1789-1851) stood out in a marked way. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1818) was one of the first books by an American author to be taken seriously by Europeans. In Washington Irving’s writings, “Europe was amazed to find at last an American with a feather in his hand, not in his hair.” (Bailey 371). Likewise, Thackeray spoke about James Fennimore Cooper: as “the first ambassador whom the New World of letters sent to the old.” (Bailey 371)

Notwithstanding the isolated instances cited above, the emergence of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) as the herald of intellectual and social individualism and as one of the founding fathers of the American “Transcendentalist” Movement decisively impacted the opening of the American mind to a floodgate of ideas unprecedented in the short history of the new nation. In his “Introduction” to *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Signet Classic edition), Charles Johnson emphatically remarks: “His journals, letters, poetry and addresses are . . . the vivid and invaluable transcript of one of the nineteenth-century’s finest, most cultivated minds as it grappled with perennial, social and theological dilemmas shirred in the specificity of a young nation confronting the all too obvious failures of its Revolution.” (Johnson ix) Johnson lauds Emerson’s ability to combine “the historical glories of the old” and “the rich possibilities of the new” to probe and explore the intractable belief in “infinitude of the private man.” (Johnson ix)

Emerson was born on May 25, 1803, in Boston, Massachusetts, to Ruth Haskins, daughter of a prosperous Boston distiller, and Reverend William Emerson, a Unitarian Minister of Boston's First Church. Ralph was only eight years old when his father died. After his early education in various schools in Boston, Emerson entered Harvard College at the age of fourteen in 1817. Among the formative influences that shaped Emerson's restless mind was that of his aunt Mary Moody Emerson, who "with her Calvinist outlook, early individualism—with its belief that the individual both has power and responsibility—and hardworking nature clearly inspired Emerson throughout his life." (Rockefeller) Though an unremarkable student, Emerson began writing his journal, which he called "The Wide World," a habit which was to last for most of his life. (Rockefeller) Distressed by the mediocrity of talents and conditions around him, Emerson joined the Harvard Divinity School in 1825 and two years later in 1827 he became the Unitarian minister of the Second Church of Boston. He married Ellen Louisa Tucker in 1829, a lady whom he deeply loved. Unfortunately, the death of Ellen in 1831 at the age of nineteen left him deeply desolate. Disenchanted with the Church that followed weather-beaten rituals, he left the pastorate in September 1832.

Emerson's visit to Europe in 1833 brought him into contact with William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, and Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle introduced Emerson to Oriental thought and gifted him the *Gita*. Inspired by the romantic individualism of these intellectuals, he returned to the U.S., married Lydia Jackson and settled down in Concord, Massachusetts in 1835. He began writing and preaching in his new avatar as "The Sage of Concord" and undisputed leader of "Transcendentalism." The Transcendental Movement primarily rested on the belief that "truth 'transcends' the senses: it cannot be found by observation and reflection alone. The highest truth comes to light through the inner faculties that every man possesses. It must be sought by permitting the individual to follow his divine instinct." (Bailey 372)

Inspired by the ideas of individualism, self-reliance and self-culture, Emerson began in earnest to articulate his passionate rebellion against the orthodox and the traditional. He addressed audiences throughout New England, challenging the status quo and speaking vehemently in favour of the intellectual independence of both the individual and the nation. Brian Harding notes in *American Literature in Context – 1830-1865*: “Emerson deplored the lack of faith in contemporary literature and clearly implied that his work expressed his belief in what he called the ‘pristine sacredness of thought’ marked by spontaneity and independence of all human authority.” (Harding 42)

Emerson’s address, “The American Scholar” delivered by him on August 31, 1837, before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard literally took the Harvard academic world by storm. Contrary to the expectations of the audience, who came to hear the usual run-of-the mill stuff like the glorification of Harvard tradition and values, Emerson simply shook them out of their complacency with his spontaneous and bold utterances. At the very outset, he reminded them that the time had come “when the sluggish intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close.” (TAS 225) He reminded the erudite audience to give up relying on “sere remains of foreign harvests” (TAS 225) and construct, through the depths of their own creative instincts, a new era of action, events and songs that would endure for a thousand years. He emphasized that he did not view the American Scholar as a member of a particular profession. To him, the American Scholar was exclusive “Man Thinking” and not simply “the parrot of other men’s thinking.” (TAS 226-227)

The first and the most important prerequisite for a true scholar, Emerson pointed out, was to remain connected to Nature and learn the boundless wisdom it offers: “There is never a beginning, there

is never an end to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself.” (TAS 227) According to him, the ancient precept, “Know thyself,” and the modern precept, “Study nature,” (TAS 228) blend into a single maxim. Once the Scholar learns to appreciate the value of his own inner divinity, he will find it convenient to move beyond dogmas and established principles to create what is of value to the entire mankind. Books have their own inestimable value but warns Emerson, “Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments ... Books are for the scholar’s idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men’s transcripts of their readings.” (TAS 231)

Rather than remain a mere bookworm, Emerson stresses that “Man Thinking” must come to recognize the active soul that resides within him for “The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates. In this action, it is genius; ... The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius.” (TAS 230)

The aim of the Scholar, states Emerson, should be “to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances.” (TAS 236) He must “relinquish display and immediate fame” and strive for the betterment of humanity in “poverty and solitude” by “exercising the highest functions of human nature.” (TAS 237) At a time when people found unbounded joy in aspiring for material gains and the glory of power, Emerson boldly declared:

Men have become of no account. Men in history, men in the world of to-day, are bugs, are spawn, and are called “the mass” and “the herd.” ... Men such as they are very naturally seek money or power; and power because it is as good as money,—the “spoils,” so called, “of office.” And why not? For they aspire to the highest, and this, in their sleep-walking, they dream is highest. Wake them and they shall quit the false good and leap to the true, and leave governments to clerks and desks. (TAS 240)

Admonishing the seekers of power and material wealth, Emerson proclaimed his marked preference for creating an indigenous literature that talked not about kings and generals but of the simple annals of “the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life,” (TAS 242) in fact anything that highlighted the life and predicament of the lowliest of the low. Having experienced a series of personal tragedies, he humbly stated, “I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low.” (TAS 242-243) To illustrate his admiration of literature grounded in the reality of day-to-day living, he cited the creative renderings of writers like Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, Goethe, Wordsworth, and Carlyle, writings that were “blood Warm.” (TAS 243)

Emerson reiterated the need for the American Scholar to evolve the concept of self-culture rather than be fascinated by the superstition of emulating something that was alien. Emerson attacked the mind of the educated American for pursuing the illusion of tradition, which was no longer American in thought and feeling. Only if the artist would gaze within in self-reflection, he could visualize a real world which he could call his own. Instead of allowing himself to be awed by an alien culture, the American artist would be doing a greater service to both his art and the nation by discovering his own path that would be self-derived. Emerson was clearly in favour of the exercise of individual talent rather than the blind emulation of tradition in a spirit of conformity. Emerson urged the American Scholar to abandon the courtly muses of Europe and draw sustenance from the material available to him in his own soil for things near to one’s own area of experience are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote. Emerson set his hopes on the “Thinking American” (that included the writer/artist/intellectual) who would be prepared to experiment in the new climate and new culture with whatever resources at his disposal

to cultivate a tradition of his own. The primary responsibility of the American Scholar lay in understanding that the “world is nothing, the man is all ... it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all.” (TAS 244)

What one was required to do was explore the richness and the vastness of the Continent one had been inhabiting for so long instead of remaining stuck up as a Colonial construct in thought and spirit. Towards the end of his historic address, Emerson urged the “American Freeman” to give up being tame, imitative and timid and learn to develop the “confidence in the unsearched might of man.” (TAS 244) Once the Scholar becomes aware of the power that lies within him of this “unsearched might” and he learns to “plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him.” (TAS 245) The belief of Emerson in the emergence of such a “Thinking” Scholar who could forge the much-needed new American identity is evident from the optimistic conclusion to his unique address:

We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. Then shall man be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence ... A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men. (TAS 245)

Based on the wisdom of his own inner reflections that led him to question authority wherever it tried to oppose the integrity of the individual soul, Emerson’s historic address “The American Scholar” laid the strong foundation for the dawn of America’s literary and cultural Renaissance, free from the fetters of Colonial moorings. James Russel Lowell saw the Address as “an event without any former parallel in our literary annals” while Oliver Wendell Holmes pronounced it as “our Intellectual Declaration of Independence.” (Spiller 372)

The echoes of his inspiring vision of intellectual independence that he espoused in “The American Scholar” can be heard in his

numerous addresses, essays and journal entries. His exemplary utterances pertaining to the assertion of true individuality can be best seen in his essay "Self-Reliance." In this work, Emerson states, "imitation is suicide" (SR 267) and goes on to add that "the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what they thought." (SR 266-267)

As a prerequisite for Self-reliance, Emerson lays emphasis on the instinctive power of the individual soul: "The soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed." (SR 288) Instead of allowing himself to be awed by an alien culture, the American artist would be doing a greater service to both his art and the nation by discovering his own path that would be self-derived, he averred. The genius, according to him, was not someone who descended on the earth as an exceptional being but one who had faith in his own thought and who believed that "what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men." (SR 266) The truly individual man, he says, "must be a nonconformist" and adds, "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world." (SR 269)

His prescription for self-reliance was precise and unambiguous, for he stated: "what I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own, but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." (SR 271) Yet, it must be borne in mind that "independence of solitude" does not imply that the "American Scholar" needs to work in isolation seated in the ivory tower of self-beliefs. He must also essentially be a man of action endowed with the ability to transform his ideas into concrete reality.

The immediate transformation that came in the wake of Emerson's role as an architect of the American Renaissance can be visualized in the appearance of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. Defying traditional approaches to creativity, Whitman sang of the power of the individual in glowing terms: "One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person,/ Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse ... The Female equally with the Male I sing.../ Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,/ Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,/ The Modern Man I sing." (Whitman 3). Whitman defines true democracy as where the consent of the governed is paramount to the relationship between an individual citizen and the nation he belongs to. His "En-Masse" is not a picture of a crowd but the configuration of an individual who must have the freedom to remain "a simple separate person." Whitman's creation in terms of both content and style, immediately evoked an unqualified appreciation of Emerson.

It is of utmost importance to understand that Emerson's appeal and renown were not limited to the nineteenth century alone. The enduring appeal of his life and work continues to exert its influence even in our own times. We are all familiar with the names of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, Michael Dell, Steve Jobs, Walt Disney, Jack Dorsey, among many others, who have distinguished themselves as successful entrepreneurs and created a niche for themselves in the enviable international hall of fame and fortune after dropping out of prestigious universities and colleges in the U.S.A. What better proof can there be of the power of individuality than the contribution of the personalities mentioned above who defied the laws of imitation and conformity to grasp the quintessential wisdom propounded by Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Every great man is unique. Abide in the simple and noble regions of the life, obey thy heart, and thou shalt reproduce the Foreworld again."(SR 289)

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**Unfolding Memories to Mirror Life:  
Reading Select Poems of Gopi  
Krishnan Kottoor**

**\*Binod Mishra**

The horizon of Indian English poetry has, of course, expanded if we expatiate our readings of the present day creative talents appearing every day with the advent of advanced technology allowing more freedom and space to the practitioners of muse. But it would not be fair to call all of them poetry in the true sense of the term. The craze for quick fame and instant recognition prompts many so-called poets to seek words that rhyme but not reason, phrases that appear attractive but not relevant. Such practices most often disappoint serious readers and poetry lovers. Moreover, when it comes to represent the word 'Indian', it becomes more embarrassing as the true Indian ethos requires something more that should inspire, enlighten, ennoble and entertain, else the delight that one seeks through poetry cannot be realized in the absence of these qualities.

Bruce King in his seminal book entitled *Modern Indian English Poetry* opines that the new generation of poets who appeared in mid-1980s came up with 'new sensibilities and new themes'. King sadly admits that while many of these poets 'were not always as serious as the earlier poets but they widened the

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range of emotions and areas of Indian life that were the subjects of poetry.' In this regard, it becomes worthwhile to mention the name of Gopi Krishnan Kottoor (1956...), who offers seriousness and variety of Indian themes in his poetry provided one allows oneself to peep into this poet's world. Kottoor's poetic genius can rightly be said to defy the charge levelled by King as the poet under discussion connects the old with the new and new with the old. This helps in broadening the canvas of Indian English poetry to greater heights. His attempt at unravelling various themes and touching upon literary genres, besides poetry makes him emerge as an accomplished creative artist.

The present paper is a humble attempt to understand how memories help in understanding the complexities of human relationships often ignored amid the advancing globalization and the fast pace of life. In order to remain focused to the study, I have taken some select poems from Gopi Krishnan Kottoor's latest collection entitled *Swan Lake*.

Born in Trivandrum, Gopi Krishnan Kottoor earned a Masters in Fine Arts from the program of Texas State University, Southwest Texas, United States. He also availed himself of being Poet-in-Residence at the University of Augsburg, Germany on a sponsorship by ICCR in association with Tagore Centre, Berlin. His pen name is Raghav G. Nair and what makes him distinct is that albeit a banker by profession, his profession doesn't affect his poetry. Kottoor has dedicated himself to poetry through a journal poetry chain named *Chipmunk* which promotes new and young poetic voices. His poetic oeuvres include *Piccolo, Milestones to the Sun, Sunbirds in the Rain, Nirvana and Other poems, Rev: Father Benedict Goes To Heaven and Other Poems, Father, Wake Us In Passing (2000)*, (*Vater, Wecke Uns Im Vorübergehen – German, Laufschrift 2004*), *Mother Sonata, A Buchenwald Diary* (Poems following a visit to Buchenwald Concentration camp, Weimar, Germany), *Victoria Terminus, Poems Selected and New, Vrindavan – The Coloured Yolk of*

*Love* (2012), *Tell Me Neruda* (2014), *The Painter of Evenings: New and Selected Poems (1980-2018)* and *Swan Lake* (2018-21). One of his famous collections entitled *Father, Wake Us in Passing* was translated into German by Wolfgang Heyder in 2004 as *Vater, wecke' unsimVorübergehen'*. Credited with several awards, namely All India Special Poetry Prize of the British Council Poetry Society, All India Poetry Competitions 1997, All India Poetry Competitions 2017, Wingword Poetry Prize 2020, 2022, and The Chandigarh Literary Society Poetry Award 2022, among others, he has also tried his hand at writing plays and novels. Kottoor acknowledges at many places his influences of the romantic poet John Keats who upon his gravestone has the words 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water' but who with his poems such as *The Great Odes*, remains immortal in verse. *The Mask of Death: The Final Days of John Keats* (1996) attests to Kottoor's endeavour at drama and it 'recaptures the last days in the life of Keats.' M.K. Naik, the veteran Indian critic's remark about Kottoor's *The Mask of Death* doesn't sound convincing when he says that 'the subject evidently called for a compact one-act play, and not sixty odd pages'. It is pertinent to mention here that the final days in the drama speak not only of his death days but his journey from England to Italy, hoping for better health and cure, his travails and the anguish of desperation in love by fate that he encountered in the last year of his life. Kottoor's radio play also recounts Keats' turbulent times in his last year.

Kottoor is a poet who finds inspiration from the past, be it the memory of the past events, of relationships and of experiences that prompt him to derive pleasure and satisfaction. The past has been a recurring theme in many Indian English poets namely in Jayant Mahapatra, A.K. Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar and others. While these poets are stuck in past in such a way that they talk of landscapes, myths and of superstitious beliefs. But Kottoor rejoices in past and makes it a weapon to answer several charges,

and to pay tribute to his elders, their everyday chores, and their beliefs in certain traditional practices and their unalterable ways of life. Remembrance of the past helps Kottoor understand not only the gaps in thinking but also various ups and downs of life. It won't be an exaggeration to say that the delineation of the past enables the poet to seek a catharsis to purge him of his emotional ruptures and overcome the grief that he experienced while being abroad. It is important to mention here that the poet was far away from his ailing parents for a long time. Thus, the reminiscence of his parents through poesy provides him with a sort of self-indoctrination. The poet seems to remind us of Dr. Giacomo Rizzolatti's discovery of mirroring in relationships, which can help in synchronizing relationships and maintaining connection.

Attraction for the past recuperates the poet's persona and helps him renew his emotional bonds. One can find filial feelings galore in Kottoor's world where he recollects not only the house where he lived but also its inmates whose eager eyes wait for his return. The disappearance of 'footsteps that came up to the stairs' makes the poet querulous to know if his mother was 'still peeling onions for the night meal?' The larger picture that emerges out of this is the traditional practice where the anxious parents not only wait for the return of the son but also the everyday chores that Indian mothers are usually assigned to. The poem is again a look over into the past where the poet recounts his experiences of belonging in a home where they once stayed, where a state of harmony with mother in the kitchen, sister in the shower, will soon be jostled by the sudden moment of the father's death... the unawareness that the kettle boiling tea was soon to be the last cup of tea for Daddy who'll soon die.

Kottoor's verses remind us of Shelley who says- "Our sweetest songs are those that consist of our saddest thoughts." The poet makes pain a medium to reassess his association with things and people who surround him. It is through pain that he seeks solace by giving outlet to all his feelings he failed to express

before. A look at his father's photograph makes him recollect his relational chords transporting him to a world 'where to think is to be full of sorrow'. The father's photograph becomes a metaphor which prompts the poet to understand the anxiety that most fathers of the world often carry within. Unknown fears of all sorts either about the disappearance of the 'daughter with the evening train' or 'sons crash landing in distant seas' seem seething in father's mind. Many longings longed often get lost with such unknown fears and uninvited troubles. The father's photograph in this poem rebuts Freud's 'Father complex' and instead prompts the son to sympathize with his father who seemed not heroic but agonized; not a rival but a friend in utter despair.

Across the far bridges of our longings, The secret origami  
unfolding  
unquenched tears, as with one side paralyzed,  
A pain subterranean seeks its answer  
gazing at God's mysterious dominion, His vast blue  
unrelenting skies.

("Looking at My Father's Photograph on Father's Day")

The poet in yet another poem entitled "Father's Shirt" gives vent to the imagination of every son's curiosity to enact father's role in order to unravel the secret of attaining the heroism of what one feels as a father. The unbridled wish of becoming as great as the father prompts the son to wear his father's shirt too large for the son. The son rehearsing as father fails to anticipate the complexities of the world which drenches the father's shirt left in the pouring rain. While the poem may appear to be a delineation of a God-fearing father who would run 'to the prayer room, dripping' yet not saved from the welter of despair. Ripped off regret at his own childish game, the son proffers an ironic humour and revels when he says:

As I lay by his side  
Hearing him snoring.

His snore  
 Had a certain kind of bird music,  
 Slipping somewhere along the bough, To a bright sudden  
 frog croak. (“Father’s Shirt”)

The poem also provides an exemplary picture of illusion and reality forcing us all to realize the gap that exists between the world of the child and the adult.

Kottoor’s poems, bordering on a son’s relation with his parents, allow us to understand the psychological truths we often skip over in the fast pace of life where cut-throat competitions erode the beautiful bonding that later becomes a part of everyone’s memory. While his poems are dipped and drenched in despair, they are not devoid of delight. Both the father and the mother deserve equal affiliations as regards love, which help the child burgeon forth as man and woman. Kottoor stands true to Indian belief which says that man can never pay back one’s parents’ debt. And in this regard, the mother’s debt has an edge over the father’s. The poem “Mother’s Hand” is a beautiful rendition of a child’s gratitude and tribute to his mother who has an active role in the making of former’s life. Making use of garden image, the poet is all praise for the mother who preserves the power to convert desert into a garden. Mother’s love has the strength to create impossible tasks in a very magical way though unnoticed. The unnoticed garden becomes the sheltering ground for the child who in a gesture of indebtedness says:

This hand  
 That rested its warp  
 Upon mine,  
 and took my lips into her own, unwinding the lime shower  
 Of her breast upon my face  
 Lighting up with tender milkweed uprooted,  
 flowing away in the rains. (“Mother’s Hand”)

Gopi Krishnan Kottoor's poetic world provides numerous ways to understand human relationships. A close study of his poems on the theme of human relationships reminds us of William Shakespeare who in *All's Well that Ends Well*, says— "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." Kottoor, too, through one of his poems entitled "Great Grandmother" presents the picture of contemporary world where money is a cementing force even in relationships. Delineating the predicament of an aged, decrepit woman, who continued to be everyone's cynosure because of her wealth and not because of her relational ties, nor because of her pitiable condition of her widowhood. An avid admirer of Shakespeare, the great grandmother was devastated to lose her husband in her early twenties. Her love for learning prompted her to study hard and later become head of English department in an institute. After her superannuation, everyone eyed her wealth and not her falling health. Her indomitable spirit made her languish herself in an ashram than becoming a burden on anyone. Her greedy relatives heaped all sorts of abuses on her. Much to everyone's surprise, the great grandmother bid adieu to the world only when her favourite nephew came to see her.

Through the treatment of the great grandmother, the poet takes a dig at the mercenary and mechanical attitude of people towards the old and the aged citizens. Their dwelling in old age homes is an attack on the Indian civilization that boasts of being civilized and congenial, proclaiming '*Matri Devobhav, Pitridevobhav, Atithidevobhav*'. Memory of the great grandmother and her command over Shakespeare's *The Tempest* provide a reminder of life's uncertainty and futility on the one hand, while on the other hand, it also reflects the fact that nothing in the world can be as great as compassion and fellow-feeling. The poem attains a philosophical but universal tinge when the poet transcribes:

Why the seas churn the sands choking our lives  
Immersing us in tidal grandeur,  
Why all this benevolence of fire

Blossoming us

In its burns. (“Great Grandmother”)

The poet in Gopi Krishnan is obsessed with pain which ultimately is the essence of all life. One cannot be oblivious to the fact that all of us have come alone on this earth and have to leave the earth alone. Happiness in life is transitory whereas pain is the ultimate and unalterable truth. One may, at times, become romantic but even that too is not free from melancholy. Joys and sorrows in human life may appear to be short-lived yet joy cannot override sorrows. All beautiful things except Nature are perishable and hence humans have to be realistic. They must realize that things that dazzle are bound to depress once the dazzle is lost. It is human nature to run after illusion like the beautiful roses which fascinate us all. All of us are guests on this earth and we cannot possess or preserve beautiful objects forever. Our bodies which are made of five elements finally will burn and be one with the earth. The poet appears to be like a dispassionate Buddha forbidding all pleasures because they are the roots of sorrow. The ultimate message that the poet situates in his poem is that all living things are perishable and hence we need to be aware of the transitory nature of life. We are but time’s fool and we often fail to realize that,

it is time to vacate the bedroom.

It is same with love and death.

Love dies.

And death becomes a mirror,

a mirror of yesterday,

of a bedroom used to living without its guest. (“There is No More Sorrow”)

While pain becomes a recurring and guiding force in Kottoor’s world, it provides the poet with a cathartic effect and allows him to extract some lessons from it. In one of his earlier collections entitled *Father Wake us in Passing*, the poet expresses his grief

over his father's illness and tries to pay a tribute to his ailing father who had to remain in coma for a long time. Silence of the father becomes a strength of the poet who raises father's suffering to a sphere of supra-personal significance. The father's wound represents the suffering of our elders in particular and us in general, as their progenies are expected to be aware of the cyclic repetition of life and death. One can find the poet-son compensating for his disobedience, which most of the typical Indian fathers undergo sometimes or the other. Autobiographical in tone, the rebellious son tries to assuage the ailing father and appears woebegone for his departure. With a sobbing heart, the son also tries to discover his own voice and identity, seeking forgiveness for all his mischiefs. The son calls the dying father 'a magic sleeper', and discovers a divine image in the passing father's 'red eyes', 'blood-nipped' and says:

This morning,  
they brought you out on a bed on wheels.  
I called out to you to wake up.  
It was as if your red eyes that opened, blood-nipped,  
Was a third eye of god.  
Did you try to move them across to me,  
The tiny boats of our sad living, caught among the reeds?  
("Magic Sleeper")

Fathers have always been considered the sheet anchor of our lives, the boats which can help us overcome all sorts of calamities and their demise makes the children rudderless. But as life and death are the cyclic repetitions, the child has to become the father of the man but not without the blessings of the departed father. Hence, the poet wants the father not only to wake the sleeping generation of sons but also to inspire them:

Be our magic mountain, magic sleeper,  
We'll keep our lesson,  
That pain is all the treasure we have here

on earth.

Go back in now.

We'll wait here where we said, we would.

We'll keep our word for you.

Come back,

And wake us, in passing, in paradise. ("Magic Sleeper")

Father in this poem can have a larger significance of Christ as symbol who suffered for the welfare of mankind as well and the use of words like 'Gethsemane', 'Golgotha', and 'Rock of Calvary' attest to the Biblical references. Dr. K. Ayyappa Paniker, a famous Malayalam poet, literary critic, and a scholar in modern and post-modern literary theories of Indian aesthetics and literary traditions, is all praise for Kottoor's *Father, Wake us in Passing* and says: "Gopikrishnan Kottoor's poetry comes of age in this sustained polyphony of his own voice: His poetry in the making gushes forth as the floodgates open. There's no let-up in the intensity of the pain or in the intensity of the poem...The lines break into a splendour of silver and gold."

Kottoor is a poet who doesn't belong to a fixed category. This becomes evident from one of his earlier collections entitled *Vrindavan* which is soaked in love, wherein the poet glorifies and divinizes the love between Radha and Krishna. Both the lovers lay bare their purest impressions of each other and are yet unable to gauge exactly their inhibitions and their swearing. Kottoor in other love poems also continues with the theme of inaccessible, immeasurable and impenetrable love. He holds a different view about love, which according to him, is beyond understanding. Love lies in memory of the glorious moments that the two lovers shared sometime in the past. Union in love is an impossibility as it eliminates the longings of both the parties. Love is an incessant flow, a flash of lightening during rains, it is a pining, a quest that is unending and unpredictable. Once again, Kottoor's lines remind us of Shakespeare's "The Marriage of True Minds", where it is said: "Love is not love/which alters when it alteration finds."

True love cannot be expressed as it makes one speechless but instead gives birth to poetry. Kottoor evidently appears critical of the contemporary crisis in love and its alterable ways, where the lovers make false promises seeking to satisfy the carnal desires and then separating from each other. The poet considers love as small voices of memory and painfully transcribes:

How the poetry of you  
Comes off in bloom in a tree all rich and green,  
How you fill lightning in the smallest drop of rain,  
Where love is a river rich and flowing  
Where  
In green banks of good night  
I'm still myself,  
Your stranger again. ("Small Voices of Memory")

Love for the poet lies in longing which never gets over. It is an unending sojourn where perfect union becomes an impossibility. True lovers continue the quest of their love like parallel lines which go along yet do not meet. It is a sort of reminiscence like the flashes of lightning appearing abruptly and disappearing instantly. The poet expresses his discomfort with the contemporary notions and practices of love which fall a prey to the bodily lures and cures ending in a sort of dejection and despair. In yet another poem entitled "If You Were with Me", the lover-poet finds himself still and his sweetheart stranger. The title of the poem itself reveals the lack of loyalty in each other, reminding us of the contemporary scenario of love in a materialistic world. While the lover-poet is all praise for the beauty, benignity and benediction of the beloved yet he rues that the former is not with him whole-heartedly. Loyalty in love can supersede all natural and supernatural delights and can defy all complexities, but the tragedy of the ever changing and competitive pace of life has soured the ideals of love and instead been mired in machinations of death, disease and deprivations. The poet, much like Andrew Marvell, expresses his

inability to be triumphant in love and holds the beloved responsible for her lack of faith in her admirer. The following lines of the poem appear as a painful reminder of how faith for each other in the course of love may result in endless miseries:

Nothing would matter  
If you were with me  
With your doe eyes,  
That ponder,  
Making me a forest,  
Of night and mourning.  
Ice bergs would melt,  
And become parts of the peaceful ocean,  
If only you were with me now  
Letting bloom  
The garden of Gethsemane. ("If You Were with Me")

Gopi Krishnan Kottoor's poetry has the quality of a natural flow which doesn't block the readers' thoughts but carries along. Words, phrases and sentences do not seem benumbed but benevolently chiseled. He is not a poet who will follow into the footsteps of Western poets just to get instant praise and hasty recognition. Like a magician, Kottoor subtly crafts expressions to suit occasions where context and content commingle mellifluously. The lines in his poetry jig-jag though have a musical sweep because of the selection of his words which do not tire the readers but makes them revel and rejoice in the swiftness of flow, softness of love and sublimity of thoughts. What makes Kottoor an evergreen poet is his devotion to muses touching upon the elemental emotions of love and longing that prompt him to ask 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/ out of this stony rubbish?' Kottoor's poetic persona is a fountain of emotions having the verisimilitude of vivacity and vibrancy. Thus, through his own verses, the poet in Kottoor mirrors life by unfolding memories, by discovering himself through relational, religious and

romantic ties though dipped and drenched in despair yet smiling at 'what a piece of work is man'.

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## The Relationship between Communication and Culture

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The study analyses the influences of culture upon the verbal and the nonverbal communication. A special attention has been given to the cultural factors which influence the organisational communication: perception, ethnocentrism and stereotypes. The study analyses that communication not only inspires but is the foundation for culture. Communication and culture have a great influence on each other. The culture in which an individual is socialized has a great impact on communication.

*“Culture is the pattern of taken-for-granted assumptions about how a given collection of people should think, act, and feel as they go about their daily affairs”*

In times of rapid growth, both in terms of economic development and globalization, an increasing number of firms extend their businesses abroad. The findings of this study indicate that the barriers of communication come from the national culture's influence on the workplace and behaviors of people with different identity. Moreover, culture also influences people's way of thinking and behaving and result in different understandings toward vision and purposes of firms.

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The relationship between communication and culture is a very complex and intimate one. First, cultures are created through communication; that is, communication is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics—whether customs, roles, rules, rituals, laws, or other patterns—are created and shared. It is not so much that individuals set out to create a culture when they interact in relationships, groups, organizations, or societies, but rather that cultures are a natural by-product of social interaction. In a sense, cultures are the “residue” of social communication. Without communication and communication media, it would be impossible to preserve and pass along cultural characteristics from one place and time to another. One can say, therefore, that culture is created, shaped, transmitted, and learned through communication. The reverse is also the case; that is, communication practices are largely created, shaped, and transmitted by culture.

The term “culture” refers to the complex collection of knowledge, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and give a common identity to a particular group of people at a specific point in time.

All social units develop a culture. Even in two-person relationships, a culture develops over time. In friendship and romantic relationships, for example, partners develop their own history, shared experiences, language patterns, rituals, habits, and customs that give that relationship a special character—a character that differentiates it in various ways from other relationships. Examples might include special dates, places, songs, or events that come to have a unique and important symbolic meaning for two individuals. Thus, any social unit—whether a relationship, group, organization, or society—develops a culture over time.

Groups also develop cultures, composed of the collection of rules, rituals, customs, and other characteristics that give an identity to the social unit. Where a group traditionally meets, whether meetings begin on time or not, what topics are discussed,

how decisions are made, and how the group socializes are all elements of what, over time, become defining and differentiating elements of its culture.

Every Organization has its own cultures, often apparent in particular patterns of dress, layout of workspaces, meeting styles and functions, ways of thinking about and talking about the nature and directions of the organization, leadership styles, and so on.

To acknowledge the implications of this communication-culture relationship, there is a need to think in terms of ongoing communication processes rather than a single communication event. For example, when a group of three or four persons first meets, the members bring with them individual thought and behavioral patterns from previous communication experiences and from other cultures of which they are, or have been, a part. As individuals start to engage in communication with the other members of this new group, they begin to create a set of shared experiences and ways of talking about them. If the group continues to interact, a set of distinguishing history, patterns, customs, and rituals will evolve. Some of these cultural characteristics would be quite obvious and tangible, such that a new person joining the group would encounter ongoing cultural “rules” to which they would learn to conform through communication. New members would in turn influence the group culture in small, and sometimes large, ways as they become a part of it. In a reciprocal fashion, this reshaped culture shapes the communication practices of current and future group members. This is true with any culture; communication shapes culture, and culture shapes communication.

Communication and culture have a great influence on each other. The culture in which an individual is socialized has a great impact on communication. Culture provides its members with an implicit knowledge about how to behave in different situations and how to interpret other’s behaviour in such situations. Culture can be seen as including everything that is manmade. Infact, since time immemorial, communication is an integral part of culture and as the culture advances, communication pattern changes.

In this regard, individualism-collectivism is a major dimension of cultural variability isolated by theorists across disciplines to explain similarities and differences in behaviour. Although both individualism and collectivism exist in all cultures, one pattern tends to predominate. Cultural individualism-collectivism has a direct influence on behaviour (e.g., through norms/rules used to guide behaviour, but it also influences behaviour indirectly through the personalities, values, attitudes, self-esteem, and self-concept that individual members learn when being socialized into their culture.

To understand a relationship of culture and communication there is a need to analyse the impact of gender role, self-disclosure, and self-esteem on communication style in Indian culture.

Every culture prescribes different behaviours for males and females. These differences start early in their lives and continue throughout in one form or the other. In most cultures, it is generally observed that males are expected to be more aggressive, assertive and achievement-oriented, while females are expected to be more sensitive and responsible. Each culture has a set of institutional structures and practices to teach gender roles. With the changing time, the socioeconomic conditions of men and women are also changing. The effect of these changes is evident in the roles of males and females in Indian society which is clearly reflected in the communicative behaviours of both the sexes. Indian culture highly values a number of traits in both sexes, but attributes higher status to a male displaying these traits. Individual's sociocultural background and the communication environment inevitably affect the way people talk and behave. The complicated social relations and diverse cultural values, and even one's political viewpoints can all be reflected in conversational styles.

Technology and media also play a vital role to facilitate communication, and in that way, they all contribute to the creation, spread, and evolution of culture. However, communication media such as television, film, radio, newspapers, compact discs, magazines, computers, and the Internet play a particularly important

role. Because media extend human capacities for creating, duplicating, transmitting, and storing messages, they also extend and amplify culture-building activities. By means of such communication technology, messages are transmitted across time and space, stored, and later retrieved and used. Television programs, films, websites, video games, and compact discs are created through human activity-and therefore reflect and further extend the cultural perspectives of their creators. They come to take on a life of their own, quite distinct and separate from their creators, as they are transmitted and shared around the increasingly global community.

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## **Narratives of Resistance: Mahasweta Devi's Contribution to the Theory and Praxis of Subaltern Studies**

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### **Abstract**

In a time when denial of rights to peasants, landless labourers, tribals, and other marginalized groups covers much of the space in national dailies, the subaltern discourse has strangely been less energetic. As an important development in the postcolonial study, Subaltern Studies and the Subaltern Studies Group have been garnering less than enthusiastic responses from literary theorists, creative writers and a variety of disciplines in the postcolonial era. The present paper studies the narratives of Mahasweta Devi, an acclaimed Indian writer whose writings break away with the fashionable literary trends of her time by voicing the cause of tribal and dispossessed people and assesses her contribution to

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widening the contours of subaltern theory and praxis. The paper studies Devi's drawing upon the possibilities of literary mediation into 'subalternity' as her narratives substantiate and theorize the most pertinent concerns of communities who have a nominal presence in the socio-political frame, particularly when there are no sources left. These narratives present a rich commentary on the most troublesome issues pertaining to 'subaltern speech', 'subaltern resistance', 'gendered subaltern' and 'counter-hegemony', and furnish alternate histories of the suppressed. Thus, the paper examines Devi's bridging the binaries: theory and praxis, real and imaginative, and literary and history.

**Keywords:** Subaltern historiography, subaltern speech, subaltern resistance and gendered subaltern

Mahasweta Devi's prolific writing on the themes of social realism, dispossession, marginalization, rebellion, insurgencies of landless peasants, labourers and particularly the indigenous community has provided the most substantial mediation in the context of subaltern historiography and subaltern identity. Her intense engagement with the lives of the lowest denizens of the social structure equips her to excavate subalternity and subaltern lived experiences in her own way. Devi's fiction and non-fiction couple serious attention towards different locations and subjectivities of subalternity. Her writings achieve the aims proposed by Subaltern Studies in the wake of multiculturalism. Devi battles, in the decades of decolonization, with those contesting discourses which emerged out of the debate to include subaltern minority groups in the building of 'nation' and its 'history'. She writes, "I have always been driven by a strong sense of history. In all my writings, I have tried to present the subaltern point of view" (Devi, *The Queen* 321). While representing the subaltern conditions, exploitation, oppression, their resentment and resistance, Devi conveys several theoretical dimensions and praxis of subaltern lived experiences in her works like *Imaginary Maps*, *Chotti*

*Munda and his Arrow, Bashai Tudu, Mother of 1084 and Breast Stories*. She deals, in the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, with the “problematic representations of decolonization” (Bagchi 41). To assess her contribution to subaltern studies, which she does in many ways than one, it is pertinent to understand the meaning and scope of the term.

‘Subaltern’, a socio-political term in the postcolonial and critical theory, is used for the lowest social class who are subjugated and oppressed and excluded from power and agency in all aspects of existence. First coined by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist political activist, in his “Notes on Italian History”, the term has a colonial bearing and refers to the dispossessed and displaced in the colonial hierarchy. The subaltern group is denied any participation in the culture and history formation of that particular society or nation and in Gramsci’s view, is without any “evident unity” (Louai 5) due to its complete submission to the ruling powers and has no excess to anything. Gramsci’s pioneering views about the potential power of peasants and the lower class achieved a distinct subaltern unity and force, which influenced, during the 1980s, a group of scholars led by Ranajit Guha. The term ‘subaltern’, within subaltern studies, refers to “the general attribute of subordination in south Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way” (Guha, Preface vii). Subaltern Studies engages with the ‘binary relationship’ between subaltern and the dominant class and studies the dialectics of subordination and dominance in the colonial set-up for it considers that “subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up” (vii). Such people, who have no political, economic and social standing, occupy the central space in subaltern studies, the primary tenets of which are:

1. Rewriting of the national historiography by a) writing history from the non-European spaces which stand against neo-colonialist modes of historiography and b) restoring

“suppressed histories” (Hanlon 190) of the dispossessed living on the margins. This theoretical stance derives from the view that Indian national history has been controlled and dominated by both colonial elitism as well as bourgeois nationalist elitism; both originated as the “ideological product of British rule in India” (Guha, “Some Aspects,” 1). This kind of historiography, as Guha says, “fails to acknowledge, far less interpret, the contribution made by the people *on their own*, that is, *independently of the elite* to the making and development of this nationalism” (3). Subaltern Studies seeks to rewrite this “elitist historiography” which he calls “one-sided and blinkered” (3) by documenting the histories of the commons and the dispossessed.

2. This critical field of inquiry aims to reproduce and restore the subaltern subjectivities, experiences, agency and identity subjugated by the colonialist/neo-colonialist homogeneous tendencies.

Considering Mahasweta Devi’s preoccupation with the subaltern point of view in her literary works, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says that Devi “lingers in post-coloniality and, even there, in the space of difference on *decolonized terrain* in the space of difference” (Spivak, *Outside* 77). She emerges as one of those “democratically minded historians [who] have fought the exclusions and omissions of mainstream narratives of the nation” (Chakrabarty 473). Each of Devi’s writing resurrects the past history of Indian *adivasis*: Mundas, Santhals, Lodhas, Nagesisas, Oraons and others. Devi attempts to contribute to the metanarratives or grand narratives about their history by retelling the ancient oral account of these communities and referring to their ancestral lineage. She says that “the history of the past and the history of present both constitute history. There are some histories that are for all times” (qtd. in Mishra 177). Devi unearths the history of the past that remains alive in the collective memory of people as it bears

unaltered and unaltered marks of time. She says, “[t]o capture the continuities between past and present held together in the folk imagination, I bring legends, mythical figures and mythical happenings into a contemporary setting, and make ironic use of these” (qtd. in Mishra 177). For tracing the cultural past of tribal folks, Devi documents the scattered history of the natives of the land by her first-hand collection and narration of oral histories of the aboriginals of the nation. Devi says that India belonged to them even before the incursion of Aryan-speaking people. The tribals, who are considered as ‘others’, are the descendants of the Austrics who were medium height and dark-skinned. It is the Austric aborigines who spread all over India and other parts of Southeast Asia. Devi refers to the Gazetteer of India to substantiate her claim: “*The Austrics form the bedrock of the people*” and “laid the foundation of the Indian civilization” (Devi, *Maps* 114). Through her imaginative stories, she disseminates these ‘histories of suppressed’. Her *The Book of the Hunter* traces the ancient culture and lost glory of the Shabar (Sobor) community and their migration to the deep interior of the mainland. The Shabar is a tribal community lesser known than the Santhals and the Mundas and, during British rule, was labelled as ‘criminal tribes’ under the Criminal Tribes Act 1871. In the preface to the book, Devi writes:

It is evident that the Lodha Shabars enjoyed a high status in society those days, since on Kanaisar Hill, the Lodha priest used to sit above and the Brahman priest below, till 1982. Also, the puja at Guptamani temple on Bombay road is entrusted to a lineage of a Lodha priest. Once upon a time the Lodhas in those forested areas were quite respected (ix).

Devi’s stories reveal how the small tribes as Parhaiyas, in particular, were branded as criminals and were killed unjustly. Her stories of Bashai Tudu, Chotti Munda, Titu Mir narrate the episodes of the tribal union against this criminalization and refer to the rebellions of tribal heroes of the past. B. Vijyaya writes, “more than two hundred years of tribal struggles for human dignity

inform her fictional and nonfictional works” (7). Devi resorts to the epics the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and legendary heroes whose histories were never heard or accounted. In an interview given to Spivak, Devi recalls a tribal girl who asked her, ““ When we go to school, we read about Mahatma Gandhi. Did we have no heroes? Did we always suffer like this”” (Devi, *Maps* iii)? Adding further to the same, she says, “That is why I started writing about the tribal movements and the tribal heroes” (iii). She brings names of those tribal heroes who contributed immensely to the Independence such as the Gond king Shankar Singh Shah whom the British had blown from the canon during the mutiny and recognizes his people to be the descendants of a tribal hero of the first battle of Indian Independence. Throughout *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, Devi reminds and sings the glory of the uprising, revolt and resistance by the great Munda legend, Birsa Munda. Devi speaks about the Shantal rebellion of 1780-85 by Baba Tirka Majhi and narrates how Birsa Munda fought against the system of bonded labour. Dhani asks the Munda people who did not put up resistance against the bonded labour system, “Dontcha know? That bond labour is one among all the ills Birsa fought against” (Devi, *Chotti Munda* 9)?

Devi’s writings are histories of the “suffering spectators of India” (Devi, *Maps* iii) as these works deal extensively with subaltern miseries and wretchedness. Her stories “The Hunt”, “Draupadi”, “Standayini”, “Shanichari”, “The Fairytale of Rajabasha”, “Rudali” and “Douloti the Bountiful”, “Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay and Pirtha” and many others highlight the social, economic and gender exploitation of tribal communities. These stories reveal the ancient history of injustice and anarchy as far as tribal rights are concerned. Starvation, malnutrition, land-grabbing, deforestation, physical torture, killings and rape, low labour wages, bonded-slavery, and trafficking are some major issues that she discusses in detail in her stories. In her overall body of work, it is tribal peasants transformed into landless labourers

who populate her narratives. The land and forest grabbing, indentured labour, bonded slavery issues remain at the core of her writing. Each of her writings gives place to resisting forces and voices against these atrocities and contributes to one of the chief objectives of subaltern historiography which is, as Gyanendra Pandey says, “to restore the agency of the subordinated, recognize that the peasant mass was contemporaneous with the modern- a part of modernity, and establish the peasant as the maker of his/ her own destiny” (2).

In an attempt to resurrect subaltern history, Devi counters with the question of ‘subaltern citizenship’, ‘subaltern identity’ and their participation in the building of the nation. Her stories deal with the problematic questions of identity and representation of tribals. “Although they fought bravely against the British,” says Devi, “they have not been treated as part of India’s freedom struggle” (Devi, *Maps* iii). Moreover, many of her stories depict very clearly that neither have they been “part of the decolonization of India” (iv) nor have they ever been treated as independent citizens of an independent nation. In her story “Douloti the Bountiful”, Rajbi, the washerwoman, expresses her indifference when a holy man informs her that they all belong to the same mother: Mother India. Devi writes:

—Oh, Sadhuji, my place is Seora village. What do you call a country? I know tahsil [a pre-independence revenue-collecting unit], I know station, I don’t know country. India is not the country.

—Hey, you are all independent India’s free people, do you understand?

—No, Sadhuji (41).

Devi refers to the 1961 Census and the third General Elections in the story while commenting on the socio-political standing of the dispossessed tribals and demystifies the myth of ‘independence’ and ‘equality’.

Much of Devi's work sketches the colonial and postcolonial history of the denudation of natural resources, particularly land and forests. In her story "The Hunt", she throws light on the colonial history of usurpation of tribal forests and land and, thereby, on the process of marginalization. Her account of deforestation of Sal trees in the area between Gomoh-Daltonganj in the story runs parallel to the account of the deterioration of natural forest as given by historian Mark Poffenberger in his article "The Resurgence of Community Forest Management in the Jungle Mahals of West Bengal." Similarly, the story "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay and Pirtha" gives a detailed account of hegemonization of resources: the natural forests have been destroyed and the wide varieties of plants and trees have been cleaned out. The story assesses the contribution of various glittering projects of the post-independence period particularly, the Green Revolution, Pollution Control, Minimum Wages Act, Land Ceiling Laws, and the Act Prohibiting Transfer of Tribal Land and finds that most of these projects have failed drastically to preserve the cause for which they were started. Devi's representation of tribal culture also contributes to the current debate on ecological and biodiversity crises. Her stories, particularly in *Imaginary Maps*, bemoan the extensive ecological ravaging of forests, animals and tribal races. Her narratives well depict how the less privileged tribals retain their sense of ecology "as a matter of their cultural conformity" (Spivak, Appendix 201). *The Book of the Hunter* narrates the tribals' animistic belief in the sacredness of the natural world, which is important to maintain ecological sanctity. Her activism and writing revive this belief and preserve 'indigenous knowledge' and thereby enunciate the notion of 'learning from below'.

Devi's work contributes significantly to the discourse on the problematics of 'subaltern communication and speech' and 'subaltern resistance' with particular reference to Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In her "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay and Pirtha", she creates the myth of the extinct bird 'pterodactyl' to

symbolize the problematics of ‘communication’ and ‘understanding’ between the mainstream and the indigenous tribes. Though in many of her short stories, she develops an oppositional perspective towards resistance from subaltern point of view, both in its active and passive forms and brings the subalterns into the circle of hegemonic structure and also “into speech” (Kock 46). Gramsci also believes that the only way to achieve excess and agency is by “releasing the subordinated consciousness of the non-elite group from the cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class” (Louai 5). Ashish Saxena finds it very difficult to find “subalterns who can speak through over-determined narratives” but it is Devi who shows “just how much the subalterns in her stories resist the abilities of their interlocutors” (418).

No other writer has delineated subaltern resistance as meticulously as Devi. She lends an unparalleled dignity to the term by examining its subtle nuances vis-à-vis subaltern lived experiences, real as well as imaginative. In general, resistance means refusing to accept or comply with something. But in her works, the term achieves wider dimensions and connotations by including the feeblest and most yielding act to the fiercest and the most articulated act of protest. Peasant rebellions and insurgencies are not the only way for her protagonists to restore to. There are several other ways, passive and active, vocal and symbolic, individual and collective, in which her characters respond and retaliate to. Each of her stories digs deep into the ontology of a problem and depicts the working of conflicting forces. Thus her stories well depict how “the monolith of hegemony *precedes* resistance” (Hanlon 222). The very statement of Dukhiya in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow* reveals how resorting to violent measures is the only way to save their existence and ensure survival. Dhukhiya, after having killed the landlord and carrying his severed head says, “I’ve no place to run, if there’s a place would I give bonded work? E’en a Munda wants to live, no” (63)? She writes of mass rebellion of landless villagers in *Sri Sri Ganesh* and *Bashai Tudu* also.

Devi's forte lies in depicting resistance which is rather implicit and more complex. The works, which have brought her world recognition, are stories where she has dealt with gendered resistance as in *Breast Stories*, *Mother of 1084*, "The Hunt", "Douloti the Bountiful". Devi opens a new dimension on 'gender resistance', which had so long been sidelined in the postcolonial theory even by the major proponents of the time by making her women participate in social formation whether it is Mary Oraon in "The Hunt" who performs "ritual into contemporary resistance" (Spivak, Appendix 206) or Dopdi Mejhen in "Draupadi" or Sujata in *Mother of 1084* or Gangor, Lachhima, Shanichari and Dhouli. Devi affirmatively breaks new ground by bringing these female protagonists to the centre of the space. In the preface to the *Imaginary Maps*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak confers the notion of "ethical singularity" and "organic intellectuals" to Devi. She writes, "When the subaltern 'speaks' in order to be heard and gets into the structure of responsible (responding and being responded to) resistance, he or she is or is on the way to becoming an organic intellectual" (Devi, Preface xxi). She further writes, "there is no lack of the celebration of the organic intellectuals in Mahasweta Devi's work" (xxiii). Devi achieves transformation of women from 'doubly colonized commodity' to 'organic intellectuality'. Prasita Mukherjee writes, "It is the breaking of this valorized silence that Mahasweta Devi's protagonists seek for and also accomplish successfully. Their resistance to the existing patriarchal ideology is by way of demystifying the idealized notions of womanhood and proclaiming themselves as the makers of their own destiny" (123).

As the most important step towards tribal resurrection, Devi gives dispersed and small tribal groups a unified identity. As Gramsci says that the lack of 'evident unity' comes in the way of liberation of the subaltern from the vortex of power groups. She connects them with the common thread of 'citizenry' of an independent nation. Her stories narrate the mass resistance and rebellions in the works like *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* and

*Bashai Tudu*. Besides writing stories about their assertion and resistance, Devi uses her activism to achieve her aim. Dakxin Kumar Bajrange has explained how she helped the Chhara tribal community, notified as criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, to found Budhan theatre in Ahmadabad in the year 1998. Recalling his experience, he says, "I was 22 years old then, when Maa (mother) came to Chharanagar, our tribal colony in Ahmadabad, and helped to found the theatre group, Budhan theatre" (Venkat). Further he says that Devi invested the prize money that she had won for the Jnanpith Award in 1996 and started a library for them in Chharanagar and urged them to overcome the stigma of the criminal label attached to them and use theatre as a means of self-expression. In 1980, she founded the 'Palamau (Bihar) Zila Bandhua Samiti', India's first bonded-labour organization. Having been associated with the 'West Bengal Oraon Welfare Society' and the 'All Indian Vandhua Liberation Morcha', she became instrumental in organizing welfare for the Oraon tribal community. She founded 'Paschim Banga Kheria Shabar Kalyan Samiti' with the help of social activists like Gomasta Prasad Soren and Gopiballabh Singh Deo in 1983. The soul aim of this society has been to defend the rights of tribals and promote their material and cultural well-being. Through various projects of the organization almost ten thousand have been directly benefited. These projects have opened the horizon of handicraft, farming, irrigation, forestation, healthcare, savings and literacy projects to the Kheria and Shabar tribal communities of West Bengal. Devi founded 'Adim Jaati Aikya Parishad' (Ancient Tribes Union) in 1986, a forum of thirty-eight West Bengali tribal groups for initiating collective action against the injustice. In order to promote crafts, demonstrations, competitions and theatrical performances dealing with social themes such as literacy, anti-alcoholism etc. in 1990, Devi instituted the Shabara Mela, an annual fair, in Rajnagar, Purulia, West Bengal. She edited *Bortika* and used it as a forum where tribals, small peasants, agricultural labourers, factory workers and rickshaw pullers wrote about their

social and economic life and problems. In 1982, she joined *Jugantar*, a Bengali newspaper, as a roving reporter. She also wrote what she witnessed during her roaming around as a reporter in the Bengali daily, *Dainik Basumati*. She also joined *Bartman*, another Bengali daily and wrote a weekly column in it until 1991. She contributed articles and investigative reports for the *Economic and political weekly*.

Thus, Devi's narratives overstep the contours of imaginative writing while examining the notion of 'subalternity'. Her narratives of resistance well exemplify "the kind of theoretical engagement of the postcolonial historian" (Sen and Yadav 16) as her stories formulate the theory and praxis of subaltern resistance, subaltern speech and subaltern citizenship. Her account of socio-historical identity of the *adivasis* and their lived experiences in the form of imaginative narratives, woven into the real stories, provide undiluted praxis of subaltern studies. She deals with subalternity not as a third-world academician or theorist or expert of a particular discipline but as one amongst many dispossessed *adivasis* of the nation. She becomes one with these people and lives with them and uses her literary skill to bring these experiences into the service of resurrecting tribal life, history and culture. Malini Bhattacharya writes that Devi "has come to represent that lone voice of conscience which plays such a crucial role in weak civil societies like ours. There are few writers of her stature toady in whose career creative writing and activism have been so closely intertwined" (1003). Devi's narratives substantiate and theorize the most troubled issues of communities and people a nominal presence in socio-political theory and discourse. Her narratives exemplify how the alternate histories can be written by narrating stories from "rationally-defensible point of view or position" (Chakrabarty 473).

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**Bhikhari Thakur's *Bidesia* and *Gabar Ghichor*: Enduring saga of angst, pain and longing of the 'left-behind'**

**\*Pankaj Kumar**

**Abstract**

The literature of the Indian diaspora has hogged limelight in recent times as it details the enduring pain and suffering that the migrant undergoes at the destination. However, in migrating to destination points, the migrant is not alone as he leaves a family behind. The 'left-behind' have failed to catch the attention of the literary community but in vernacular literature of the Bhojpuri-speaking areas, it has been a primary concern. In fact Bhojpuri literature, enriched by doyens like Bhikhari Thakur, has given centre stage to these 'left-behind' members of the migrant community in the homeland. This paper will take two plays by Bhikhari Thakur, *Bidesia* and *Gabar Ghichor* and analyse the concerns of the left behind, usually women. The paper will put forward problems and issues of those who have to wait for the return of their near and dear ones. It would attempt to capture their angst, pain, suffering and longing of the 'left-behind'.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Migration, Left-behind, Girmitiya, Homeland, Chastity, Urharis, Bidesia folk-culture

The term diaspora connects with modern-day readers as a sort of struggle, pain and longing of those who had to leave their

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motherland willingly or as they had no choice. The way Indian diasporic writers like M.G. Vassanji, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, and Jhumpa Lahiri, to name a few, are vetted shows our awareness with the problems encountered by people who had to leave and migrate to the unknown land. There has been a lot of theorising on diaspora by the likes of Homi Bhabha, Vinay Mishra, Salman Rushdie ...et al. Our preoccupation with these writers and theorists make us oblivious of the larger questions: What happened to the families of migrants who could not accompany them? How did those 'left-behind' cope with the loss of their near and dear ones? Were they left eternally waiting for those who had left? Has enough been written on them? Why are their (hi)stories in oblivion? This is where this paper takes off from because if diaspora writing focuses on the angst, pain and suffering of the migrants at destination points, it is left to masters like Bhikhari Thakur to bring to fore and recount the suffering, pain and sense of loss of those 'left-behind'.

Migrants in the Indian context, can be seen as leaving one's village, town or city and migrating to far-off places both within the country and outside. In India, moving from one state to other is similar to moving from one country to another, as there is no homogeneity of language and culture at destination points. For Badri Narayan Tiwari, internal migration is "an economic phenomenon, but it also creates a cultural phenomenon in both the homeland and the land of destination" (12). This gives rise to what is known as '*bidesia*' folk culture in Bhojpuri-speaking areas of western Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Tiwari further suggests that the concept of '*bidesia*' folk culture differentiates between '*bidesia*, *pardesia* and *batohia*' – all terms of affection and complaint by the loved ones left behind. All the three terms an expression of kinds of folk tradition which has basis on chances of return of the migrant. The migrant Bhojpuri people were emotionally and physically torn off: husbands from their wives, sisters from their brothers, and fathers from their children and so

on. It was economic compulsion which propelled this outward migration and had a considerable impact on the social landscape of the Bhojpuri society. The pain of separation and a sense of loss became intrinsic part of Bhojpuri society. This paper will look at the angst, pain, suffering and sense of loss of those 'left-behind' taking into account two famous and popular plays of Bhikhari Thakur: *Bidesia* and *Gabar Ghichor*.

The Bhojpuri people had agriculture as sole means of survival, which too was dependent on vagaries of nature and as such led to their outward migration- both internal as well as external. The *girmitiya* migration to the Caribbean is a case in point which resulted in a/the large-scale dislocation of the Bhojpuri people. The effect of migration within the country as has been presented by Bhikhari Thakur in his folk plays adds an altogether different dimension. The Bhojpuri society as Nitin Sinha notes, in the "1840s to 1860s witnessed three developments: first, the introduction of the new means of communication (steamships and railways); second, new industrial and plantation investments in and outside of India, creating demand for labour; and third, the expansion of a print culture that went beyond the urban elite domain to reflect the world of small towns and villages" (203). It had a lasting impact on the social, economic and technological landscape as it altered the semantics of Bhojpuri society for ever. It was in such a scenario that the Bhojpuri youth was lured to migrate to East to earn cash money for his labour. Calcutta was a prime destination as he could work in the thriving jute industry. It was also the economic pressures that forced him to leave behind his home, village and family. It is about such youths and their 'left-behind' families that Bhikhari Thakur writes.

The impact of migration is not limited to the individual migrant, but consequences are borne by their families, as is mirrored in the characters of Pyaari Sundari and Galiz Bahu, the former protagonist of *Bidesia* and the later of *Gabar Ghichor*. It is the pangs of separation that reflects the angst, pain and longing of Pyaari

Sundari, Galiz Bahu and Saloni which Thakur takes up as subject of his plays. Brahma Prakash sees “*bidesiya* as a performance [that] emerged as a transformative and vital reconciliatory force to endure hardship and provide a shared utopian space to rebuild the community in affective terms” (62). It thus represents the migration and displacement of a community in the existing song culture of *bidesiya* genre. The popular *virha* genre or the love songs based on separation is its primary component. Its use does not appear to be novel as during the Bhakti period there were songs that had Radha and Krishna, the mythical deities, longing for each other because of their physical separation. They were replaced by Pyaari Sundari and Bidesi in the play *Bidesia* and stood for any newly married couple whose husbands had to migrate soon after marriage. Krishna was represented as Bidesi where as Radha was a ‘left-behind’ *virhani* who longs for the return of her beloved.

*Bidesia* is perhaps Thakur’s most popular oeuvre and is classified/considered as a classic depicting the wife’s pangs of separation from her husband. It is a novelty of Indian literature as such situations do not have any parallel in Western literature. Sanskrit literature has experimented with such themes, notably Kalidasa in *Meghdootam* and Valmiki in *Ramayana* which depict the longing of the husband for his separated wife. This literature is enmeshed in *sringar* Rasa which is an emotion of love. The dotting wife, Pyaari Sundari, who has been dislocated from her natal home after marriage, is inconsolable when she hears about her husband’s plan to leave for the east because she knows that she has to lead a life of desolation without anybody being near her:

“*Piya mor, maati ja ho purabwa.*

*Purab desh me tona besi, paani bahut kamjor. Piya mor..*

*Sunat bani aankh paani deta ba, saari Bhaial sarbor. Piya mor..*

*Ek Nath binu maan aanath rahi, ghusi mahal me chor. Piya mor...*

*Kahat 'Bhikhari' hamaari oor dekha, katina karin nihor? Piya mor.."*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 31)

(Translated as: O my husband! Please don't go to the east./ In the eastern region, there is black magic and poor climate./ As I hear you, tears well in my eyes and my sari is wet with/ by wiping tears./ Without, you I will be lordless and thief may sense a chance./ Bhikhari says, look at me, to what extent I implore.)

She inconsolably tries to dissuade her husband from taking this journey as East represents black magic and she cannot bear to part from her husband. She says she will be orphaned without him and may not be able to control her passion. Pyaari Sundari feels like a migrant at her husband's place and has a strong desire to communicate with her family and husband. Her reminiscences about the time spent with her husband make her sad and lonely. This is aptly communicated to the audience by Pyaari Sundari, in her remonstrations to Batohi:

*"Kari ke gaawanawa bhawanawa me chodi kar, aapne pariyle purubwa balamua*

*Aankhian se din bhar gire loor dhar-dhar, batiya johat din bitela balamua".*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 37)

(Translated as: Just after marriage, leaving me at home, you departed for the east, O my dear husband./ All day tears flow from my eyes; day passes waiting for you, O my dear husband)

In *Gabar Ghichor*, Thakur shows the result of the absence of the husband, fifteen years in this case, and how it leads the protagonist, Galiz Bahu, to be involved in an illicit relationship with other men, Garbari, resulting in birth of Ghichor, an illegitimate child. Thakur in a masterly fashion focuses on the issue of paternity of the child and his legitimate custodian. The aspect of

longing for and succumbing to the lure of the flesh is highlighted. The debate finally leads to the acceptance of the fact that the main cause of problem is prolonged absence of the husband due to migration. The play is modelled after an old folk tale of Bihar and is widely performed. It takes up a contemporary subject having moral significance as it conveys the age-old practice where women are expected to make sacrifices even when they turn out to be the victims in every situation.

The plays, *Bidesia* and *Gabar Ghichor*, are centred on female characters as it is they who are directly affected by the migration of their husbands. They encounter problems in the absence of their husbands which are primarily social and economic in nature. The 'left-behind' women try hard to come to terms with the situation they are thrown into, while Pyaari Sundari is able to stay afloat, Galiz Bahu succumbs to the pitfalls. If Pyaari Sundari had not been restrained in her actions she would have become another Galiz Bahu. The predicament of both the woman is similar yet the outcome is different. They both suffer from pangs of loneliness and desolation. Pyaari Sundar laments:

*“Piya mor gailan pardesh, eh Batohi bhaiya!  
Raat nahi neend din tani chainwa, eh Batohi bhaiya!  
Sahatani bahut kalesh, eh Batohi bhaiya!  
Rowaat-rowaat hum bhailin paglaniya, eh Batohi bhaiya!  
Eko na bhejalan sandesh, eh Batohi bhaiya!  
Nahake jawani hum ke dihalan vidhata, eh Batohi bhaiya!”*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 39)

(Translated as: O Traveller! My husband went abroad./ I have no sleep during the night and rest by day/ I have to endure great agony./ Continuous weeping has made me insane./ He hasn't sent a single message./ In vain did God grant me youth.)

Galiz Bahu also has a similar refrain:

*“Shiv-Sati ji ke pooth, devan me majgooth;  
Giraat baani tohare charan me ho swamiji!*

*Gawana karike gaila, ghar ke na sudhi kaila;  
Maratani tohra viyog me ho swamiji!  
Haanth-baahin dhaiyla ke, shaadi-gawaana kaila ke;  
Aaj le na kaila nigahawa ho swamiji!"*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 163)

(Translated by Meenu Gupta as: "Thou son of Shiva-Parvati, powerful among Gods I fall at your feet/ Oh! My husband, I am pining in your separation/ You married me with proper rituals yet never cared/ You have never fulfilled your responsibility of being a husband (Thakur and Gupta 2000: 128).

Pyaari Sundari and Galiz Bahu are newlywed and long for the company of their loved ones, yet they both choose different paths to fulfil their desires. If on the one hand the protagonist of *Bidesia* waits patiently for her husband, Galiz Bahu succumbs to her passions in *Gabar Ghichor*. The common refrain in both the plays is the desire to be united with their loved ones which turns into reality in the case of Pyaari Sundari whereas Galiz Bahu has to be contented with getting the custody of her illegitimate son.

Bidesi and Pyaari Sundari are types rather than individual characters; they are representative of the general rather than particular. Thus Bidesi represents all young migrants who are left with no choice but try their fortune in distant and unknown places like Assam and Bengal. The play shows Bidesi migrating to Calcutta as suggested by his friends. It is the promised land of opportunities and better prospects. Pyaari Sundari, his wife, is representative of a type for all women who are left back in villages and those who have sacrificed their married life for the better future of their family. Bhikari Thakur presents women who are passive and marginalized as wives. *Bidesia* puts forward the innocent and sincere character of Pyaari Sundari and focuses attention on the pitiable and helpless position of women who are financially dependent on men. This leads to their being outside the domain of decision-making in family. Such women embrace

solitude and depression which becomes part of their lived reality. Being desolate and lonely, they in moments of weakness and desire, give in to their passions. Whereas men can engage and have relations with other women the same is not acceptable for women. If she happens to exercise such an option, it becomes the story of Galiz Bahu of *Gabar Ghichor* who is in all sorts of problems and loses her respectability in society.

*Gabar Ghichor*, as a text, questions the stereotype of women as found in the folk tradition. Galiz Bahu speaks of it as:

“*Babua bhailan paiyda, kucch na milal faiyada;  
Sab bidhi kaila bekaida ho swamiji!*”

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 163)

(Translated as: “I begot a son, it was of no avail/ My husband you forced me to adopt wrong means” (Thakur and Gupta 2000: 128). She talks about the birth of the child outside wedlock and instead of happiness which fills the mother and family; it brings shame and unhappiness to her. Galiz Bahu makes her own independent choice, even when she accepts it as a moment of weakness. It gives a sympathetic picture of the heroine as she exercises her freedom free from the set stereotype that the community has for her. Though looked down in society such women, as Dhananjay Singh asserts are, “the voices of protest and even show signs of rebellion” (49).

The chastity and purity of women in Indian tradition is paramount, and the Bhojpuri folk-literature is replete with its image. The plays *Bidesia* and *Gabar Ghichor* also reinforce this image of women. If Pyaari Sundari fights hard to protect her chastity and purity from the advances of the Devar, Galiz Bahu in *Gabar Ghichor* succumbs to it in a moment of weakness. Pyaari Sundari shows through her actions the value of chastity. She not only turns down the proposal of the Devar but defends and protects it. Galiz Bahu on the other hand cannot wade off and falls to the longings of the flesh. She is unable to protect and guard

her chastity and purity in the absence of her husband. Her husband who had migrated just when she was newlywed deserts her. It is important to note that chastity as a virtue was adhered to only by the women, and men were free to have illicit relationships. Further, chastity and purity of the women was synonymous with guarding her husband's honour. This is also evident in *Bidesia* where Pyaari Sundari protects herself from advances of men whereas her husband Bidesi is in an illicit relationship with the other women, Randi, in Calcutta. In *bidesia* tradition women is thought to be one who suffers perpetually.

Bhikhari Thakur makes us peep into the lives of *urhari* migrant women. The play *Bidesia* has a character *Randi* (whore) named Saloni who is an *urhari* migrant. She is in a 'temporary marriage' with Bidesi. Bhikhari Thakur uses the term *rakhailin*, a Bhojpuri word for kept woman, to denote such women. In a scene, Batohi comes from Bidesi's village with a message from his wife and recounts a picture of his home and village, which makes Bidesi restless to return home. Saloni is addressed as *randi* by Batohi which is symptomatic of her socially inferior status:

*"Randi me na kuch na bate, kuta jaise har chate, eko ghat  
ke tu lagab bidesia  
Chori da adharam, mijaj ka ke naram tu, manva me kari  
lehu saram bidesia"*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 46)

(Translated as: There is nothing in a whore , it is just like a dog licking the bone in the useless hope of some blood or meat, you will find no destination./ Leave irreligious act in cool mood, feel shame.). Batohi says these things because for him women like Saloni are not true and cannot be faithful to anyone, neither her villagers, nor her in-laws, nor even her parents. Batohi further advises Saloni:

*"Barivali batiya tu manila ho mat kara soc-bicar  
Thore kahe se tu pura samujha , niman bana la rahaniya"*

*ho tu a khude hosiyaar*

*Hamara kahe se Bidesi ke jaya da, mili jaihan chaila  
cikaniya ho tohar banal ba bazaar”*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 48)

which has been translated as, “Hey landlady, listen to me, don’t do anything without thinking about it first. I will only hint at the problem and you must understand the entire conundrum. Turn your life around, your demeanour and whereabouts, your way of life. Let Bidesiya come back with me. You have a ready market here, you will find a lot many lewd men” (Singh 2018: 52). Saloni is not convinced because she has struggled and lived a hard life. She is fully aware of what the absence of a husband would entail in society. Marriage though ‘temporary’ with Bidesi has provided her with respectability and security in society. She is no ready to sacrifice these by losing Bidesi.

Saloni tries to convince Bidesi in all possible manner:

*“Ghare cali jaiba lavat ke na aiba tu, as turi ke sab nas  
kaila balamua*

*Jaiba bhavanva paranva teyagi dehab, paka janiha jani  
kahanava balamua*

*Asal ke hai beti, irikhe phasal ba neti, kar turi ghar jani  
jaiha balamua”*

(Yadav and Singh 2005, 46)

(It translates as: If you go home, you will not come back, breaking the hope you have destroyed everything./I will end my life if you go home, what I say is final./ I am a daughter of respectable parents but my own pride only has caused a noose around my neck, don’t go home). We can see Saloni’s depth of her emotions for Bidesi. She is blinded by his love and cannot distinguish between right and wrong, true and false love. It is women like Saloni who reconsider the verb with such untrustworthy husbands and make their own life difficult.

Women suffer because of migration as 'left behind' or if they are forced to migrate themselves or as *urharis*, who have come back with their 'husbands'. To conclude, in words of Brahma Prakash, *bidesia* theatre made "longing performative, and its performance constantly evoked some hopes and desire amid grief, and kept the community aware of its own subjectivity, materiality, agency, and potency" (62). It bridged the divide between *desh* (homeland) and *bides* (foreign land), between hope and hopelessness and between the imagined and real sense of completeness (Prakash: 63). *Bidesia* as a genre as attempts to bring 'a sense of togetherness for those living in separation' there by providing solace to the angst, pain and longing of the 'left-behind'.

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## Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* as a Representative Postmodern Fiction

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### Abstract

Geetanjali Shree's novel *Tomb of Sand* (2022) recently won the International Booker Prize. The committee hailed it as "an urgent yet engaging protest against the destructive impact of borders, whether between religions, countries or genders" ("Tomb Of Sand | The Booker Prizes").

Frank Wynne, chair of judges of the International Booker panel, felt captivated by the power, the poignancy and the playfulness of this exuberant novel. The story, as well as the milieu presented by the novel, is tragic, yet as the award committee declared, 'Rather than respond to tragedy with seriousness, Geetanjali Shree's playful tone and exuberant wordplay results in a book that is engaging, funny, and utterly original' ("Tomb Of Sand | The Booker Prizes").

The novel is reminiscent of the tragedy of Partition of the Indian Subcontinent. Though some critics consider it a partition narrative about "two women: one mother, one

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daughter” who cross the border between India and Pakistan, the novel also has several other dimensions. It is a representative postmodernist metafiction that questions our notion of realities and conventions. With the help of some of the basic postmodern assumptions and concepts, this article highlights the characteristic features of *Tomb of Sand* (2022) that make it a postmodernist fiction.

**Keywords:** Tomb of Sand, Postmodernism, Metafiction, Narrative Style, Intertextuality, Wordplay, Magic realism

### **Introduction**

Geetanjali Shree, a recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, is a famous Indian novelist and short story writer. She emerged on the Hindi literary scene with the publication of her debut collection of short stories, *Anugoonj*, in 1991. The English translation of her novel *Mai* (2000) received applause for its unique style. Many of her fictional writings have been translated into English, Korean, French, German, and Serbian. *Ret Samadhi* (2018) is her fifth novel that created history as the first Indian novel to win the International Booker Prize in 2022. Originally written in Hindi as *Ret Samadhi*, this novel did not receive much publicity when it was first published in 2018. However, its English translation by Daisy Rockwell, entitled “*Tomb of Sand*”, has created a stir in the world of literature. In her translator’s note, Rockwell calls it “an experimental tale that plays with language, form and structure.”

In her article “Writing Is Translating Is Writing Is Translating”, Shree (2008) presents her conception of writing. For her, “literature is always MORE than its content. It is structure; it is texture; it is cadence; it is rhythm”. True to her conception, *Tomb of Sand* (2022) is an elusive, shapeshifting, captivating novel that appears challenging to summarise.

### **Research Method**

The article starts with a discussion of the concept of postmodernism in general and postmodernism in Hindi literature

in particular. With the help of some of the basic postmodern assumptions and concepts, the article then analyses Geetanjali Shree's novel *Tomb of Sand* (2022) as a postmodern novel.

### **Postmodernism**

Since the 1960s, "postmodernism" has become a buzzword in intellectual discussions in Europe and the United States. Postmodernism is undeniably a complicated cultural phenomenon that defies easy categorization. Inspired and impregnated with diverse and heterogeneous philosophical and intellectual ideas such as Derrida's critique of linguistics, Foucault's critique of society and history, Marx's theory of capitalism and several other scientific and social views, Postmodernism critiques almost all of them and defies any particular definition.

Postmodernism started with the 'new novelists' in France, including Alain Robbe-Grillet, Philippe Sollers, and others (Butler 12), whose works reflect a marked shift from the themes and techniques of a traditional novel. Instead of carrying forward the modernist writer's preoccupation with angst and absurdity of individual characters, these novelists started employing a far colder, contradiction-filled anti-narrative method. Postmodern scepticism regarding a language's power to represent the real world played an instrumental role in replacing realistic and mimetic fiction with magic realist fiction and metafiction. Critics like Roland Barthes, Linda Hutcheon, Mark Currie, and John Barth have pointed out several themes and techniques in postmodern writing. They include Metafiction, Irony, Wordplay, Intertextuality, Magic realism, and Temporal distortion as some characteristic features of postmodern fiction.

### ***Postmodernism in Hindi Literature***

In *The Postmodern Condition* (1960), Lyotard used the term postmodern in the context of the "most highly developed societies" (Lyotard 5). Perhaps this spatial specification has kept critics wary of applying the notion of postmodernism to the Indian

context. Postmodernism, in the Indian context, has been stamped as an imported and alien reality since it is profoundly rooted in the Western world's historical and socio-cultural context. Although the writings of Indian English novelists like Amitav Ghosh, Manju Kapur, Shashi Tharoor and several Indian diaspora writers have been critiqued and acclaimed for their postmodern techniques, the novels written in Hindi have mostly been ignored. Ghirardi (2018) highlights this critical apathy towards novels written in Hindi and concludes that Pacauri and ÚitâCœu have identified the existing postmodernist tendencies in some recently published novels. According to her, Pachauri and Pandey “outline a sort of ‘local declension’ of postmodernism by reading and working with specific texts”.

Ghiradi (2021) cites several novels like *Mujhe Chand Chahiye* (Surendra Varmâ, 1993), *Hariya Hercules ki Hairaani* (Manohar Shyam Joshi, 1994), *T-ta Professor* (Manohar Shyam Joshi, 1995), and *Ek Naukrani ki Diary* (Krishna Baldev Vaid's, 2000) and maintains that these novels produced in India from the 1990s onwards, establish the presence of postmodernism in mainstream Hindi novels as well.

***Tomb of Sand as a Metafiction:***

Geetanjali Shree's novel *Tomb of Sand* (2022) can be seen as an addition to the repertoire of Postmodern fiction in India. *The novel* is a representative metafiction that “explores a theory of writing fiction through the practice of writing fiction” as well as “fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 39).

The first chapter of *Tomb of Sand* (2022) opens with a statement that appears as a quotation from the postmodern rulebook: “A tale tells itself. It can be complete, but also incomplete, the way all tales are.” (Shree 2022, part I, ch 1) gives a clue regarding its resemblance to a metafiction. Throughout the novel, the reader is reminded of the authorial presence and the

text's position as fiction. The novelist proposes to tell a story of "two women and one death" and, in a playful, sarcastic tone, the remarks, "How nicely we'll get on, us and them, once we all sit down together!" (Shree 2022, part I, ch 1). The chapter ends with the author's remark: So there's no harm in starting the story right here, that is, the way we're doing it right now. (Shree 2022, part I, ch 1)

In his pivotal text *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard (2008) accuses the blossoming of techniques and technologies since the Second World War as responsible factors for the decline of narrative. He defines postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 5). Instead of those narratives attempting to legitimate and summarise everything, Lyotard favours short narratives representing individual points of view. Following Lyotard's conception, Geetanjali Shree intentionally divided *Tomb of Sand* (2022) into three parts: Ma's Back, Sunlight, and Back to The Front.

These parts are further subdivided into various chapters. This division is idiosyncratic as some chapters contain several pages while others only have a few sentences or words. Chapter 19, for instance, has a single sentence and a clause, while chapter 74 in the second part of the novel contains two words only: "Rosie Died".

*Tomb of Sand* (2022) follows the life of an 80-year-old woman, "Ma" and her bohemian daughter "Bet". The first chapter, "Ma's Back", depicts how 'Ma' loses interest in life around her after the death of her husband and sinks into a 'samadhi' like deep depression. All the efforts of the family members are of no avail in breaking her 'samadhi' - at the slightest sound at the door to the house, "she'd curl up and die, huddled against the wall, lifeless back turned towards the world". (Shree 2022, part I, ch 5) The sarcasm in depicting the deep-rooted self-interest of the family members can not be missed. 'Ma's' son Bade is frantically searching for her because he loves her but also

remembers the unsigned cheque books. Her daughter-in-law 'Bahu' wears Reeboks and believes no one appreciates or even notices her sacrifices for the family. The contrast between Ma's two grandsons is also highlighted. However, what is left untold is "whether the wall was playing the greater role in pulling Ma towards it, or whether it was her own desire to show her back to her family that drew her in." (Shree 2022, part I, ch 2)

Fabulation - a rejection of realism is also an element of metafiction. It is inspired by the idea that literature is a creative work that should not be constrained by mimesis and verisimilitude. It challenges the traditional notions of literature as a story and attempts to subvert the notion of the author's role as the narrator. Highlighting the difference between reality and fiction, the novelist comments: "In a story, you make whatever you want [to] happen; otherwise, how could you push a real woman through a crack in the wall like a pail and pick her up on the other side and splash her about?" (Shree 2022, part I, ch 34) Such authorial insertions seem to create a break in the narration. Nevertheless, they help in breaking the monotony of the novel.

Furthermore, it makes some essentially critical points about storytelling and assumes a self-denying view about storytelling. For instance, this is a description of one of the many narrators in the novel: "Sid's wife (who won't enter this story because she's not a character in it), at some point in the future... (I'm still giggling about this)". (Shree 2022, part II, ch 65) The authorial presence is omnipresent, interpolating the narrative with its conversational and stream-of-consciousness-like comments. The narrator keeps on making paradoxical statements that are excellent instances of "intense self-reflexivity" and "parodic intertextuality" (Hutcheon, 1986, 280) of postmodern fiction.

Hutcheon (1986), in her essay "Historiographic Metafiction Parody and the Intertextuality of History", maintains that "the term postmodernism, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and

historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past". (Hutcheon, 1986, 280)

### **Irony, Paradox and Playfulness**

Experimental writing in Hindi is scarce, the few notable writers being Krishna Baldev Vaid, Krishna Sobti and Nirmal Verma. Perhaps it was her experimental writing style that was responsible for the lukewarm response received by *Ret Samadhi* (2018). The most striking feature of *Tomb of Sand* (2022) is the chorus of multiple voices that narrates the story. Anything and anyone - birds, butterflies, doors, walls, roads, and a character who apologizes for joining in the story, narrates some part of the tale. Sometimes the silence of a character heightens the irony of the situation.

Despite its tragic plot, *Tomb of Sand* (2022) employs a playful tone and exuberant wordplay. Though the twists and turns in the plot and a chorus of voices test the reader's intellectual responses, the verbal mastery of the author like this gives it a unique charm. The novel employs a unique narrative style embellished with puns, paradoxes, personifications, polyphony and playfulness. On the one hand, it frequently uses dialect-specific Hindi lexicon like *bharhara*, *makuni*, and *guramma*. On the other, it plays with English phrases: "Bells and whistles. These are things that pierce not just the air but the heart, and bump into the body" (part II, ch 65). These stylistic features lend the novel a unique style and an unprecedented vigour. Its narrative frequently diverts in wordplays like "*Gaya Bhi Gaya*—Gaya is also gone.. And what of Bodh Gaya? When the brains—the bodh—drained away, it too was gone—*voh bhi Gaya*". (Shree 2022, part I, ch 30)

As Hutcheon (1989) argues, "irony depends upon interpretation; it happens in the tricky, unpredictable space between expression and understanding". *Tomb of Sand* (2022) frequently employs both verbal and situational ironies. In the novel's first part, we learn that Bade -the son of Ma, is a civil servant who is on the verge of retirement. Bade and Bahu refer to one another as D -an

abbreviation for darling. Later on, this D metamorphosed into an abbreviation for a duffer. The family lives in a palatial government quarter that they will have to leave after Bade's retirement. He throws a farewell party in which several character types are sarcastically portrayed.

The frequent mentioning of Ma during the party (sitting alone in her room facing the wall) heightens the irony of the situation. After the farewell party is over, Ma is found missing. The family members keep searching for the lost mother in their peculiar ways. The author's playfulness, even at such pathetic moments, gives a unique appeal to the novel. For instance, the description of several methods by which a missing object can be searched under a "One method is to tap the quilt, twist it like it's dough that's been kneaded, then pat it gently" (Shree 2022, part I, ch 34) is both ironic and playful. Ma, who had moved out of the house surreptitiously, is later found stumbling with her cane. A passerby takes her to a nearby police station, and she is returned to her home. Paradoxical statements like the following are dispersed throughout the novel:

Words. But what are words, really, hmmm? They're mere sounds with meanings dangling from them. That has no logic. They find their own way. Arising from the squabble between a sinking body and a drowning mind, they grab hold of antonyms. The seed planted was a date tree; what blossomed was hibiscus. They wrestle with themselves—wrapped up in their own game. (Shree 2022, part I, ch 3)

Amid the narration, these observations by the narrator create an atmosphere of contrast in the narrative and bring forth postmodernist scepticism to the fore. They also add new dimensions and points of view to various scenes. Such interferences corroborate what Brian McHale (2003) refers to as postmodernist fiction's 'dominant' mode. They also reveal the postmodern ontological uncertainty about the world projected by the text.

The "world" in which the text situates itself is the "world" of discourse, the "world" of texts and intertexts. This

“world” has direct links to the world of empirical reality, but it is not itself that empirical reality. It is a contemporary critical truism that realism is really a set of conventions, that the representation of the real is not the same as the real itself. (Hutcheon 1989, 6)

The second part of the novel, ‘Sunlight’, depicts the revival of Ma, who once put her back to life. It begins with a description of ‘Beti’s flat’; the same bohemian daughter who got separated from the family due to her love affair. Ma has come to Beti’s flat, and the story has come to dwell in Beti’s house. We find Ma (Now called Amma) with Beti, hoping to get her lost rhythm and peace of mind. Beti takes care of Amma and decides to make good all her mother’s ill-treatment at her son’s house. Paradoxically “Beti became the mother, made Ma the daughter, and stroked her brow”. (part II, ch 1) Gradually Amma relearns to walk on her own, and the duo are having a good time. Beti enjoys introducing Ma to new experiences. Mother and daughter watch films together. She gifts bangles to her daughter that are symbolic and suggestive of domestic life. Beti is perplexed as she had been proud of herself for being a carefree, independent, working woman and a feminist leader. Like a true postmodernist fiction, the novel does not feel shy about using sarcastic barbs against established notions, be it feminism. For instance, the description of a feminist crow is full of humour, irony and playfulness: “An elderly crowess with the heart of a poet began to remind everyone of the crow law. She had been one of the most badass feminists of her time, one who had fought and won the right for mothers to attend meetings and also take part In community decisions” (Shree 2022, part II, ch 44).

Beti’s affair with KK does not make any significant change in the plot; instead, it is the arrival of Rosie Bua- the transgender person who brings a new lease of life to Amma. The irony of the situation is quite apparent. Amma defies set conventions and convictions to the extent that her ‘modern’ bohemian daughter gets perplexed:

Ma sat with her arms and legs stretched out. The paste was smeared here and there on her body. The droplets of garlic stuck to her skin. Insides out, flipped up and over, inside faucets and entrails all gushing blood breath life. All exposed. Beti didn't like Ma sitting around exposed like that. (Shree 2022, part II, ch 25)

Rosie's appearance in this novel is like crossing a border in itself. After Rosie's death, events take on a distinct velocity and direction. Ma soon expresses her desire to visit Pakistan. Given her age, Ma's family is compelled to fulfil her request, but they question whether it is worth crossing the border and endangering everyone's lives.

### **The Myth of Progress and Class Consciousness**

Many postmodernists are haunted by Marxist revolutionary ideals and are sceptical of progress and development. For them, in a profit-oriented society, marketing takes precedence over production. They think art, literature and other media become vehicles for advertisement in such a social set-up. They define and modify our materialistic values and inspire new needs in our lives by idealizing false stereotypes. Postmodernist attitudes towards the notion of progress and development are reflected in their writings. Criticism of materialistic values and the false sense of pride in them has been severely criticized in *Tomb of Sand* (2022). Bade's sister disliked airports because "*she felt like a tiny bug among many, trapped in a laboratory*" (Shree 2022, part I, ch 7). Bahu's fascination for Reebok shoes is criticized with sarcasm and irony. The novelist creates a myth around "Reebok" only to criticize the lure created by it through advertising. She portrays it as a poisonous snake once found in America that metamorphosed into shoes. "But now Reeboks are only known for their current incarnation, and the company brings forth new types of shoes, not snakes, generation after generation". (part I, ch 16). The unreliability of technology is mocked when mother and daughter are lost near a lake. "They had arrived via GPS, and thus had gotten lost". (Shree 2022, part II, ch 70)

It is also worth noting that the household members have not been named. They have been referred to by common nouns like “*Bade*”, “*Beti*”, “*Bahu*”, “*Ma*”, and so on. On the other hand, the domestic help has their name and personalities analyzed, played upon and desiccated. These individuals from various social strata depict Shree’s awareness of the caste and class divide.

It is a well-established fact that postmodernism is against “*logocentrism*”, tends to question and subvert the legitimacy of values and considers values as topics suitable for endless debate. Postmodernism argues that systems and conventions are social and cultural constructs rather than unchangeable realities or “*natural*” facts. It questions the assumptions behind Technological development, Scientific positivism, Rationality, Enlightenment and several other seemingly established notions. The repression of voices and loss of critical acumen that mar the contemporary age has been sarcastically brought forward by the inherent analogy between human beings and crows:

The era of debate was still extant among the crows, and conversations proceeded boldly. They were not in the habit of shooting point-blank at those who put forth their own understanding, whether from their own experience or their own ideals or simple incomprehension. (Shree 2022, part II, ch 44)

### **Magic Realism**

Magic realism is one of the much-theorized aspects of postmodern writings. Works of Italo Calvino, Gabriel García Márquez, Salman Rushdie, and Margaret Atwood have been labelled as magic realist fictions. They have been upheld for juxtaposing the realistic and the fantastic elements, as well as their use of dreams, myths and fairy stories that lend them a surrealist aura.

According to the Penguin Literary dictionary, Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic

or bizarre, skilful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the element of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable. (Cuddon 195)

*Tomb of Sand* presents several elements, characters and incidents suggestive of magic in realistic fiction. For instance, the door can feel the emotions of one crossing the threshold. (Shree 2022, part I, ch 2). Julius Caesar- a dog, mocks Serious Son's attempts to laugh: "He barked whenever he saw him and wagged his tail as if to say, *Look at me! We laugh like this!*". (Shree 2022, part I, ch 18). Pir Nabina – an occultist, has his mysterious ways of diagnosing diseases. Throughout the novel, we find several birds interested in human affairs. It also contains a chapter that narrates the tale of the friendship between Garuda and the parrot (part III, ch 31). Crows, Blackbirds and others have been depicted as if they could feel the emotions of human beings and also express their own. Even some part of the story has been narrated by birds. Moreover, there is an entire chapter dedicated to the assembly of crows, where we find crows debating on relevant issues:

The conversation had turned to El Nino.

One young jackanapes, rather bored in his youthful zeal, as well as a bit self-enchanted, asked with curiosity (but also just to rile), Nina who?

Nino, corrected the one next to him.

El Nino, said another knowledgeable crow.

*Le* what? asked the jackanapes, twisting his beak to pronounce it.

*El, el*, replied the elder crow loudly.

Like Al-Biruni? Al-Azhar? jested the jackanapes.

Pay attention, don't turn everything into a joke, retorted an elderly lady

*crow*. (Shree 2022, part II, ch 44)

### **Intertextuality**

Intertextuality can be defined as an allusion or reference to another literary work. Since Postmodernism holds a decentred view of the universe and does not consider creative works as individual creations, intertextuality is a salient feature of several postmodern works. Geetanjali Shree admits the influences of several writers on her works. “Behind me and this book lies a rich and flourishing literary tradition in Hindi, and in other South Asian languages, ... World literature will be the richer for knowing some of the finest writers in these languages”. (*Tomb of Sand* (2022)| The Booker Prizes, 2022)

*Tomb of Sand* (2022) can be compared to Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *Love in Time of Cholera* (2003) in more ways than one. In *Love in Time of Cholera* (2003), Florentino Ariza waits fifty-one years, nine months, and four days to be with his beloved Fermina Daza. Similarly, In *Tomb of Sand*, “Ma” appears to wait for her lover Anwar throughout her married life. Both novels end tragically and employ a narrative style that is lyrical, humorous, playful and poetic. Shree’s (2018) conception in this regard, which is a reiteration of what T.S. Eliot (1982) avers in his seminal essay *Tradition and Individual Talent*, is worth noting:

No writer is as unique as she might like to believe! The writer’s interior comprises a universe where there is constant shifting across available linguistic and cultural registers, historical moments, and much else. Bound to it, every writer also aspires to break free of that already-given universe. It is this aspiration and its manifestation which makes her somehow unique, even though she is not! (Shree, 2008)

Several other intertextual references include Borges (Shree 2022, part II, ch- 62 ) and Paul Zachariah (Shree 2022, part II, ch- 79). After the death of Rosie, Ma starts clamouring for a passport. She wishes to visit Pakistan: Pakistan. “Pakistan? Pakistan! Why fling Ma into the swirl of the noisy slogans in

Krishna Sobti's *A Gujarat Here, A Gujarat There?* (Shree 2022, part II, ch 81)

The third part of this novel, "Back to The Front", opens with this remark: *Here we are at Wagah, where the tale is drama, and the story is Partition*. Shree claims space among the Partition writers by paying her dues to several Partition writers. She depicts Joginder Pal, Manto, Rahi Masoom Raza, Intizar Hussain, Sobti, Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Ramanand Sagar, Balwant Singh, Manzoor Ehtesham, Rajinder Singh Bedi and several others sitting in a row, at the Wagah border. In her translator's note, Rockwell corroborates it: "Throughout *Tomb of Sand*, reference is made to many of the great Partition authors in Hindi and Urdu, especially in the chapter that introduces the third section, when many of these writers come alive at the Wagah border between India and Pakistan." (Shree 2022, translator's note)

The depiction of the Retreat ceremony performed at the Wagah border with Bhisham Sahni performing pranks heightens the poignancy of the situation. Once Maa and Beti are in Pakistan, the tragedy of the Partition unfolds. Reminiscent of things past find in their way in the story. We learn about Chanda aka Chandraprabha aka Maa aka Amma aka Badi Amma's past as she reveals them through her several stories.

### **Fragmentation and Temporal Distortion**

The third part of the novel is Marked by a nonlinear, fragmented narrative where stories are placed under stories. Ma and Beti, who have visited Pakistan to deliver *chiraunji* to the relatives of Rosie- Hijra, are, searching for Anwar Chanda's Pakistani *Shauhar*. The Pakistani administration is frantically searching for the duo as they have entered the country without a proper visa and have gone missing. Ma narrates her past to Beti in the Thar desert through different stories set in different periods of her life. The temporal distortion in these stories is a characteristic feature of postmodern fiction.

Several symbols constantly appearing in the novel, like the broken Buddha and Ma's whistling with Rosie, find their significance through these stories. She reveals how she got Married to Anwar and how she was separated during Partition and crossed the border with Rosie. During their interrogation, Ma reveals several other facts about her previous life. Ma insists on meeting the Special officer Ali Anwar who happens to be the son of her former husband, Anwar. However, by now, Beti is suspicious of her mother:

She invented a spouse in her head. Even invented his name—Anwar! We ended up here chasing after that name. Until yesterday, the story went that she had to meet with the Special Officer, her shauhar, her husband...husband. But that guy turned out to be much younger than her, so now she's looking for the father. (Shree 2022, part III, ch-24)

The story then moves to a cricket field in Sri Lanka, where the bowler, who was once a guard in Khyber's prison, narrates part of the story. He performs the hiccup-curing running kick that he had learnt from Maa. Later in the story, we find Ma visiting her former husband Anwar, who is lying paralyzed: "That night, the night-tryst lady from one side of the border held a clandestine assignation with her beloved from the other side." (Shree 2022, part III, ch- 29). Paralyzed Anwar speaks only one word, "Forgiveness", -which can be interpreted in several ways according to the context one takes.

The narrative takes a tragic turn when Maa and Beti are shot in the dead of night. Ironically, the name of the person who shot them is not revealed. The pathos and tragedy are related through the mythical story of the Garuda and the parrot in chapter 31. Ali Anwar's consternation throws a hint at the shooting event:

All Ali Anwar had to say was that he hadn't shot her. He knew there was a rumour afoot that he'd helped a burglar escape from prison, and that out of fear of getting exposed

for being in league with the culprits, he'd shot her when the Khyber folk woke up and a commotion arose that night. But afterwards, he had wanted to forget, and so he had. (Shree 2022, part III, ch- 33)

The narrative here is full of several twists and turns. Several events, ideas, images, and even time frame has been fragmented to present the void engulfing human existence. The last chapter of the novel is the Epilogue in which the story finds its way back to Bade's house- from where it had started. Once again, the novel plays with the time frame by obliterating the story's timeline: "Of what significance were eleven or twelve years when there had been centuries of experience? It did not matter if it had been twelve years or fifteen or sixteen; there was no need to count" (Shree, 2022, Epilogue). However, there is a marked change in the perception of the narrator. The daughter, an advocate of independent life, now desired a family. A border considered a dividing line had become a place where two entities met. The family that was once compared to the old, dusty roads of Delhi has become a blessing. The novel ends with the narrator looking at the window that appears as a place where a plethora of new stories and characters await the moment they will take shape.

### **Conclusion**

In his influential essay "The Literature of Exhaustion", John Barth (1982) highlights a postmodern writer's expectations. According to him, a Postmodernist author neither rejects nor imitates the Modernist or other predecessors. Without succumbing to moral or creative simplification, he aspires to produce a fiction more democratic in its appeal. An ideal Postmodernist novel for Barth "rises above the quarrel between realism and irrationalism, formalism and "contentism," pure and committed literature, coterie fiction and junk fiction". (Barth 70)

*Tomb of Sand* (2022) is a representative metafiction that religiously follows several tenets of postmodernism. It freely employs several postmodernist ideas and techniques, including

intertextuality and magic realism. It relies on irony, paradox and playfulness to create a narrative that questions and subverts several established notions. It criticizes several so-called established realities like the myth of progress, borders, “religious fanatics and governments who do not care for samadhis or stories.” (Shree, part III, ch- 8)

The various twists and turns and a chorus of narrating voices test the reader’s intellectual responses and tolerance. Furthermore, it makes some essentially critical points about storytelling and assumes a self-denying view about storytelling. The use of metaphysical-conceit-like comparisons in the novel reminds us of Dr. Johnson’s (1779) remark: “The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions..” (212). However, all the loose ends merge to form a shape-shifting yet enticing and captivating postmodern metafiction that leaves much to surmise.

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## Migration, Relocation and Re-establishment of Identity and Social Status in *Medicine: Light in Twilight*

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### Abstract

“Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It is part of our very make-up as a human family.”—Ban Ki Moon (General-Secretary of the United Nations)

This research paper aims to critically examine the positive and negative effects of migration on one hand, and the struggle of those migrant families either in financial crises or in re-adjustment to a new socio-political environment on the other hand, a portrayal by Prof Vikas Sharma in one of his masterpieces *Medicine: Light in Twilight*. This novel is very remarkable for its depiction of heart-touching real and authentic stories set before partition and after partition till the Pandemic period of COVID-19, due to this the reader’s interest can be maintained throughout the whole narrative text. Also, the plot is mostly based on depicting the life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. The main aim is to portray the real condition of contemporary society, and the emphasis on the appearance of what is real and true, to make the reader enable for a close, detailed and comprehensive understanding of his/her surrounding. However, this novel is having so many characters from one

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generation to another but each character has been given an important role that their roles can be critically seen on individual as well as in the terms of societal norms and general ideologies.

This paper attempts to unveil the sufferings, rootlessness, alienation, exile, identity problem, mistreatment, loneliness, complication, social and economical disturbances especially faced by male characters in order to save honour and pride. The research finds how a family who uprooted from their village left behind all their land and business, can use their difficulties as a powerful weapon to re-establish and re-furnish their identity and dignity in the social sphere of the new environment. Prof Vikas Sharma has truly made justice with the portrayal of male as well as female victims who have suffered and gone through a lot because of the shift from one place to a new place for a better and peaceful life.

**Keywords:** Migration, alienation, exile, mistreatment, rootlessness, search for home, identity problem, materialism, social realism, sufferings of male and female and COVID-19.

*Medicine: Life in Twilight* is based on Social Realism that represents reality by portraying everyday experiences as they are in the real life. Prof Vikas Sharma told the story as truthfully as possible instead of dramatizing or romanticising it, which enable readers to have a close, comprehensive, and detailed analysis of reality and modernity. The author also tries to portray the real socio-political conditions of the working class and lift the curtain of power structures behind the poor conditions of the working class. The aim is to reveal tensions between an oppressive, hegemonic force and its victims.

The author puts emphasis on appearance of what is real and true. He gives more importance of economic and social class, especially middle class interests. Realism rejects imaginative idealization and focuses on its realistic characters and setting and

give the comprehensive detail about everyday occurrences with the amalgamation of dialects of the area. Character development of the novel is also very important factor for depicting the social class of the country.

Literature has thousands of threads which can weave a beautiful piece of art. Each thread has its own importance in creative work. In the same way, there are different narrative techniques for the narration of literature. Among the narrative techniques, Realism, in literature, is an approach that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. Although realism is not limited to any one century or group of writers, it is most often associated with the literary movement in 19th-century France. Realism has been chiefly concerned with the commonplaces of everyday life among the middle and lower classes, where the character is a product of social factors and environment is the integral element in the dramatic complications in literature, an approach that proceeds from an analysis of reality in terms of natural forces. Realism, a style of writing, gives the impression of recording or 'reflecting' faithfully an actual way of life.

'Social' is an omnibus word covering all aspects of human activity that display an awareness of others. Simply speaking, "Social Realism" is an extraordinary reach of understanding of social life. Still better, it is an intellectual power of probing into the nature and function of society, its various institutions and traditions, and their functioning. It is an intellectual penetration of social processes.

Social Realism involves individual, social and cultural changes in all the spheres of life with their intricacies and nuances: facts relating to family, class, marriage, school, politics, the inter-relation, economy, morality, religion, and educational standards. It relates more to social readjustments and social maladjustments such as unemployment, youth unrest, industrial indiscipline, crime, and war and their causes and consequences.

Social Realism is a keen depiction of social conditions. It implies a moral awareness also. Social insight is a heightened consciousness or comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural milieu - a sense of social fact. Socially conscious refers to an awareness inspired by a social ideology. It implies extreme social involvement and commitment to the socialist programme. Social Realism includes social consciousness, social sense and experience and social insight. It is an all-embracing term, indicating a sound and systematic grasp of the socio-political web, all rolled into one. Social Realism unravels the layer within layers of the social fabric through a fictional medium. By choosing an appropriate story, characters, language and fictional technique, the novelist aims to present the multifarious aspects of society and its complex functioning. Social Realism is not just realism represented in novels. It is, on the other hand, the novelist's way of dealing with realism or sometimes dealing with social facts and events of society for his novel's sake. In the novelists' hands, it remains a technique by which truth is represented in an artistic way.

Social Realism developed as a reaction against idealism and the exaggerated ego encouraged by Romanticism. The consequences of the industrial revolution became an apparatus; urban centres grew, slums proliferated on a new scale contrasting with the display of wealth of the upper classes with a new sense of social consciousness and the social realists pledged to fight the beautiful art, any style which appeared to the eye or emotions. They focused on the ugly realities of contemporary life and sympathized with working-class people, particularly the poor. They recorded what they saw, as it is existed, in a dispassionate manner.

The novel tells the story of five migrant families who were uprooted from their homeland and by facing many hardships, they finally reached Meerut, India from Lahore, Pakistan. One day Swami Giri Maharaj delivered his lecture to his five disciples – Kunj Behari Lal, Ghan Shyam, Gopal Das, Rajendra Narain and Krishna Prasad and asserted that “nobody should be afraid of

death. All human beings are victims of death, whether they are kings or paupers. Secondly, all have to suffer agonies whether they are rich or poor. The rich have terrible lust for more money and hence suffer regularly. The poor feel pain as they fail to fulfil their basic needs of life. Thirdly, every person is alone and dies alone.” In the end of his lecture, he said “Everybody must follow four dictates such as Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, and liberation is the best stage of life.”

After the end of the lecture, Kunj Behari Lal took Swami Ji to his ordinary home and offered Roti, Dal and Rice. After taking the meal, Swami ji said, “Look, Kunj Behari. Conditions of Lahore, Islamabad, Rawal Pindi etc. are no more favourable for us. Volunteers of the Muslim League and other selfish parties are violent now and it is no safer to stay here.” Swami Ji advised Kunj Behari to leave the village with other friends and their families as soon as possible. Kunja Behari had a rented shop in his village with a monthly income of forty rupees and he was not very rich in his skill that is why he had a question in his mind to stay in the village or to move from the village. He shared his problem with Swami Ji and Swami Ji said “Don’t worry as your lines forecast a bright future outside this village. Hope for the best.” After being satisfied with the assurance of Swami Ji for his settlement Kunj Behari asked anxiously to Swami Ji and said “What about Ghan Shyam, Gopal Das, Rajendra Narain, and Krishna Prasad? Will you be able to arrange for their living there too?” In reply to the questions asked by Kunj Behari, Swami Ji said “If you four friends also wish to settle in Meerut, there should be no problem.”

The next day Kunj Behari sold all his goods from the shop to his neighbour Farhat Ali for three thousand rupees. Ghan Shyam, Gopal Das and Rajendra Narain also sold their goods, shops, and lands in the same way Kunj Behari sold all his goods at low prices in helplessness.

Krishna Prasad, a famous Vaidya of Badarpur village possessed fifty bighas of land and earned good money in the village also

wanted to leave the village, but the main problem was his fifty bighas of land. So he took the address of Seth Sukhmal of Meerut and promised his friends to reach there just after selling his land.

Swami Ji started his journey from Lahore to Meerut with eight people, Kunj Behari and his wife Madhu, Ghan Shyam and his wife Kavita, Gopal Das and his wife Rani and Rajendra Narain and his wife Shakuntala. Except for Swami Ji all of them were enjoying the journey by rail for the first time. Swami Ji promised them for a new society, new education, new business, new town, and above all urban facilities.

Meerut was new for all of them; they had left their past away and wanted to start from the beginning. Kunj Behari Lal, Ghan Shyam, Gopal Das, and Rajendra Narain stayed in a single room each in Jain Dharmshala in Sadar Meerut. In front of the Dharmshala, all four male members hired one shop each and each one had to pay two rupees for one shop. Kunj Behari started a provision store, Ghan Shyam started a milk dairy, Gopal Das prepared samosas, jalebi, and rasgullas, and sold them at the rates of Badarpur village and Rajendra Narain extracted cream out of milk and prepared pure ghee with the cream. In this way, all these four families got settled here in Meerut whereas Krishna Prasad alias Vaidya Ji tried his level best to sell his fifty bighas of land but buyers were rare. Most of the Muslims wanted to buy property at a very rate as they hoped to possess the same by force. Kamal Naini daughter of Vaidya Ji intimate with Salim, and Salim told a lie to Kamal Naini that “he had passed High School from Lahore High School and would soon be posted as a teacher for primary school with a monthly salary of rupees thirty every month.” Salim loves Kamal Naini only to grab her fifty bighas of land, so he encouraged Kamal Naini not to accompany her parents to Meerut so that they may live as husband and wife in Lahore.

One day Vaidya Ji had saw Salim kissing Naini in the field, secretly, Vaidya Ji sold his total land for eighty thousand rupees to Ali, a prominent farmer from the nearby village. After knowing

the fact that Naini's father had already sold all his land to Ali, Salim planned to sell Naini to spinster Gooli of Red Light Area of Lahore and expected to get two thousand rupees with his sale.

Vaidya Ji left the village for Meerut without her daughter Kamal Naini. He felt emotionally hurt as his only daughter had disobeyed him- What Can't be cured must be endured. Salim felt very sad after the departure of Vaidya Ji though he had for a day with Naini in her house. Salim took Naini to the city, soon she found herself in Red Light Area and Salim sold her for one thousand rupees to spinster Gooli. The head spinster sent a customer to her room to control her for the sexual affair, she resisted boldly and came to blows with the customer. The next customer Balak Ram was sent to her room the next evening and he pitied her. He asked her to run away from her room at night after 2 O'clock and guided her in the direction to run towards the railway station. At the railway station, Balak Ram decided to desert Lahore to seek a job in new India and accompanied Kamal Naini. Vaidya Ji and his wife Saroja felt deligher to see Kamal Naini at Meerut with Balak Ram. There were tears of remorse in the eyes of mother and daughter. Saroja thanked Balak Ram for defending Naini at a critical juncture. Niani apologized for her misconduct and disobedience and promised ever to obey her parents.

“Here life appeared to be normal as all the five had works to do and earn their living. Moreover, worthy Swami Ji guided them at every step and encouraged them to lead a simple life. Let them feel that they were Indians and promised to remain Indians at heart.”

One of the important aspects of Social Realism is to inculcate social consciousness, social sense and experience and social insight. One cannot deny the fact that there is always a need to maintain identity. This aspect is reflected in the novels of Vikas Sharma. His novels represent reality by portraying everyday experiences as they are in the real life. He tells stories as truthful as possible instead of dramatizing or romanticising

Social Realism is an art movement that became popular in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a style of art as well as fiction. It provides with a realistic depiction of people and their lives; the daily life of workers and poor people. It adheres to reality and is, therefore, devoid of romantic embellishments. Instead it aims at exposing human flaws. As a matter of fact, the famous Bengali novelist, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, wrote his first novel *Rajmohan's Wife* in English. *Rajmohan's Wife* is about the effects of bad marriage on the woman, the novel deals with social issues of the day. Indian Writing in English deals with a wide range of themes. It reflects Indian culture, tradition, social values and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living elsewhere. The recent Indian English Literature has been trying to give expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicaments. The first generation of Indian English writers projected the themes of nationalism, the freedom struggle, the partition, social reform, rural-urban conflict, freedom and the plight of the untouchables and the landless poor.

Depicting social issues for the purpose of social reform was one of the major themes in the Indian writings in English during that period. Some of the distinguished works which played an instrumental role in bringing about social reform were, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. These works depicted the Indian society, especially the common man rather than the elite and the sophisticated, preferring the familiar to the fancied, explored the by lanes of the outcasts peasants and the working people. The writings of this period extensively deal with several aspects of social reform such as exploitation of the untouchables, the landless peasants, tea garden workers and the problems of industrial labour.

The second generation of Indian English writers projected the themes of, social reform, the Indian diaspora, the east-west encounter, the of values, and existential issues. Some of the Indian English writers carved out a niche for themselves by extensively

and intensively dealing with the individual problems and issues such as the quest for identity, alienation, rootlessness, meaninglessness and human predicament.

The third-generation writers have concentrated their themes around sociological, diasporic elements, feminine subjects, science and technologies, explorative writings and much more. Industrialisation, urbanization, globalization, modernization and feminism and women's empowerment and the changing social dynamics constitute the major themes of the modern Indian English writers.

The main aim is to portray the actual condition of contemporary society, and the emphasis what is accurate and true, to enable the reader to have a close, detailed and comprehensive understanding of his/her surrounding.

The characters of the novel of Vikas Sharma, facing problem relating to their identities. As we know identity is a state of mind in which someone recognizes/identifies their character traits that lead to finding out who they are and what they do and not that of someone else. In other words, it's basically who you are and what you define yourself as being. In all four novels of Vikas Sharma, we can easily see through the characters, searching for their identities.

The themes of rootlessness, search for home, male as well as female sufferings, modernity and alienation. The setting of the novel *Medicine: Light in Twilight* is before and after the independence period, intends to observe the turmoil and consequences due to the change of place from Pakistan to India, and the hardship that occurred due to this change. *Medicine: Light in Twilight*, there is a shift of five Hindu families in fear of being killed, who lived in a village in Lahore, Pakistan and this shift from one place to another shows the paradigms of changes, challenges, and responses of the social issues. They are new to India, it is correct that they are Hindu by religion but their way

of life, their language, and their surroundings are quite different. They started their life from the very beginning.

In addition to it, all the characters of the novel like Kunj Behari and his wife Madhu, Ghan Shyam and his wife Kavita, Gopal Das and his wife Rani, Rajendra Narain and his wife Shakuntala and Krishna Prasad alias Vaidya Ji and his wife Saroja etc each of them is assigned with different roles, various shades immersed based on their characteristics but what remained common among all of them is the optimistic view of life, they all lived in a satisfactory positions but they want to improve their condition. There are other sets of characters like Salim and Gooli, they both have a lust for money and greed for land and material things. Prof Vikas Sharma has truly justified his portrayal of families who migrated from their lands, re-locate and re-establish their identities. The different shades of icons can be seen as characteristics containing; women sufferings, identity problems, diaspora, rootlessness, search for home, alienation, exile, extra marital affair, modernity, loneliness, love, complication, divorce, modern life, materialism, the suffering of male, mistreatment, and COVID-19, etc.

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## **Murder and the Victim: Tracing the Beginning of Suspense/Thriller in Popular Culture Through Anthony Cox's *Before the Fact***

**\*Nganthoi Khuraijam**

**\*\*N. Banita Devi**

### **Abstract**

The aftermath of the First World War saw a reactionary response in popular British fiction in the form of detective stories. A sleuth carefully deciphering murders became the norm of crime fiction. Anthony Berkeley Cox, a celebrated mystery writer, subverts this detective trope under a pseudonym, Francis Iles, and investigates a more human side of crime as opposed to the boxed, walled, ratiocination of murder. This paper attempts to look at *Before the Fact* by Anthony Cox as a genre-breaking and questioning tool which tries and make sense of the senselessness, fear, suspicion, paranoia and horror related to murder to explore the victim's psyche. Alfred Hitchcock's adaptation of this novel, his film *Suspicion*, may have a different ending but attains that same human and universal emotion of identifying with the dangers a human can face. This novel marks the beginnings of a popular theme in pop culture, which Hitchcock is known to be the master of, i.e. psychological suspense and thriller.

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**Keywords:** Crime Fiction, Hitchcock, Murder Mystery, Suspense, Thriller, Victimhood.

When classic murder mysteries and whodunits were the norms, Anthony Berkeley Cox stretched the limitations of the genre of Golden Age mystery to explore deeper into the relationship between murderers and victims. His works as Francis Iles become the beginnings of fiction's full-fledged psychological suspense genre. Psychological suspense fiction focuses on the how and why, unlike whodunits. Many writers like Ruth Rendell use this medium to do detailed character studies or psychological observations about mystery and murder (Cooper-Clark). Cox's psychological suspense novel, *Before the Fact*, functions as a genre-breaking device among the Golden Age whodunits. The movie adaptation of this novel, *Suspicion*, made by Alfred Hitchcock and released in 1941, is one of Hitchcock's first American movies dealing with psychological suspense, a foray in which Hitchcock is remembered to be the master. This paper will look at Anthony Berkeley Cox's novel *Before the Fact* with the help of its movie adaptation *Suspicion* and its paradigm-shifting status among the Golden Age whodunits to look into victimhood and its relationship with psychological suspense.

Anthony Berkeley Cox wrote *Before the Fact* in 1932 under the pseudonym Francis Iles. While Cox, a member of The Detection Club, wrote detective fiction during its Golden Age, he used the alias to explore different aspects of crime fiction. Golden Age detective fiction focuses primarily on detective figures and their rationalisation of crime and murder popularised as whodunits. Cox, one of the many essential and prominent whodunit writers of the Golden Age, strays from the traditional whodunit formula in his fiction as Francis Iles, allowing exploration of the other side of the puzzles of the locked room Golden Age murders. Cox was "a firm believer in the writer's need to employ pseudonyms when departing from the style in which he or she had attained popularity" (Turnbull 79).

Golden Age detective fiction is famous for its clue-riddled mysteries laid out for the reader and the detective to solve. While detective stories emphasise the importance of the idea of innocence and tracing, rationalising and solving murders, Cox offers a new perspective on murder in the era of detective fiction. Looking at murder through the eyes of the victim, Cox explores suspense and victimhood. Golden Age detective fiction is seen as a reactionary medium to restore order to a threatened social calm left in the wake of the First World War. Its deductions and rationalisations provide reassurance that everything that does not make sense can be solved. Cox, as Francis Iles, explores the opposite side of that reassurance. *Before the Fact* looks into the nature of murder through the victim's point of view. It explores the psyche of a potential and eventual victim and exposes the senseless and unreasonable act that is murder. The novel dives into the nonsensical aspects of murder while most crime novels of its age bask in the popularity of the formula of reassurance that murders can be solved and killers caught. Crime fiction during this age focused mainly on mysteries solved by sleuths. The Golden Age reader leaves the familiarity of reading about the investigation and enters the realm of the crime itself through Cox's writing. Colin Dexter wrote in an introduction to Berkeley's *Malice Aforethought*, another novel written under Francis Iles's name:

Most of Iles's settings are familiar to us: the cosy suburban ambience of local tittle-tattle and tennis parties. But quickly we begin to discern the emergence of a strangely different story pattern- a pattern allowing a series of twists and turns just as riveting as those of any classically constructed whodunit. And with what a bonus, since the viewpoint has changed dramatically. (Dexter 2)

Cox remains a writer of detective fiction under the name of Anthony Berkeley and adopts the name of Francis Iles to leave the genre of detective fiction. *Before the Fact* has the typical Golden Age settings of countrysides, parties, eccentric neighbours and servants but gives the characters a fresh perspective as they

are seen from the victim's eyes. It is not a typical murder mystery that focuses on who the killer is. The publication of this novel at the time was somewhat experimental because it does not hide who the perpetrator is. The mystery lies in the suspense and tension that comes from the victim's slow realisation of her eventual murder at the hands of her husband, whom she loves dearly. She and the reader know it, creating a psychological thriller.

The novel goes deep into the mind of Lina Aysgarth more than the movie adaptation does. It follows Lina from her initial shock of finding out that she is a potential victim of her husband's schemes to the eventual acceptance of her fate and descent into near madness. The form of a whodunit is thrown out the window at the very onset of the novel with the opening lines, "Some women give birth to murderers. Some go to bed with them. And some marry them" (Iles ch 1). The straightforwardness of these lines assures the reader of insight into a victim's psyche. By revealing the murderer and the victim on the first page, Cox takes the English countryside Golden Age mystery for a fresh spin and describes instances of Lina's married life riddled with irony. Cox stresses the psychology of a victim in significant proportion and length. The reader follows Lina's mind from her initial happiness and giddiness and goes through her shock, suspicion, wariness, suspense, fear and eventually acceptance that she is a potential murder victim. In the face of murder at the hands of a loved one, Lina, an intelligent and well-read woman, descends into a pile of neurosis, which leads her to lose a practical sense of judgement, thereby not being able to prevent someone else's and her own murder and blames herself for the same. Her "intuition warns her that he is planning to induce the death of his old friend and business partner, Beaky Thwaite. When beaky does die, she believes herself as guilty as Johnnie (Guiltier, because she was the responsible one of the two)" (Turnbull 86). There are red herrings throughout the novel of her evaluation of situations which speak volumes of her naivety despite being intelligent. Cox's satirical tone throughout the

novel captures the essence of what Lina has to go through. With the help of her friend, the mystery writer, Lina, tries to come to terms with what she thinks “real” murder is.

Cox uses his position as a whodunit writer in Golden Age Detective fiction to exploit the genre’s popularity in this novel. Acknowledging that a detective story is written by many in his age, he uses this as a medium for Lina to recognise her position as a victim in what would probably become, in Isobel’s words, a murder mystery involving “people we never hear about, because they’re never caught out” (Iles ch XVIII). Cox’s take on murder through a victim’s eyes has been done differently by EC Bentley in *Trent’s Last Case*, who greatly influenced his works. In Bentley’s novel, a character learns he is a potential victim but acts on his own to turn around the situation and succeeds, which in Lina’s case, doesn’t happen. The potential victims in both novels know that they are in danger but act on it differently. The suspense keeps Lina on edge, and her descent into near madness is well-captured by Cox when she wishes for Johnnie to kill her soon just so the tension would end. Lina is a victim of her husband, but because she drinks the poison willingly, she is also guilty of suicide. Her last act of drinking the milk in the novel results from the mental trauma she goes through as she unravels her husband’s secrets and intentions. Hitchcock’s movie adaptation has a different ending. Still, Lina’s paranoia is highlighted in the movie as it builds upon itself slowly until it leads her to decide to run away to her mother’s place.

The absence of a conventional detective in the novel makes it unconventional detective fiction. Lina can be seen as an unwitting detective in the novel as she goes through clues and patterns with the reader to discover Johnnie’s true nature. Lina constantly consoles herself and remains willingly unaware of Johnnie’s nature and intentions. She forces herself to misunderstand and interpret Johnnie’s acts and convinces herself of his love for her. Like a classic whodunit, clues and patterns are formulaically

strewn across Lina's path as she gradually discovers her husband's intentions as "little by little, she becomes aware that his [her husband's] likeability masks a frightening unscrupulousness" (Turnbull 86). The novel does a good job of rooting itself in the detective story formula and yet breaking many generic conventions simultaneously, allowing room for exploration of the psychological depth of the character, which rarely happens in detective fiction. Malcolm Turnbull notes that the novel was celebrated as innovative upon its publication (80). It is an attempt and a success in transcending the limitations of the genre of detective fiction.

As much as Lina is the unwitting detective, she is also the unwitting murderer. Her cover-ups, excuses and silence over the shreds of evidence she finds make her an accessory to Beaky Thwaite's, her unborn child's and her own murders. She has the money, the evidence and the means to escape from Johnnie, but she doesn't. The reason she chooses to stay is related to how much Johnnie has manipulated her over the long years, but it has also got to do with her own personality. Stephen Knight says, "Cox's view is social as well as personal: the final sequence, and the title, suggests that many people's behaviour may make them accomplices to murder, including their own" (86). She is the victim but also indirectly, the detective and the murderer as well. As the novel goes deeper into the victim's position, the victimisation is essentially complicit on the victim's part, so much so the binary of a murderer and a victim becomes compromised. There is a great deal of masochism on Lina's part. Just like the novel sets out in the beginning that Johnnie will eventually be a murderer, Lina is also a born victim.

Alfred Hitchcock's adaptation *Suspicion* has a different ending than the novel. The film breaks convention and expectations by altering the ending. It somewhat mirrors Cox's genre-breaking way of revealing the murderer on the front page. Hitchcock breaks the authorial boundaries and constructs a story which is entirely his own. William A. Drumin writes, "In his later years, at least,

Hitchcock became an almost pure example of the film “auteur,” exercising control over all aspects of the filmmaking process” (1). There is no murder in the movie, and Lina’s suspicions are false. Donald Spoto writes about how some critics reported that Hitchcock may have altered the novel’s ending in the film, bowing to studio pressure (ch 9). Cox’s portrayal of Johnnie is of a charming, attractive man at the novel’s beginning, which remains so in the movie. Portrayed by Cary Grant in the film, the character comes across as ambiguously charming. The studio’s unwillingness to portray Cary Grant as a murderer is one of the reasons for opting for a different climax (Truffaut and Scott 142). The different ending of the movie proves Lina’s suspicions to be products of her imagination and, for some critics, takes away the story’s essence. Tania Modleski writes: “Notoriously, however, critics have viewed these avowals with a great deal of scepticism. The ending of this film, in which the wife’s suspicions of her husband – that he is a murderer and is plotting her murder – are revealed to be unfounded, is for most critics too sudden and too pat to be believed” (Leitch and Poague 172). Even though he opted for a different ending where Lina and Johnnie drive off to a happy ending, Hitchcock plays into the intense suspense mode that the novel gives. The last scene in the novel when Johnnie brings Lina the milk, an act which in which he symbolically and literally delivers the poison that will kill Lina, is brought out in a beautiful scene in the movie. It is shot in an almost gothic way such that Cary Grant’s deliberately acted blank face menacingly enhances, as Susan White calls it, “the sinister effect of the dark outline of his body” over the dark stairwell (184). The glass of milk is highlighted in such a way that it is the scene’s focus (*Suspicion* 1:33:02-1:33:25). Hitchcock himself has admitted that a small light was placed in the glass so that it is the complete focus of the scene (Truffaut and Scott 143). Regardless of the different endings, the movie and the book concern themselves with Lina’s suspicions and the effects on her mind and sanity.

Played brilliantly by Joan Fontaine, Lina becomes more robust than in the novel as she refuses to die in her husband's hands. Even with the altered ending, *Suspicion* is an interesting insight into marriage as a psychological battleground. Manipulation and suspicion play critical roles in this battle and keep the audience on the edge of their seats, hoping that the gullible Lina will leave her charming but despicable husband, who always disappoints her. And yet she keeps holding on and is quite determined that he can be changed. Both the book and movie versions of Lina seem to think that leaving Johnnie behind is not an option she has in good conscience.

While in the novel, Cox uses irony to build on the suspense of the reader's knowledge of the fact that Lina has married a murderer, the movie captures some of these sequences to highlight its connection to Golden Age detective fiction's conventions. The setting is at the country house, and there are scenes like the dinner party where they discuss stories of mystery murders. The actors capture the darkening tone of the movie in their expressions, helped by music played at appropriate intervals in the background. The scene, which takes place on the windy hill where Johnnie pursues Lina, sets out to make him and the audience smile. It also shows Lina's wariness which, as the movie's tone darkens, turns into suspicion. The psyche of a potential victim is more about identifying with Lina's deepest fears. There are moments when Johnnie is genuinely frightening. At the end of the dinner sequence, when they discuss an undetectable poison, a close-up shows Johnnie's smiling face transforming into an ominous look. Lina and Johnnie are caught up in their fantasies in both the movie and the novel. For Lina, it is her gothic suspicions; for Johnnie, it is his gambling. Looking into the relationship between the position of a victim and Golden Age detective fiction, both the novel and the movie sets up Lina to be the perfect victim of her husband and, in the case of the film, herself. It is important to note that Hitchcock's movies say a lot about his views on the universe, human nature, good and evil and life and death:

His films are meant to be seen and enjoyed, but like other great literature and drama, their enjoyment can be significantly enhanced by an appreciative analysis that sharpens our perception of how Hitchcock constructs his films and deploys the film medium to embody his artistic vision of the world and of humanity's situation within it. (Drumin 1)

The film serves as a cautionary insight into marriage and the harm done to it by miscommunication, trust and suspicions, which leads to an atmosphere of palpable tension, fear and paranoia – a psychological turmoil that many marriages suffer through. The suspense created by this psychological thriller gives its ultimate twist when, after an hour and a half of suspense and unrest, it ends on an optimistic note in contrast to the novel. The movie centres on the issues and dramas of human concerns and needs.

It is important to note that Cox's deviation from the generic conventions under a different alias is his way of criticising detective fiction as a genre in its formulaic nature and detachment from the horrors of murder. Raymond Chandler writes about the treatment of murder in Golden Age detective fiction:

These are the flustered old ladies—of both sexes (or no sex) and almost all ages—who like their murders scented with magnolia blossoms and do not care to be reminded that murder is an act of infinite cruelty, even if the perpetrators sometimes look like playboys or college professors or nice motherly women with softly graying hair. (7)

The victim's viewpoint surpasses this observation about murder in *Before the Fact*. The novel is complex when it comes to emotions as the reader lives through the victim's journey through various emotions until her death. How the victim handles her relationship with her husband speaks volumes about oppressive relationships. Her panic, terror and horror at her husband's ways and lies, her despair at loving an unfaithful murderer and her downright passivity in accepting death at the hands of her husband – all portray a descent into victimhood and echo how abusive relationships are.

With his seasoned and cynical wit, Cox took Golden Age detective fiction to new heights and became the father of psychological suspense fiction. Cox is the one who made all the right noises about producing quality crime fiction. The psychological aspect of the novel is what Hitchcock perfectly captures as the emotions of a potential victim. His cinematic creation technique does not focus on violence and gore but on identifying the dangers a human can face in relationships and society. As much as Alfred Hitchcock is called the master of suspense, Anthony Berkeley Cox is the Father of psychological suspense in his right.

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## **Narayan's *Kocharethi*: A Critique of Malayaraya Adivasi Community**

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### **Abstract**

Narayan's *Kocharethi* describes the marginal lives of Malayaraya Adivasi community and processes of their cultural transformation. The cultural change is noticed when the protagonist Kunjipennu rejects her marriage to her maternal uncle's son and marries Kochuraman, her lover. The couple faces abysmal poverty like other members of the adivasi community. Drought and heavy rain drive the community to debt and drink. They are the victims of exploiters like money lenders, the businessmen and the police. Their lands are taken away by vicious mechanism of the money magnates.

The arrival of a teacher in the village marks the beginning of another transformation. Children are now imparted education. The community also changes to modernity imposed on them by poverty or discriminatory methods of development designed to benefit the upper caste landlords and corrupt officials of the state. Education and acculturation displace Parvati, the daughter of Kunjipennu and Kochuraman, out of the community. Class-consciousness adds to the magnitude of the problems of

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the Adivasis. Christianity brings change to the life of the Aarayas. After independence of India, the democratic republic becomes the exploitative mechanism in the place of kings. Economic exploitation becomes the social reality of the Adivasi community. The paper aims to study the slow erosion of cultural identity, the questionable modernity and development and its effects on the community in *Kocharethi*.

**Keywords:** Marginal, Cultural, Transformation, Education, Exploitation, Class-consciousness, Christianity.

Narayan's *Kocharethi* describes the history, traditions and travails of the Malayaraya tribal community in Kerala in the twentieth century. *Kocharethi* belongs to the corpus of novels in Malayalam like *Indulekha* describing the changes in the social organisation and cultural consciousness of the Nair community while negotiating with colonial modernity. The novel details Adivasis's changing perception of the land and its ownership, possession and dispossession of the land. It describes lives and customs of the community, processes of cultural transformation and community's transition to modernity. Pramod Nayar comments:

It is a novel about a community's transition to modernity that requires them to not only abandon older ways of living, but whose transition is rarely voluntary but is imposed on them through poverty, dubious and discriminatory modes of development that benefit the uppercaste landlords and the corrupt state machinery. (The Hindu, Kocharethi, [https://www.thehindu.com/books/cultures\\_in\\_transformation](https://www.thehindu.com/books/cultures_in_transformation).)

The first half of the novel describes particulars of beliefs and rituals of Adivasis who bear close connection to nature. The second half of the novel deals with description of personal loss.

G.S. Jayashree comments in Introduction to *Kocharethi*:

*Kocharethi* is the first fictional attempt to reconstruct the history of the Adivasi's negotiation with the forces of modernity in Kerala. Narayan provides a vivid account of the primal ways of life of the adivasis and their move towards citizenship in independent India. He draws heavily

from adivasi oral traditions to underscore the earthy tensions of a rustic society that lived in close communion with nature and slowly distanced itself from it'. (P. XXVII)

Adivasis observed a unique set of rituals 'life cycle rituals' – marking birth ceremonies, marriage customs and funeral services. Social taboos were observed from the days of menstruation, women retreated to eettappera during menstruation and child birth. The menstruating girl was to spend seven days in the secluded room and was forbidden to go to the kitchen and to touch anybody. Such a girl was required to carry a scythe to protect herself from mysterious dangers. Another myth related to menstruation was the crying of the 'theendari bird'. Kunjipennu feels the start of her monthly cycle after hearing the cry of the Theendari bird.

Endogamy was the norm among the Malayarayan community. Marriage was performed through clan exogamy or illam. Marriage was permitted between certain illams. Adivasis who breached accepted customs were treated as outcastes and became the members of Chokkayillam. Cross cousin marriages were allowed among the Malayarayars. Girls were married after attaining puberty. Marriages were arranged by negotiation between elders of the clan. Mundkodukkal or Pudamkodukkal or clothes were gifted to sanctify a union. The boy and the girl were required to eat off the same leaf on which food was served.

An Adivasi woman was brought to her natal home in the seventh month of pregnancy for her first delivery, known as Pettinukonduvaral. Valayama (birth pollution) was observed for sixteen days after child birth. Pollution of child birth was observed by close relatives. Oil bath, drinking toddy and eating meat were forbidden for seven days. Appearance before deities and performing religious rites were also prohibited. The girl's family was subjected to bear the expenses of the first delivery. If the girl was living in her husband's house, her aunt and sister-in-law would come with sweetmeats to invite her home. The pregnant woman was given to unwrap balls of rice. If it cracked, it suggested danger. Lastly,

she was required to touch one of the packets brought by her husband's relatives. If the packet consisted a piece of iron, it predicted the birth of a boy. If the packet contained a stone, the birth of a girl was predicted. On the seventh day of delivery, the mother would take a bath and then meal and gifts were offered to her.

Narayan also describes the funeral rites of the Malayarayers. After death, no cooking fire was burnt in the house. The house was swept in a north direction. Then the deadman's children and relatives bathed the corpse and kept it on a plantain leaf in the front yard near the door, the head being in the north direction. A burning wick was placed near the head. Friends and relatives would then spread cloth over the dead body. The eldest son was required to perform the funeral rites. Relatives would put pinches of rice, *vaykari*, on the mouth of the corpse and the eldest male of the gathering would pour into a cupped leaf and put rice and grain in it. Then he would dip a jackfruit leaf in the oil and sprinkle it on the children, nephews and nieces who were to observe *pula* or death pollution.

A trench six feet long and six feet deep was dug in the south-north direction. The eldest son was to circle it thrice repeating incantations. Then the corpse was placed in the trench with head in the south direction and the pit was covered with leaves. The son then would put fistful of mud chanting the mantras. The prayer was observed and then the pit was covered with mud by all. Then sticks of *murrikkin* tree were placed over and stones were kept all around to keep away dogs and foxes. The people of burial ceremony would take bath in the stream. Close relatives would be offered a meal of rice gruel the next day. *Pula* was to be observed for fifteen days. They were forbidden to touch weapons, enter cultivated land, perform rite or appear before idols, drink liquor and to contact women. A ritual bath was performed on the fifteenth day and a festival meal was arranged on the sixteenth day for relatives and friends.

Each Arayar had certain family deities. The eldest son of the family offered puja for the deities. Each deity had a preference for a particular object that was offered to him. The salient feature of the Malayarayar form of worship was its integration with daily life. Division in terms of nature and culture was unknown to them. They had no idea of institutionalized religion. Man and god were integrated to each other. They believed that natural calamities resulted due to the anger of ancestral spirits for wrong actions of the Adivasis. The gods bore human features like anger or sadness. They had changing power over the lives of Malayarayars.

The Arayars had the system of treatment based on religion and nature. The treatment of Kadutha by Ittyadi marks close contact between religion and medicine. He takes a sprig from the pepper vine, some pebbles and a pinch of ash as curatives. The spirits also possessed a person and the person was heavily beaten to drive out the spirits. People believe in Velichapad to cure afflictions. Kochuraman belongs to the next generation of Adivasis who offered a sophisticated method of treatment. He moves away from the traditional form of medication that consisted religion. He severs ties to practices of incantation. He uses various herbs and other natural products like the fat of animals to cure wounds, sprains, diarrhea and migraine. When Ittyadi fails to cure Kunjipennu of a dangerous rash on being poisoned with ash, incantations and a fowl sacrificed to Puliambulli, Kochuraman saves her by administering natural herbs.

The Malayarayars dwelled on the slopes of the hills. They cultivated paddy on the cleared land called 'Kalai'. The rocky land was useful for maximum of two successive crops. After two crops, they left the land uncultivated and cleared other area of forest for cultivation. The Adivasi community chiefly depended on food crops like tapioca, yam and wild tubers. Hunting and fishing were other means of food. They enjoyed a self-sufficient economy. The major part of the income being the farm produce exchange. Pepper was their main crop commodity. They traded in wax and honey obtained from the forest.

Tribal's women are strong and assertive. They are pure and they are the symbol's of Indian women's chastity. Narayan presents this view through his character Kunjipennu. Kunjipennu opposes Narayan's move: 'Narayan felt that just then in her anger, she looked like Kali. He paused, angry and embarrassed, but the sharp scythe held him back. An Arethi girl would not hesitate to attack the man who tried to molest her; she would even slit her own throat to thwart him.' (Narayan, P. 11) Narayan commends the status of Adivasis. He feels pride in the community identity. He comments: If the Arayar were even slightly literate they would be just like us. They are not socially backward in any way. They are nature's children, strong and healthy. (P. 118)

The Malayarayers were victims of various exploitations. The Muslim and Christian traders did not offer them fair price of their commodities. They often cheated them as Adivasis did not know addition or subtraction. The lack of knowledge of counting money and weighting items were other reasons of cheating by the merchants. Adivasis were honest and innocent so they were unaware of the tactics of the merchants. Kunjimundan and his son are cheated by Pareethu, the trader. Narayan comments.

'The Poor Arayar! They toil hard on the land, but they don't know anything about weights, they can't count or calculate. The merchants cheat them with their crooked weighing balance and weighting sticks'. (P. 102)

Secondly, the Malayarayers had not free hold on land and were tenants on land owned by the king. They were subjected to pay heavy rent for the right to cultivation. They were also required to pay thalakaram or head tax on the basis of the number of members of their families. Tamil Brahmins levied Malakaram or breast tax on them. They were demanded taxes for their fruit trees too. Each headman was required to give a certain quantity of honey for the King's birthday, dig few pits for elephants and help to conduct animals with bark ropes. Drought and torrential rain brought the Malayarayar community into debt and alcoholism.

The poverty of the community was exploited by money-lenders, landlords, the businessmen and the police and Arayar's lands were taken away by the unholy nexus of upper castes and upper-classes. The rebelling Aryars were beaten to submit. They were victims of diseases due to their ignorance and alcoholism.

Forests were converted into reserved forests by the laws of colonial modernity. The feudal landlord, the King and the British Raj are symbols of various transformations. India became democratic republic after independence and removed the power of the King but it substituted one mechanism of exploitation for another. Economic exploitation is the bane of the community in new India. The end of the old order and the establishment of the new order creates identity crisis for the Adivasis. The oppressive power of new laws brings perils to the tribals.

The main characters in the novel are Kunjipennu and Kochuraman. The cultural change is noticed when Kunjipennu rejects her marriage to her maternal uncle's son and accepts Kochuraman as her husband. The arrival of a teacher and the establishment of a school in the village marks the beginning of another social change in the community. Parvati, Kochuraman's daughter, passes her matriculation and gets a government job as a clerk in the central excise department in Ernakulam. The education opens new ways of development for the younger generation but it disturbs the values, beliefs and ways of life of older generation. The needs, aspirations and desires of the younger generation have gone considerable changes incomprehensible to the older generation. The words of Parvati show remarkable transformation:

'Mother, you don't know anything. What do you expect me to do... go to office everyday wearing the same skirt? Employees are expected to come to office elegantly dressed. Others change their clothes every day. I wear a sari for two days'. (Narayan, P. 188)

Kujipennu does not understand or believe the words of Parvati. She, with great agony, concludes: "It was futile to expect Parvati to help out her parents." (Narayan, P. 188) The values and virtues of modernity affect tribal life. The woman of new generation walks out of her roots. Parvati falls in love with Padmanabhan an educated and employed person and marries him against her parent's wishes. She starts to distance herself from the community. Education and acculturation shift Parvati from the community to city life. But Narayan feels that education is important for woman but not at the cost of femininity and culture.

The older generation having a different value system is displaced and destroyed in the modern system. Kochuraman falls ill due to alcoholism and seeks treatment in a modern hospital. The modern medical set up in the big hospital terrify Kochuraman and Kunjipennu. When they are told by doctors that he will require surgery that the doctors will cut him open alive, they are mentally scared of modern medicine and escape from the hospital.

The process of modernisation began during the mid-nineteenth century by the British colonial administrators. Teak in massive quantities was required for shipbuilding and railway lines. Large areas of land were taken from the Malayarayers and given to European planters. Roads were constructed in Adivasis territory and opened paths for traders. The introduction of cash economy replaced traditional conception of wealth and Adivasis consciousness gained currency for lust for money. Class-consciousness, modernity's close associate, compounded the problems of the community.

The new changes in social and economic domain affected traditional tribal system of primordial gods. The belief in the traditional gods failed to meet the social and economic changes. The acceptance of Christianity by Adivasis was an acceptance of sufficient spiritual power to negotiate deep crises of belief in native traditions and to secure their faltering souls. The Christian missionaries assured them that Christianity was a path to Heaven. The religious conversion solved some of their problems. Christianity

offered them access to education making them capable for trade and commerce. The English schools established by missionaries attracted them for education of tribal's children. The missionaries helped them to protect their lands from greedy money-magnates.

Adivasis perceived that Christianity was a guarantee against evil spirits and diseases brought by evil spirits. Mass conversion to Christianity was observed during epidemics. But the earlier belief system and practices continued with them and they relapsed to inherited mode of belief and worship during troubled days and crises feeling more consoling and comfortable. Religious conversion improved the financial and economic position of Adivasis. But their position was still inferior associated with their original castes Kochuraman says: 'My name is Kochuraman. I don't want to change my religion and become Arayan Mathayi. I know that's how they're called the converts. Pelaya Thama or Chothi Ararai'. (Narayan, 151)

Hindu orthodoxy too tried to civilize them according to Hindu culture. Kochupilla Asan, the representative of Hindu culture, attempted to drive away Adivasis from primitive ways of life and obliterate their marks of identity through Sanskritisation. Asan's description of the origin of the Malayarayars in the context of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata is an attempt to bring them in the Brahminical system of belief. He teaches them principles of hygiene, social conduct and worship. He starts 'Saraswati Vilasom Kolari' school for the education of Adivasis. Kunjunni canvassed them to participate in the temple activities and Maharaja made a proclamation for Adivasis entry to temples. But Malayarayars were suspicious of the benefits of the Hindu religion.

Forces of acculturation arrived Adivasi community. The Christian missionaries introduced English education and Christianity was set into the minds of Adivasis. The gods of Adivasis were totally outside the Hindu religion. Narayan criticizes Hindu orthodoxy. Narayan says in 'Interview with Narayan':

‘The Christians came and started English medium schools. They said worshipping stones and trees was wrong. Then the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) came and did the same – replaced Puliambulli and Marutha with Vishnu and Durga; ochre robes replaced the gowns of the priests and nuns. No one was really interested in us as a people.’ (P.212)

Saraswathy Nagarajan rightly observes : ‘*Kocharethi* reminds us, yet again, how the children of the land were marginalised by the State, the establishment and the organised religion. From proud farmers, practitioners of traditional medicine and guardians of the land, the tribals became displaced and dispossessed, dependent on the largesse of the State to protect their lands, and most importantly, their cultural identity.’ (Nagarajan, <http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/article>). Pramod Nayar also concerns the same theme: ‘The slow erosion of cultural identity, the absence of agency for some sections of society, the increasing erasure of various communities from the supposed democratic space of citizenship, the questionable route ‘modernity’, and ‘development’ take and the effects they have on men and, differently on women are all woven into Narayan’s novel.’ (Nayar, [https://www.thehindu.com/books/cultures in transformation](https://www.thehindu.com/books/cultures%20in%20transformation))

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## Replacing the Real with the Hyper-real: A Theoretical Study of the Historical Distortions in Popular Indian Serials and Films

**\*Prasun Banerjee**

“Imagology has gained a historic victory over ideology”

—Kundera (127)

One of the most noteworthy contributions or trademarks of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is supposed to be the homogenization of heterogeneous cultures and discourses that have been subjected to privileged and advantageous categorization under the essentially patriarchal and capitalistic cultures of the past. This seems to have not only asserted the “plurisignificance” of our existence, but secured the longevity of heterogeneity of cultures from the urban to the tribal sectors. Social commentators have given a major share of this achievement to the presence of strong audio-visual forms like the television, the Electronic media, the social networking websites or the digitalized cinematic form that have encouraged and ensured participation of a sizable section of population into various issues in the public domain which have hitherto been subjects to only an elitist or privileged section of the society. These forms of representation which often use the tools of popular culture to create lasting impressions with the viewers or the audience, serve somewhat like a public watchdog, as an interpreter of macro and micro issues from the local to the global, as a

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facilitator between the home and the world, raising awareness and widening the horizons of knowledge even of an otherwise unwilling mass who can no longer refuse to hear or see the neighbour. But it is often noticed that in their constant endeavor to present the consumable story to garner larger viewership, these popular forms tend to the sensational and the thrilling, the exciting and the dramatic, and create strong macro images that give illusory and falsifying, if not false, impressions of those discourses thus represented. These images being augmented with advanced technological crafts create a false sense of objectivity and blow away any sense of counter-arguments against those discourses. With more advanced technological innovations like the 3-D effect, these images gain the fourth dimensions of the “hyperreal, a metastate”(Durham 473) and submerge, overpower and invade the collective unconsciousness of the viewer to subsequently delete any grey areas of problematic in them. In this paper, we propose to study the nature of such dramatic and popular representation of the historical discourse and analyze the effect of them on the general viewer.

History or the historical discourse, especially the written form, has proved to be a subject of genuine interest to the social commentators of the present time of almost all genres, not only because it provides them with a plurality of perspectives to look into the past extant both in written and archival form, but also it enables them to satiate their fascination for narratives. Besides this history, despite all the empiricism and critical elements, remains a treasure-trove of fascinating tales and narratives of mankind that needs to be retold and represented to the newer generations. To the postmodernist eye, written or codified history is also a form of grand narrative that needs to be looked into with suspicion and scrutiny to discover the gaps in the process of narration and interpretation. In a nutshell, history is a problematic site that needs to be visited and revisited time and again to be acutely conscious of the dark alleys and corners leading to it. This

fascination with history is surely not to miss the attention of the authors of popular fictions or the producers of the television and the cinematic texts, who are endlessly seeking new narratives to fascinate their audience and widening their viewership to ensure the profit-values of their product. So we see today a flurry of historical tales being adopted as subjects of television soaps or films from Hollywood to Bollywood. The craze is even more palpable in the television industry of India today as we see many historical events are adopted such as *Jodha Akbar* in Zee Television, *Bharat ka Veer Putra-Maharana Putra* in Sony Entertainment Network or *Prithviraj Chouhan* in Star plus and many more along with recent Bollywood films like *Jodha Akbar* by Ashutosh Gwarikar and *Padmaavat* by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Making history their unique selling point, they draw abundantly from historical sources to plan their plotline and portray their characters but dramatize them to weave riveting tales of romance and betrayal, envy and instigation presented in a grandiose canvas that keep their audience glued to the television sets or thronging the multiplexes . But while doing so the makers neither follow any standard model of historiography nor historical interpretation but go on freely interpreting the historical details to suit their purpose. Under the naive disclaimer of creative license or artistic freedom, they manipulate the historical narratives to create a parallel text that eventually remains inextricably confined within the capitalistic desire of profit-making and attracting attention for a business end. But the text thus created, marks a lasting impression with the naïve viewer who being awe-struck by the constructional splendour and grandeur of the product takes it on face value letting the grand images erase out any traces of historical memory in his unconsciousness.

Baudrillard asserts that these images, coloured with a dramatic packaging and being augmented with latest technological innovation, foreground a world of the hyperreal which is a world of simulation, a world of fantastic telescoping where polarities collapse. And the

audience gets confined into the “hyperreal” loosing track of the reality. The famous Czech-French novelist, Milan Kundera in his well-known novel *Immortality*, has given a new semantic dimension and interpretation of the simulcra through the concrete symbols and descriptive details:

Imagology! Who first thought up this remarkable neologism?...What matters is that this word finally lets us put under one roof something goes by so many names: advertising agencies; political campaign managers designers who devise the shape of everything from cars to gym equipment; fashion stylists; barbers; show-business stars dictating the norms of physical beauty that all branches of imagology obey. (127)

Kundera thus makes a categorical assertion of a new paradigm that is constructed by the tools of these popular representation and this new paradigm of the imagologue who has replaced the role of the ideologue in the final outcome, and thus, Kundera notes, “[I]magology has gained a historic victory of ideology” (127). Having replaced the actual ideologue of the discourse, these representations, thus, go on creating a series of powerful yet illusory images which also create their own set of signified that lies far apart from the actual ideologue they have proclaimed to signify in the beginning. The new signifiers and their signified do not abide by the patterning and functions of the ideologue but create a new ideologue in the text which only abides by the principles of consumable popularity and market economy. What the viewers get is a breezy fascinating “readerly” narrative, high in entertainment quotient and emotional value but free from narratorial hiccups as in typical historical narratives or historical fictions where the narrator has to undergo the painstaking process of describing his sources and explaining his conclusions. The reader or the audience can relax in his passive reception of the narration and be blown away by the grandeur of the splendor of the production. But in the end the text thus created can in no way become a true period-piece reflecting “the felt ultimacies of the

time” (John Barth), it seems to represent, nor does it become a timeless historical fiction that imaginatively reconstructs a historical time through personal tales and anecdotes. What it becomes is a mish-mash, a very coloured and misleading depiction of a period and a time and a very careless handling of a medium with a huge potential.

To substantiate our arguments, let us refer to the narrative of Mughal Emperor Akbar and his Rajput wife who was now commonly known by the misnomer “Jodha”. This multi-layered tale has received considerable attention from the makers of both television soap operas and film makers in India. As per the annals of the history, Emperor Akbar married, rather forcefully, the daughter of Raja Bharmal of Ajmer for purely political reasons to strike a sort of friendship with the other-wise unmanageable Rajput clan who could not be tamed despite of several attempts by the Mughal army (Chandra 111). The marriage diplomacy might have been enacted also to offer a sort of religious bonhomie with Akbar’s Hindu subjects who were showing signs of rebellion against the religious discrimination extant in the then Mughal administrative structure (Smith 656). Being in disconformity with the popular belief that the marriage led to Akbar’s adoption of a rather secular vision of religion and social policies and that he did not force his wife to adopt the religion of her spouse, historical records indicate that after marriage the Rajput princess came to be known as Mirium-un-Zamani or Wali Nimat Begum suggesting her conversion to Islam. Mirium-un-Zamani was the title by which she was referred to in contemporary Mughal chronicles, including Jahangir’s autobiography, the *Tuzk-e-Jahangiri* (Rogers & Beveridge 1909, p. 78. cited in Wikipedia accessed on 30.07.22). Apart from the title of Mariam-uz-Zamani, she also bore two more glorious titles of “Mallika-e-Muezzamma” (lit. “Exalted Empress”) and “Mallika-e-Hindustan” (lit. “Empress of Hindustan”) {(Lal, Muni (1977). *Akbar*. V.P. House Private Ltd., Delhi. p. 133 cited in Wikipedia accessed on 30.07.22)}. She was also commonly

referred as “Shahi Begum” (lit. ‘Imperial Begum’) throughout her reign( Wikipedia accessed on 30.07.22). Various other sources of history have discovered other names such as “Harka Bai”, “Harkhan Champavati”, “Maanmati Bai” and others with which Akbar’s Rajput wife might have been addressed but no records has any mention of the name “Jodha” which her character was addressed as in popular soap operas and films. Several historical records rather identify “Jodha” as the wife of Jahangir, Akbar’s son and heir to his kingdom(Atul Sethi cited in Wikipedia accessed on 30.07.22). And unlike Jahangir’s wife who is the daughter of Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur, Mirium-un-Jamani’s origin takes her back to Amer or the present day Jaipur, thus making it impossible for her to be called “Jodha” because of her birthplace. It was also found that Akbar’s relationship with this Rajput princess was not very different from his other wives and the dynamics of his political relationship with the Rajputs did not really encounter a paradigm shift with this marriage. But when this historical event of highly political nature was converted into consumable public content the political narrative was made a personal romantic one. Both in the television series produced by Ekta Kapur under Balaji Telefilms aired from 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 to 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015 and in the feature film written, produced and directed by Ashutosh Gwariker, Emperor Akbar is seen wooing the Rajput princess who is unmistakably called “Jodha” in both the shows. Not only her, Akbar is found to be intimately involved with her family members and try win their favour and the Rajputs, too, are accepting him without much clamour. During the course of the screen enactment many other incidents were shown which have no historical validity or minimum amount of substantiation. There were glaring anachronisms, merger of multiple disconnected subplots, dichotomies and contradictions in the story-line in both the productions which belie the very foundation of history. But the grandness of the production design, the dramatization, the insertion of popular elements of dance and music, colourful frames, episodes of love, romance, conspiracy, melodrama, heroism and especially the use

of a highly stylized parlance to convince the audience that the story belong to the period it represents. Besides, the use of long credit roles where the makers mention several historical sources to drive upon the point that the story is well-researched and documented, convinces the audience that the makers have taken every care to maintain historical authenticity. Having been augmented with powerful tools of audio-visual medium, technological devices, the produced narrative impresses and then fortifies into the mind of the audience, as Baudrillard has indicated, a grand picture, the hyper-real, which blurs the problematics of historical consciousness from the collective unconsciousness of a generation of audience and flatten into a linear surface the hilly bumps of disjunctive problematized history. The dangerous effects of these popular productions on general public psyche have been felt by the writer of the paper himself. While visiting Agra and Fatepur Sikri in 2019, I found that tourist guides clearly demarcating areas where the historical “Jodha Bai” had the sword fight with historical Akbar and telling many imaginary tales upon her legend and the tourists believing them and asking questions to corroborate what they have seen in the film and the television broadcast. The same deliberate distortion of facts could be found in the controversial movie *Padmaavat* (released in 2018, directed and produced by Sanjay Leela Bhansali). The film, though based on a fictional poem of the same name by Malik Muhammad Jaisi, makes tall claims about being a period piece on 13<sup>th</sup> century Rajasthan. But neither the film is faithful in depicting contemporary social or political reality, nor the fictional world they delineate effectively capture the individualistic worlds of the then people. In their desire to sell their stories, they create a make-belief world by constantly magnifying certain grand or heroic emotions which were choreographed with a grand setting and a thematic grand-narratives. The mini-narratives, the miniature form of lives which modern historians have brought to the foreground as palpable, justifiable elements of history along with the grand heroic sagas of battles of Kings and princes.

Thus, it can be said that the growing liking of the popular film makers have seriously jeopardized historical consciousness of a generation of readers and viewers which is heavily bent on the digital content for any kind of information gathering and knowledge dissemination. An alternative needs to be created which would use the same tools as the popular forms to make people aware of the open-ended nature of historical narrative and the grey problematic zone which marks the continuity of history rather than confusing it.

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## Tracing the Intellectual and Critical History of the Epistemological Tradition through *Culturemes* of Language and Literature

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Culture is one the most complex and contested critical idioms and therefore it is multidimensional, fractured, polyphonic, dialogic, heteroglossic however, the broad understanding of culture explicates the fact that it constitutes and defines the intellectual, philosophical, and epistemological tradition which constitute the epistemological order of a nation and of a self which is created by the structures of feelings, consciousness, and ideology. The stream of thoughts, consciousness and epistemic order has been constituted by the series of concepts, idioms, and *topoi* which are inalienably important for constituting the rubric and texture of culture. The rubric of culture has been constituted by a series of infinite chain of concepts called *culturemes*. These *culturemes* are the smallest units of the intellectual and the critical tradition which are dialectical, *antinomical* and contrary in nature and therefore they involve the continuous process of negation and progression. These *culturemes* also define the nature of discourse; socio-pragmatic, aesthetic and metaphysical which are related to the entire intellectual, philosophical, theoretical, and epistemological tradition. The present paper intends to explore the contribution of *culturemes* in shaping the epistemological an intellectual tradition of a nation.

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The intellectual and critical history of the epistemological tradition of the West and the East has examined the nature, process, and existence of the intellectual and epistemological complexity. The West, beginning from the pre-Socratic, Heraclitus through Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, Livy, Tacitus, Bede, Machiavelli, Vico, Hume, Hobbes, Hutchinson, to Hegel, Finlay, Marx, Gibbon, Ranke, Bloch, Carr, Gibbon, Spengler, Collingwood et cetera have explored the history of ideas within the complexes of Apollonian and Dionysian realities and they have locate the history of intellectual tradition within a wide spectrum of discourses which may include; realist, metaphysical and aesthetic discourse. The orient, particularly India, traces the history of intellectual and epistemological realities through its rich trajectory of *itihas-puranparampara* (family genealogy and biographies) along with some *vedic* and *uttar vedic* (*upnishads*) texts. Further, 18 *Mahapuranas* and 18 *Upapuranas*, Ashvaghosa *Buddhacharita* (2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE) Banbhatta's *Harshacharita* (7<sup>th</sup> Century CE), in addition, some *kavyas* including Kalidas' *Raghuvansham* (5<sup>th</sup> Century CE) represents *Raghu dynasty*. These texts exemplify the fact that the intellectual history, in the Indian context, cannot be explained through the parameters invented and developed in some other nations. In India, the intellectual history is deeply embedded into its cultural textures or *culturemes* which include all aforesaid discourses.

A careful critical inquiry into the genesis and genealogy of a nation and its existence may bring one to a complex texture of culture. Though culture is one of the most contested terms of literary, linguistic, sociological, anthropological, psychological, historical, economic and political orders of epistemological realities yet it has been defined as one of the major components of academic, intellectual, epistemological, and behavioural aspects of human existence. Culture has been defined by philosophers, social thinkers, cultural materialists, literary theorists, et cetera in different

vocabularies and languages, and these definitions have indeed enriched the complex texture of culture. Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976) defines culture as a repository of the complex texture of intellectual tradition as it has been derived from the German term *Kultur* which means to develop, grow or foster. Thus, it is associated with the cultivation of human civilization where the human intellect, emotion, consciousness, ideology, rationality, logic, epistemic order etcetera find their shape and meaning. Raymond Williams (1976) writes, "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is so partly because its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought" (116). During 1870s Matthew Arnold, a noted social critic, along with his contemporary F.B. Taylor, defined culture in a more inclusive structure. Taylor, in his *Primitive Culture* (1958), defines culture as "a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by men as a member of society" (1). It is evident from the said fact that Arnold and Taylor defined culture as a systematic, universal and unified complex. However, the 1950s experienced a great shift in the understanding of culture, and it was made visible in the work of Raymond Williams *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961), where culture is seen as a "general structure of feeling" (1958: 15) and "relationships between elements in a whole way of life. The analysis of culture is an attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships" (1961: 46). Further, he also has introduced the concepts of totalizing, ideologies, dominant culture, residual and emergent in order to define culture. Further, Williams also introduced the concepts of base and super-structure, which he divided into three categories; ideal, documentary and social. With these concepts, Raymond Williams countered the material

theory of culture as Stuart Hall in his “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms” (1980) writes that Raymond Williams countered “Vulgar materialism and economic determinism” with “a radical interactionism: in effect, the interaction of all practices in and with one another, striking the problem of determinacy” (60). After Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart in his *The Uses of Literacy: Changing Patterns in English Mass Culture* (1957) introduced a revisionary project of cultural analysis where he focused more on mass culture and popular media particularly new papers, magazines, television and film. In addition, Dick Hebdig through his *Subculture: The Meaning of the Style* (1979) and Iain Chambers with his *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994) expounded the fact that culture is neither a homogeneous reality nor a symmetrically arranged relationship between force and other factors. These theses and antitheses on culture transformed the idea of culture into the problem of culture, or in other words culture itself turned out to be major *problematique*. Thus, culture in the 1980s is now being viewed by two spectrums; one of anthropologists, Claud Levi-Strauss’ Structuralist Anthropology which analyses culture as coherent, systematic and predictable structure and the other of Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Halls model of culture as something popular, fragmentary and contingent. Thus, the discourse of culture automatically became hybrid in nature. Melissa Gregg brings out the notion of ‘Conjuncture’ through which she intends to focus at the particularities of the present. Gradually, the field of cultural studies witnessed a post-structuralist or deconstructionist’s orientation as far as its theoretical texture was concerned. Lawrence Grossberg appropriated Derrida’s theory of Differe(a)nce. The phenomena of Culturalism also received some hues from the social construction social construction theory for the analysis of some unmapped alterity. She also takes some basic arguments from Lacan and Zizek and defines culture as an entity and a phenomenon from where something is subtracted but nothing is included. Further, Pierre Bourdieu contextualizes his theory of social field and habitus which

construct human subjectivity. Around 1970 when the United States experienced a great demand for racial justice, the entire model of cultural studies included the major aspects of race by challenging the traditional modes of representing culture. Clifford Geertz took up a functionalist position and focused at including local knowledge within the complex realities of culture. Later on James Clifford and George Marcus' *Writing Culture* (1986) underlined the process of writing culture. Gregory Castle (2013) enunciates "*Writing Culture* invited criticism on the grounds that it focused less on material cultural conditions than on the texts those conditions constitute by virtue of a stand point that predisposes the ethnographer to regard such conditions *as texts*" (223). After writing culture, cultural studies became more multi-cultural and gradually moved into the complex domains of feminism and youth culture. It also investigated its relationship with nature and technology which is quite explicit in the works of Beth Fowkes Tobin's *Colonizing Nature* (2005) and Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991). The rich trajectory of cultural studies does not come to end here itself rather, it includes popular culture which focuses on material culture. Thus, the world of cultural studies has witnessed several conceptual, critical, material, realist categories and of late it also explores the realities of phenomenology, ontology and many new objects which have developed and are yet to develop. Therefore, Margaret Morse in her *Virtualities: Television, Media Art and Cyber Culture* (1990) argues that the notion of the cultural field or cultural space needs to be revisited. She argued that much of the culture takes place in non- space, which "is not mysterious or strange to us, but rather the very haunt for the creature of habit... communications... as a flow of values between and among two and three dimensions and between virtuality and actuality" (102). In hindsight, the realist, metaphysical, art and aesthetic discourses of culture have experienced a great metamorphosis as they have explored all plenitudes of Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Modernism, Post-modernism and Deconstruction.

Continuing with the *tour d'horizon* of the debate on culture Vivekanand in his "A Fascination with Culture" (1913) writes that a culture defines the intellectual and academic life of the people. Similarly, Anand K. Coomaraswamy in his *Essays in National Idealism* (1909) associates culture with nation. Further, he has expounded the fact that culture includes intellectual tradition; art and aesthetic, metaphysics, language, and literature along with different philosophical schools that represent a nation. In addition, many Indian cultural nationalists; Sri Aurobindo, John Woodroffe, K. M. Muni, G.C. Pande and many others have underlined some inexplicable relationship between culture and discourses that include art and aesthetic, metaphysics, language and literature along with different philosophical schools. G.C. Pande in his *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Volume I (1984) expounds:

Culture subsists as an authentic wisdom of human ends and means and its origin lies in the experience and activity of prophets and Masters. Culture thus, is nothing except the perennial tradition of wisdom informing the various aspects of human life and activities. If we do not stick to an intellectualist or literalist conception of tradition, we should find its essence in an insight into imponderable truth and value which subsists basically as personal communication but is expressed and elaborated through symbolical and intellectual activity. For example, Uddalaka's communication 'tattvamasi' to Āvetaketu gets elaborated in the schools of Advaita philosophy or in the symbology of Ūrīvidya or poetry of Yogavāsistha. (8)

The Kantian turn to philosophy, industrial growth, apocalyptic wars, economic depression and the linguistic turn to the theory of knowledge have shaped, constituted and controlled the complex phenomenon called culture. The advent of technology, the phenomenon of mass production, literacy, the growth of museums and exhibits and the emergence of some new philosophical ideas in anthropology, sociology and political theory have changed both the structure and the content of culture. These realities brought

a great metamorphosis within culture and introduced the realities of a popular culture. Gregory Castle's *The Literary Theory: Handbook* (2013) records, "the rise of mass culture coincided precisely with one of the most devastating crises in the history of capitalism: the irrational development of totalitarianism, which distorted market, at home and abroad, and caused historical upheavals that threaten the stability of a global system of circulation and exchange. On this view, exemplified by the work of Theodor Adorno, the possibility of collective forms of culture is irredeemably lost" (218).

Culture is viewed as a perennial, eternal and perpetual process which is defined by syntagmatic and pragmatic realities of intellectual tradition which is constituted by some diachronic and synchronic conceptual lexemes which are dialectical, *antinomical* and self-reflective in nature. Those conceptual lexemes are **Culturemes** (author's coinage) which stand analogous with phoneme, morpheme, mytheme etcetera. These lexemes; phoneme, morpheme, mytheme connote a minimal unit of a culture which represents a distinguishable hermeneutic reality. Similarly, a discursive and dialectical analysis of a culture may divulge the fact that a culture is both syntagmatic and paradigmatic, is the composition of several minimal units which constitute the intellectual complexities that further define a culture. So looking at the facticity of *Cultureme*, it is conspicuously clear that it is a bundle of several distinctive features or in other words *Cultureme* can be characterized as:

1. It is a minimal meaningful unit of any culture or the intellectual tradition or the tradition of knowledge.
2. It is dialectical, *antinomical*, and conflictual in nature.
3. It is self-reflective and self-critical.
4. It encompasses all realist discourses.
5. It voices the different dimensions of metaphysical realities.
6. It represents both material and metaphysical spectrums of art and aesthetics.

7. It includes the philosophical plenitudes of Empiricism, Cognitivism and Pragmatism.
8. It includes ontic, ontological, ousia, truth, substance, real, aletheia, epiphany, spot of time, moments of being, telos, being etcetera.
9. It is epistemological as it associated with episteme and becoming.
10. It is a complex rubric of different lexical items which are associated with culture and varied components, myth, mythoi, mytheme and all smallest units of epistemic structures.

Culture, as has been examined, debated and expounded by many anthropologists, social thinkers, psychologists, cultural thinkers, literary theorists, critics, poets and writers is one of the most complex, quizzical and inexhaustible, intellectual and philosophical plenitudes and the planitudes of translation and communication. It is generally defined by the sum total of the conceptual, cognitive, and intellectual lexemes which underline the tradition of knowledge of a particular nation. Such lexemes cover a wide range of intellectual, theoretical, philosophical, linguistic, literary, scientific and social discourses. These discourses are and can be examined as a set of some conceptual words which define epistemological realities of a particular form of knowledge tradition. The history of ideas or the great chain of epistemological orders of India may explicitly expound the fact that the tradition of knowledge in India or in the East or any oriental country can be classified within the schemas of philosophical, linguistic, literary and poetic, scientific and sociological realities. A close observation of the philosophical tradition of the orient may communicate the fact it has developed through several phrases and idioms, schools, and branches which have continued to progress through the emergence of some noble thoughts which are represented in and through some complex lexical items. The moment one begins to explore the philosophical trajectory of India, it is but inevitable that one encounters several

philosophical schools which have further been enriched by many other conceptual realities. The existence of philosophical schools in India in the form of *Vedanta, Advait Vedanta, Shankhya, Mimamsa, Nyaya, Vaishesika, Yog, Buddhism, Jainism, Charvaka*, along with several other concepts which have formed, sustained and enriched the epistemological and ontological textures of the said philosophical schools is indeed cultural specific and they do expound their hermeneutic existence within a particular cultural specificity which denies the possibility of translation. These philosophical schools have developed, progressed and have sustained through ages along with some more concepts and conceptual realities which may include the basic topoi of *Abhasa Vada, Aveda Darshan, Abheda- darsana, Abhidha, Abhidhamma, Abhinavgupta, Abhyasapratyaya, Abhyupagama-siddhanta, Acara, Acintya-bhedabheda-vedanta, Adharma, Adhikarna, Adhikarana-siddhanta, Adhonyamaka-sakti, Adhyaropapavada, Advaita, Agama, Aghati-karma, Aghora, Agni, Aham, Aham-brahmasmi, Aikya-samandhikaranya, Ajahal-laksana, Ajamila, Ajati-vada, Ajnana, Ajnana-vada, Akasa, Akhyati-vada, Alaya-vijnana, Alvar, Anaikantikahetu, Anandamaya-kosa, Anava, Anekanta, Antah-karana, Anu, Anumana, Anupalabdhi, Anu-pramana, Apratisankha-nirodha, Arthapatti, Arya-astanga-marga, Asana, Asrama, Asrava, Astanga-yoga, Astikadarsana, Atman, Avatara, Bandha, Bhagavad Gita, Bhakti, Bhakti Yoga, Bija, Bimba-pratibimbavada, Bindu, Bodhisattva, Brahma, Brahman, Brahmana, Brahma satyamjaganmithyajivobrahmaivanaparah, Brahma-sutra, Brahadaranyaka Upanisad, Buddhi, Caitanya, Cakra, Carama-sloka, Chandogya Upanisad, Cit-sakti, Citta, Dharma, Dharma-bhuta-Jnana, Diksa, Dravya, Gandhrva, Guna, Hetu, Hetvabhasa, Hinayana, Hiranyagarbha, Indriya, Isa Upanisad, Isvara, Isvara-pranidhana, Jiva, Jnana, Kala, Karana, Karma, Kashmir Saivism, Katha Upanisad, Kena Upanisad, Kriya, Loka, Madhyamika, Manana, Mandukya Upanisad, Mantra, Maya, Moksa, Mudra, Nadi, Nirvana,*

*Nirvikalpaka-pratyaksa, Padartha, Parasamvit, Paravidya, Pasu, Prabha, Prajna-paramita, Pramana, Pramudha, Pramudita, Pranamaya-kosa, Prapatti, Pratibha, Pratityasamutpada, Pratyaksa, Puja, Purusartha, Rudraksa, Sadhaka, Sadhana, Saktipata, Samadhi, Samskara, Sannikarsa, Satkarya-vada, Siddha, Siddhartha-vakya, Smrti, Syad-vada, Taijasa, Taittiriya Upanisad, Tantra, Tattva, Upanisaad, Upaveda, Upaya, Veda, Visesa, Visnu, Yoga.* These conceptual words are not merely a composition of signifier and signified, but they represent a complex trajectory of philosophical thoughts which have been dialectical and have enriched the intellectual tradition of India and therefore I call them *Culturemes*.

It is an undisputed fact that a culture exists, sustains and thrives on some fundamental processes; the formation of knowledge (Epistemology and Ontology) and its dissemination. The formation of knowledge which inevitably includes epistemology and ontology has been a matter of great philosophical and critical inquiry. Such inquiries have focused upon both material and metaphysical apparatuses which are instrumental in exploring and examining the complex realities of epistemic formation. The metaphysical dimension of knowledge formation locates knowledge within the abstract and inconceivable domains of spiritual, teleological and ontological realities whereas the material aspects of knowledge formation finds knowledge within realist and rationalist peripheries which include all material realities of the world. Language is one of the most vital and complex instruments of knowledge formation and it has been examined very seriously both in the Eastern and the Western traditions of knowledge formation. However, they do exhibit some significant differences as far as the nature, form, and function are concerned. In India the linguistic discourse and discourses on linguistics have always moved concomitantly with the schools of philosophy. Therefore, language has been examined differently by different philosophical schools. The exposition on language given by *Vedantin, Advait Vedantins, Nyayaiks,*

*Vaisaisikas* etcetera is significantly different from the philosophy of language shared by Buddhists, and Jain philosophers and they have expounded their philosophical arguments through some conceptual and philosophical topoi; *Shabda Brahma, Shabda Pad, Sutras, Dhatu, Pratyayas, karakas, Pratishakhyas, Nirukta, Nighantu, Gun, Vyakti, Akrti, Jati, Mahabhasya, Varna, Vakya, Shunyatavaad, Apoha, Panani, Katyayan, Patajali, Batrihari, Shabdabodh, Sphota, Para, Pasyanti, Madhyama, Vaikhari, Dhvani, Samas, Sandhi, Naad, Akanksha, Yogyata, Sanmiti, Tatparya, Anvitabhidhana, Avhitanvaya, Abhidha, Vyanjana, Lakshana, Vakyartha, Vakrokti, Arthapatti, Anumaan, Anekantavad, Sayadvad* etcetera.

Another domain of discourse which defines the cultural and intellectual complexity of a nation is literary or poetic discourses which also includes some discourses of and on literary criticism. To understand the history of poetics either of the East or the West one must have to acquaint oneself with the process, trajectory and the reality through which the conceptual *topoi* have developed. They have continued to sustain precisely because they have accepted negation and this negation has propelled them to progress further in the history of ideas. Indian poetics cannot be understood without some minimal or smallest unit of the conceptual plenitudes because these plenitudes define the growth and development of Indian poetics. These minimal units of poetics; *Rasa, Alamkara, Riti, Dhvani, Vakrokti, Guna-Dosa, Auchitya, Mahavakya, Kavi, Sahradaya, Kavya, Kavya Laksna, Kavya Ved, Kavyanank, Rasanubhuti, Rasabhava, Sabdikajnana, Pratibha* etcetera define Indian intellectual tradition or the tradition of knowledge as far as the poetics is concerned. Undoubtedly, the aforesaid *apodoses* have gone under some major metamorphosis and they have witnessed some negation and progression. These conceptual terms are *Cultureme* as they are the minimal yet vital units to explore the uncanny world of Indian aesthetics or poetics.

Indian intellectual tradition since its inception has been based upon the scientific principles of observation, classification, experimentation, verification and falsification. This is clearly visible in the form of systematic knowledge which is available in grammar. The *Astadhyayi* of Panini of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C includes some primitive elements of language, definitions and rules. Gradually, the tradition of *Shastra* and *Vidya* comes into existence. *Vidya* or science gradually attained the status of formal system and paved the way for *anvishiki*. *Vidya* gradually unfolds itself and includes *Dharmasastra*; a system of right, *Arthashastra*; describes social phenomena and indicates policies based on the principle of public utility and *Nitishastra* which is the study of ethics and morality. Some of the following *Culturemes* may expound the fact that India has and had a long tradition of scientific inquiry; *Ank-Ganit*, *Beej-Ganit*, *Av\_kalan*, *Prameya*, *Sama\_kalan*, *rekha*, *Bahubhuj*, *Varga*, *Trijya*, *Vyaas*, *chhetrafal*, *Jeeva*, *Aayat*, *Bhautiki*, *Sootra*, *Prayog*, *gati*, *chaal*, *map*, *Ushmaa*, *Chumbakatva*, *Vaidyut\_Chumbakatva*, *Bal*, *gurutva*, *Dravya\_Maan*, *Ghanatva*, *Aavritti*, *Aavart\_kaal*, *samay*, *tarang*, *tarangdaidhyarya*, *Anu*, *Adrata*, *Urja*, *Amla*, *Gurutva*, *Gharsan*, *Jaratwa*, *Parmanu*, *bhaar*, *Vayumandal*, *Hemank*. In addition, *Ayurveda* which is one of the *Upvedas* to the *Rigveda* developed in India as a very strong system of medicine. G.C. Pande (1984) writes “the *Milindapanho* mentions many ancient teachers of the science viz Narad, Dhanvantari, Angyarasa, Kapila, Kandaragnisvami, Atula and Purana, Katyayana. According to the *Charaksamhita*, Ayurveda was first taught by Prajapati... and it is the modified form of the Agniveshtantra. Further, the ancient Ayurveda also included *Susrutasamhita*” (233-34).

The aforesaid elaborations on different constitutive elements of culture; language, literature philosophy, art and aesthetic, science and technology along with some indispensable aspects of myth, sociology, ethics, psychology, ethnology, axiology, anthropology, astrology, astronomy, etcetera constitute or construct a complex

and rich intellectual tradition of a nation, as G.C. Pande *Foundations of Indian Culture: Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Forms in Ancient India* (1984) records “Culture, thus, is nothing except the perennial tradition of wisdom informing the various aspects of human life and activities. If we do not stick to an intellectualist or literalist conception of tradition, we should find its essence in an insight into imponderable truth and value which subsists basically as personal communication but is expressed and elaborated through symbolic and intellectual activity” (8). Thus, culture is related to cultivation and the formation of self and each and every component which constitutes the complex process of the epistemic formation is integral to culture and then to intellectual tradition. The constitution of an intellectual tradition can be observed through different forms of discourses; literary, linguistic, philosophical, artistic, sociological, psychological, ethnographical, anthropological, scientific and technological and these discourses have been constituted by a galaxy of conceptual and critical signs which have some ontological, phenomenological, hermeneutics and epistemological functions. Those conceptual and critical vocabularies can be called *Culturemes*. In hindsight, they are minimal and yet meaningful unit of any culture, the intellectual tradition or the tradition of knowledge. Thus, W.J.T. Mitchell in his *Picture Turn* (1995) enunciates that “the very concept of culture as a relation between text and readers endures a sea-change when it encounters its “significant others”, the image/speaker as a “resident alien” in its own household.... Culture has a dialogical and a dialectical structure, not in Hegelian sense of achieving a stable synthesis, but in Blake’s and Adorno’s sense of working through contradictions and indeterminacy” (219).

The formation of the fundamental layers of human consciousness, ideology, ideas, conceptual and critical complexes, systems of faith, believe and thoughts has been viewed either through absolutists or through dialectical realities. The absolutists model locates everything within the existence of immovable and

inscrutable monad, soul or ultimate reality whereas the dialectical model expounds the fact that the formation of epistemic realities is historical and therefore it is guided, interpellated, constituted and structured by some dialectical processes where each idea or thesis is followed by some antithesis and synthesis. G.W.F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1927), Michel Foucault's *An Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), R.G Collingwood's *The Idea of History* (1993), Immanuel Kant's *On the Form and Principle of the Sensible and the Intellectual World* (1770), Richard Tarnas' *The Passion of Western Mind; Understanding the Ideas That has Shaped our Worldview* (1991), and Charles Van Doren's *A History of Knowledge: Past, Present and Future* (1991) have advocated that knowledge and its creation is fundamentally dialectical and *antinomical* in nature. Thus, the history of mankind is all about the growth and development of human knowledge which is deeply embedded into the cultural realities or what I call *Cultureme* as has been explained by C.V Doren's (1991) "The history of mankind is the history of progress and development of human knowledge ... universal history" (xvii). Now each *Cultureme* which belongs to a particular discourse progresses by positing an antithesis for itself.

The progression of knowledge involves some inevitable negations where a critical and a conceptual sign interrogate itself and it tries to negotiate between different aspects of a sign or *Cultureme*. A *Cultureme* continues to grow because it interrogates itself and in the process it also brings some inevitable ameliorations or additions which enrich the complete texture of that *Cultureme*. The history of knowledge, its construction, growth and development either of the East or of the West has focused on more than one discourses but the reality of self or being has always enjoyed a central place. The *Cultureme* of self or the self as *Cultureme* has progressed and has witnessed several dimensions and it has been made

possible because it has examined itself what may be called as the reality of self-reflexivity or self-criticality. In the absence of self-reflectivity, a *Cultureme* may become absolute, monolithic, totalitarian and teleological which may defy the possibility of any play, change, verisimilitude etcetera. Thus, *Cultureme* is self-reflective and self-critical.

The history of human knowledge is generally viewed through the development of episteme and discourse and more precisely through three different forms of discourses; metaphysical, realist and aesthetic. The metaphysical discourse refers to the nature and formation of reality whether it is absolute or contingent and how it is constituted. The aesthetic discourse informs the complex world of art, art experience or aesthetic experience, artist and the reader. The realist discourse is indeed not teleological or absolute rather it refers to the phenomenal realities of the construction of knowledge and how it gets interpellated through the interplay of several constitutive elements like- ideological, economic, political, social, cultural and linguistic. The realist discourse in other words explains the process of the formation of self, consciousness, ideology, and identity which themselves are *Culturemes*. Therefore, theoretical discourses; Feminism, Marxism, Post-colonialism, Historicism, Gender Studies, Psychoanalysis, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Modernism, Postmodernism, Positivism, Cultural Studies et cetera address the realities of self, subject, subjectivity, subjectivization, and objectification which constitute the inevitable aspect of *Culturemes*.

Metaphysical discourses constitute the nature of realities and they also explain the ontology of truth and substance. Though there are different *Culturemes* through which the nature of realities are addressed yet the most prominent are structuralist and poststructuralist. The former represents reality as absolute, teleological, final, monological, central, and transcendental and it believes in the process of binary opposition whereas the latter is explicated through the *Culturemes* of contingency, uncertainty,

infinity, play, service, chance, flux etcetera and it locates the nature of realities within the texture of multiplicity, polyphony, and rhizomatic relations where image, hyperreal, simulation, locality etcetera become some major tools of explicating realities. Thus, it can be postulated that *Culturemes* represent the world of metaphysical realities.

Metaphysics and the complexes of art and aesthetics are inextricably intertwined because the discourses of metaphysics inform the world of art and aesthetics. Apart from the metaphysical dimension of art and aesthetics, there are two models through which it is represented and expounded; material and metaphysical. The material model of art and aesthetics explains art and aesthetics through material, physical and external realities. Art take birth in a particular context which is determined by all components of material world where the artist experiences some dissonance and conflict and they compel him to move into the world of art and therefore the object of art is to transform the murky socio-economic and political space which are controlled by the realities of conflicts. The metaphysical model represents *Culturemes* of sublime, taste, beauty, jouissance, eudemonia and pleasure and echoes the philosophy of romantic art and aesthetics where art is the product of spiritual unification, realization of the ultimate energy, the experience of epiphany etcetera. Thus, the aforesaid *Culturemes* are integral to the constitution, realization and relishment of art and aesthetics.

Progress and process are the nature of things and it is because of this ontological and epistemological nature of things the human civilization has developed and has continued to become something else by inventing, discovering, adding, substituting and intertextualizing the complexes of Patrick Gunkel's "ideonomy" and the complexes of idenomy brings the reality of universal history which records and disseminates the textures of epistemological realities. The philosophy of knowledge formation has also witnessed some major shifts and turns which have shaped

the philosophical textures of episteme and they have been guided by some major historical events. Those historical events which have triggered, shaped and reshaped the entire process of epistemological construction are different forms of *Cultureme* and thus the history of human knowledge has progressed. There are three major *Culturemes* which adumbrate the process of knowledge formation; Empiricism, Cognitivism and Pragmatism. The *Cultureme* of Empiricism includes several uncanny elements which locate the textures of knowledge within material, social, political, cultural and economic world. They connote the fact that all forms of knowledge are governed by external realities and therefore human experience is responsible for stimulus, reinforcement and practices of some *Culturemes* which constitute the world of experience, ideas and knowledge. Gradually, as the human history or the history of human knowledge progresses from one region, religion, linguistic communities to another it indeed posited an antithesis that expounds the fact that the reality of the thesis does not address the existence of a particular episteme or *Cultureme* in its totality. Similarly, after the advent of rationalist turn to the theory of knowledge, it is postulated that knowledge is innate and it is the thinking power of the mind that constitutes the epistemic reality of a person. This gradually brought in the *Cultureme* of Cognitivism and echoes the philosophy of Rene Descartes' "*Cogito Ergo Sum*" "I think therefore I am" as he has mentioned in his *Discourse on the Method on Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (1637). Further, it foregrounded the *Culturemes* of Skepticism and Dualism between mind and body which constitute the fulcrums of epistemological construction. It is evident from the aforesaid discussion that two different *Culturemes* namely Empiricism and Cognitivism explain different aspects of epistemological constructions and they propose two different theories of knowledge formation. The former locates everything within the realities of outside world where the latter finds everything within the quizzical complexes of human mind. However, they focus at two different

singular aspects of epistemic realities and are unable to represent the reality in totality. A new *Cultureme* comes into existence for representing the epistemic reality *in toto* and it is known as Pragmatism. Philosophers like J.S. Mill, Richard Roty, Henry Bergson, Martin Heidegger and many others have attempted to integrate the empirical textures with psychological realities or material with metaphysics so that a comprehensive representation of *Culturemes* or episteme can be attained. Thus, three major *Culturemes*; Empiricism, Cognitivism and Pragmatism have explained the philosophy of epistemological construction.

The texture of *Cultureme* is not merely epistemological, empirical, material but it is also metaphysical, ontological transcendental and noumenal. Plato and the philosophy before Plato has underlined the fact that there is an absolute, metaphysical and teleological order which creates and structures not only human existence but also the texture of knowledge. As the history of knowledge or universal history progresses it also explains the role of material and physical realities in the process of attaining truth. This development historicizes the conflict between the ideal and the real or the Greek ideal and the Latin real. Augustine's *The City of God* (426) places the inevitable conflict between the city of man and the city of God. The city of man represents material, fleshy and downward-turning whereas the city of God stands for spiritual, turning upward toward the creator of all things. Finally, he establishes the place of *magister interior* as on ontic reality. Thus, it underlines the fact that there is some truth, substance or ontological reality which is beyond the realm of physics and rational thinking. The philosophy of *Cultureme* indeed includes those teleological and ontological realities which are attained through 'epiphany', 'moments of being', 'egotistical sublime' or 'spot of time'.

The aforesaid discourse, debate and discussion on universal history of mankind or the history of knowledge formation or the genealogy and archeology of knowledge formation have expounded

nature, form and function of *Cultureme* and it has been found that *Cultureme* is indeed a pervasive critical and conceptual idiom which includes all forms of discourse; social, economic, scientific, cultural, aesthetic, artistic, linguistics, literary, soci-pragmatic, aesthetico-spiritual, theological etcetera. It includes 'the structure of feelings', ideonomy, episteme, mytheme, mythoi, myth etc. It appears that even the smallest unit of the epistemological reality is not beyond the rubrics of *Cultureme*. It is indeed inclusive, self-reflective and self-critical and hence it always remains in the state of dialectics so that it may include the possibilities of antiform, play, chance, anarchy, silence, deconstruction, absence, intertext, paratexes, rhizome, *petite histoire*, idiolect, desire, mutant, polyphony, polymorphy, androgyny, schizophrenia, difference, trace, irony, indeterminacy and immanence.

The comprehensive study, on the guiding features of *Cultureme* may explain the fact that *Cultureme* includes all possible forms of texts, context, intertext, pretext and subtext of philosophy, art and aesthetics, language and linguistics, science and technology, ontology and epistemology, physics and metaphysics etc. and it is still open to include any conceptual or critical vocabulary which may come into the history of human knowledge in future. The present text includes two major *Culturemes*; language and literature. The philosophy of language covers a wide range of plenitudes which may expound the nature, form and function of language and it is indeed one of the most vital *Culturemes* because each civilization and culture of the world be it Egyptian, Indian, Greek, Latin, Mesopotamian, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Judeo-Christianity etc. have their different *topoi* about and on language. They locate the genesis of the world within the cusp of *logos* or the journey of the world they believe must have passed through the conduit of linguistic realities. Further, several aspects of language; phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics along with philology act as *Culturemes* which constitute the epistemic and epistemological

realities. Similarly, the philosophy of literature, on the one hand highlights the metaphysical content; sublime, taste, beauty, poet, reader and poetry, on the other it also underlines the material dimensions like texts, work, morphemes, words, narratives, styles etcetera. The former i.e. metaphysical dimension explicates the fact that literature is fundamentally spiritual and transcendental in nature whereas the latter i.e. material dimension connotes the fact that literature is dialectical and it records conflicts that prevail within a society so that some progress, growth, improvements and development in the present predicament of human kind could be made. Thus, *Cultureme* is rhizomatic in nature. It includes almost everything that comes within the preview of human existence. It is so pervasive in nature that it comes from everywhere and it goes everywhere. *Cultureme* is a vortex in which signs, ideonomies, ideas, thoughts, specificities, dialectics, metaphors, metonymies, epistemic structures, *topoi* of art and aesthetics etcetera dissolve into one whole and records realist, metaphysical, and aesthetic discourses which constitute the *terra firma* of intellectual history or the tradition of knowledge.

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## The Artistic Expression of Love in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats and Taslima Nasrin: Tradition and Innovation

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### **Abstract**

The poetry of W.B. Yeats and Taslima Nasreen on love merits attention because, to put in Yeatsian expression, it discovers 'blood and mire' in the experience of love, traditionally looked upon as a sublime emotion. Doubtless, Maud Gonne's rejection of Yeats' love and Nasreen's dejection of mood in the practice of love lend intensity to the poetry.

No love poem can be strikingly original or exclusively traditional. Both Yeats and Nasreen experiment with love, both in life and art, in such a way that needs to be critically assessed. Both are passionate and extremely sensitive. As artists Yeats was gifted with mytho-poetic imagination and Nasreen was an instinctive feminist. While Yeats could not emerge as a misogynist, Nasreen did emerge as a rebel against the male-dominated phallogocentric world. In their love poems, a reader perceives that instead of 'life disdained', life 'raged against'.

The aim of this paper is to compare the variety of poetic themes and techniques, both the luminaries adopt, adapt to the conventional, and finally become adept in composition of popular love poems.

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Key words: Conventional, experiment, original, rage, variety.

W.B. Yeats and Taslima Nasrin are two outstanding poets in the arena of world literature because both of them respect the poetic tradition they inherit and depart in a way which is nothing but original. Yeats began his career as a romantic, developed into a realist and ended as a metaphysical seer of life. In his earlier poetry, he is a lover of a nostalgic silken girl like Maud Gonne, sweet murmuring sound of the water of the lake isle of Innisfree, but in the later poetry, he plans to be off to Byzantium- a city of spirituality and purify his desires in order to elevate his life. In the poem like *Sailing to Byzantium*, he expresses his preference of art over life. Nasrin is passionate about life, love, art, dignity, womanliness and a good number of things which a woman with a progressive outlook would long for. She dreams of art, practices art and her whole life is another name for art because she falls in love, respects the tradition and marries her lovers but divorces in her longing for freedom. She is disarmingly frank in the expression of her preferences and assertive in order to live life intensely. The intensity of her living and the intensity of poetic process in which her thoughts and feelings get combined demand critical thinking.

This paper has been divided into four sections. The opening section defines the keywords in the title of the paper: love, tradition and innovation. It introduces two outstanding poets who make an innovative approach to the treatment of the traditional theme that is love in poetry. The second section deals with the love poems of W.B. Yeats: its variety, innovativeness and uniqueness; the third section dwells upon the love poems of Taslima Nasrin which manifest an ironical tone. She loves art more than any human especially of the opposite sex. The fourth section is the conclusion in which the love poems of Yeats are compared with those of Nasrin and concludes that both had painful experiences in the practice of love but they succeeded in translating their frustrations in the art of love making into the beautiful poetry which satisfies the aesthetic sense of the perceptive readers.

## II

W.B. Yeats is a love poet of excellence when he treats love a traditional theme in a traditional way. Here is a brilliant passage addressed to his beloved Maud Gonne in a simple and lyrical style in *When You Are Old*:

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.  
(Jeffares: 17)

This passage is written on Maud Gonne, the paragon of beauty. Maud Gonne could attract many a man because of the beautiful constructions of her body. She could instil feelings of lust and love in those who looked at her. Yeats in this passage makes a contrast between sensuous or sensual and spiritual love. Sensuous or sensual love is temporary but spiritual love is enduring. Yeats the experiencer of love holds that love has many facets but the most remarkable one is Platonic love where the soul not the body matters. Yeats failed to have an intimate physical relationship with Maud Gonne because he failed to marry her but he loved her so sacredly that he could produce immortal poems of love: educative and aesthetically satisfying. His love elevated himself.

*The Arrow* reads like a fine love lyric placed in the volume of *In the Seven Woods*: it depicts the physical beauty of Maud Gonne that arrested Yeats and made him mad about her. The opening lines of the poem read as follows:

I thought of your beauty, and this arrow,  
Made out of a wild thought, is in my marrow.  
(Jeffares: 38)

The wild thought of Maud Gonne's physical beauty acts as a kind of arrow for Yeats. Arrow pierces the body; so does physical attraction and thought generating out of it penetrates into the whole being of a lover. Hence the metaphor arrow that the poet uses

for the wild beauty of Maud Gonne is suggestive. In the succeeding lines the poet delineates his superiority over others in the courtship of love with Maud Gonne:

There's no man may look upon her, no man,  
As when newly grown to be a woman. (ibid.)

Maud Gonne grew up to be a beautiful lady to be the source of attraction and love by the members of the opposite sex. The poet grows eloquent about the physical beauty of Maud Gonne:

Tall and noble but with face and bosom  
Delicate in colour as apple blossom. (ibid.)

The poet regrets as he was growing older, he was no match for Maud Gonne in physical appearance; his regrets find expression in the lines below:

This beauty's kinder, yet for a reason  
I could weep that the old is out of season. (ibid.)

Thus, in this love poem *Arrow* Yeats dwells upon the source, magnitude and dimension of love between man and woman. His depiction is pictorial and in such pictorial quality and verbal melody rests the beauty of love lyrics.

Yeats is one of the outstanding modern poets; love as a theme of poetry captures his imagination so vigorously and so well that he pictures it in poetic language that is worth-analyzing. In *Among School Children* he puts a question in the concluding two lines of the poem which is striking:

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?  
(Jeffares: 130)

These two lines portray a dancer who gets so much engrossed in the act of dancing that the dance and the dancer become one inseparable entity. The absorption of the dancer in her dance is so total that she arrests the attention of the onlookers. The looks of the dancer and the spectators brighten and such brightness is

the result of undefined love. The rhythmic movement of the organs of the body of the dancer speak eloquently of harmony that is associated with music. Thus, Yeats the master poet conceives and perceives the nature of love, one of the sublime emotions the poets have dealt with all over the ages. The same idea of love gets repeated in the final stanza of *Sailing to Byzantium*:

Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium

Of what is past, or passing, or to come. (Jeffares: 105)

This is a splendid passage on love for art. The poet desires that in the next life, he won't prefer to be a living being, be it a bird or animal or plant or a human. He makes it clear that he does not like to experience life in the world of nature. He prefers to be a work of art by an expert Grecian artist. He would be a song bird made of gold that would awaken the drowsy emperor from the state of drowsing. This songbird would teach the emperor in a rhythmic voice about the passage of time. Thus, this passage breathes an air of profound love in which creativity is a vital element. Harmony that is the coordination among the parts is the watch-word. This passage makes a striking contrast between the state of awakening and state of drowsing and it is love which can be generated through singing which is an art be practiced with love and meticulousness. Such a kind of treatment of love is innovative in its design.

To sum up, Yeats is doubtless a love poet of first-rate order. He is pragmatic in his approach to love and the kinds of love: the physical, the spiritual and the artistic. Of these three kinds of love, his love for art surpasses the other varieties of love in depth and

intensity. T.S. Eliot holds that it is the intensity of artistic process, the process in which sensation, observation, recollection and above all incessant groping for appropriate words and images combine together results in great poetry. Yeats is great as a poet because the process of his poetic composition is deep.

### III

Taslima Nasrin's frustration in love is different from that of Yeats. Yeats could not marry his lady love Maud Gonne but Nasrin did marry her lovers one after another and divorced. Nasrin is undoubtedly gifted with a literary sensibility. She writes in her mother tongue that is Bengali and her poems in English translation sell like hot cakes because they have the touch of modernity, novelty. Her tone is that of a rebel. She is a rebel against the patriarchal set-up, social injustice, religious fundamentalism and narrow political chicanery. Thus, her love lies in defiance of the existing order. As T. S. Eliot's *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is not sung her love for man or manners finds an expression in unconventional terms- a language which grows ironical or satirical. Below is given an analysis of some of the magnificent passages of her poetry which reflect upon her originality and iconoclastic attitude.

*The Unrung Ring* is a beautiful lyric on the dreams of love but there is no fulfilment of love in human relation. The concluding lines of this lyric read as follows:

Dreams ring, keeping time to their beats,  
and, making a havoc internally,  
loneliness rings.  
Only an intimate bell on my door does not ring.  
(poemhunter.com)

What Nasrin feels is that intimacy in human relationship appears to be a myth in modern times. Loneliness is pervasive. Here Nasrin echoes the feelings of Robert Frost who metaphorically states that loneliness includes her unawares. Loneliness Frost personifies in

order to heighten its importance. Similarly, Nasrin views that loneliness rings here. Thus, Nasrin's perception is an absence of love that leads to the reign of loneliness.

*Women and Poems* is a beautiful lyric in which she focuses on creativity as a means of fulfillment of woman's aspiration in life. She writes in a colloquial style:

When woman becomes a poet, she is totally a woman.  
Then she is mature enough to give birth from her suffering heart,  
Then she knows how to care for a word. (poemhunter.com)

Poetic sensibility makes a woman complete in the realization of her womanliness or glorification of womanhood. She feels that poetry is born out of suffering and woman has the experience of suffering. She concludes the poem:

You have to be a woman first if you want to give birth to a poem.  
A word without any pain is fragile, breaks when touched.  
Who knows more than a woman all the lanes and alleys of pain!

She links womanhood with suffering and suffering with the process of creation of poetry. Her association is not without justification. A woman has instinctive love for creation: be it a human child or a piece of poetry. Thus, the poetess hints at the spontaneous flow of love in the process of creation and such love is natural, powerful and essential for the sustenance of art.

*My Bengal* is a poem of a different order. The repetition of "my" enforces the idea of Nasrin's love for motherland and mother tongue. In fact, such love has made her an outstanding poet in her mother language. Her love for Bengal comes out in the concluding stanza of the poem:

I weep over my Bengal to exhaust my tears.  
May one day her soil be fertile,  
May true humans sprout on her soil,

May the ill-fated Bengal habitable for humans.  
(poemhunter.com)

Tears arising from the depth of despair for the degradation of human values are ideal not idle. Such ideal tears get linked with love for positive values human in nature.

*Noorjahan* is a lovely lyric in which Nasrin raises questions about transitoriness of feminine grace and its appreciation by the humans observing the desolate statue of Noorjahan she writes:

They have made Noorjahan stand in a hole in the courtyard.  
(poemhunter.com)

...

Noorjahan's fractured forehead pours out blood, mine also.

Noorjahan's eyes have burst, mine also.

Noorjahan's nose has been smashed, mine also.

Noorjahan's torn breast and heart have been pierced, mine also. (poemhunter.com)

...

Arrows speed to pierce her body,

My body also.

Are these arrows not piercing your body? (poemhunter.com)

Nasrin uses the arrow metaphorically as a substitute word for penetrating sensation- a sensation that is caused because of humiliation to fair sex. 'Fractured forehead', 'smashed nose' and 'torn breast' symbolize the mutilation of the parts of the body of Noorjahan, an embodiment of physical beauty and love. To neglect and not care about the statue of Noorjahan is to disregard women and underrate aesthetic sense. The symbolic representation of ideas is one of the poetic devices, especially in modern poetry. Nasrin pictures a culture in which women, however beautiful or loving, get neglected.

Thus, a close analysis of the poetry of Taslima Nasrin reveals that love, which was once a sublime emotion to be treated in

poetry, has lost its vitality. Modern people are neither loving nor sensitive to the appreciation of beauty in a woman- a degraded culture indeed!

#### IV

T.S. Eliot in his article *Tradition and Individual Talent* makes pertinent comments in the context of tradition and innovation. He holds tradition involves a historical sense as well as a principle of the aesthetics. He uses the phrase 'supervention of novelty' in the context of innovation. He says novelty is better than repetition. Hence innovative ideas in the arena of literature are indispensable. Viewed in this light one would conclude that W.B. Yeats undoubtedly inherited the romantic tradition in his conception of woman and her beauty, practice of love for nature and so on. He also inherited the special features of romantic poetry like pictorial quality and verbal melody. Imagination is the soul of romanticism. Doubtless Yeats has romantic imagination but he does not escape into and stay in the imaginary world for long. He is down-to-earth and a realist. His poetic genius undergoes a process of evolution. He has felt the thrill as well as the pangs of love: be it sensuous or sensual or spiritual or artistic. He remains an artist. His love for the creation of poems is unbounded. Taslima Nasrin is a rebel throughout her life. She wrote long after Yeats wrote. She belongs to the post-modern period. Her poetry, written in free-verse and colloquial style castigating the evils of society compels attention. She is class by herself. She dares to incur the displeasure of religious fundamentalists and feminists. Love as a term has wider connotations. It is much more than marriage of true minds; it is the Pole star that guides or directs. In fact her poetry engages the attention of people who are critical of social institutions like marriage and system like patriarchy. Both Yeats and Nasrin try to use the best words in the best order. Both of them are good poets because they are conscious of the experiences where they should be conscious. Yeats is very much conscious of his frustrations in love affairs with Maud Gonne. Nasrin is very much

conscious about her frustrations in her longing for transformation of the prevailing system- be it religious or social or political. Both of them are artists of the highest order because they study tradition and strive to depart when they discover loop holes. They are independent thinkers, value originality above imitation and compel the attention of perceptive readers. Yeats instructs his followers to 'cast a cold eye', on his life both practical and artistic. Nasrin's life is full of hazards, and risks but worth living in the sense that it can inspire the youngsters to be fiercely independent and be the messengers of a progressive world order in which love is not used in the sense of possession but in the act of giving.

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## The Quest for Home in Host Country; Documenting Experiences of Indian Diaspora's First-generation

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### Abstract

This paper aims to present the terms that are more associated with immigrants, i.e., 'unhomely new home', 'self-identity' and 'belongingness'. All these are included under an umbrella term of diasporic literature, that includes works composed and written by the authors settled outside their native country. But these works are associated with their homeland, native background and culture. Generally, diasporic literature deals with existential rootlessness, alienation, resettlement, quest of Identity, nostalgia, hybridity and homesickness. The questions that haunt the diasporic are related to identity issues like: 'who am I', 'where do I belong', 'which culture do I represent', 'am I western', etc. This is, what they have experienced from their Diasporic encounter and such discriminations made them feel alienated in their new unhomely 'home'.

Though common in themes, the diasporic writers may differ based on generations/ages. The writings of the first-generation diasporic writers may be different from the second and third generations.

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Through the first-generation writers put in the picture about their earlier life and experiences. The second and later generations of the diasporic group in general show a dual identity. Though these generations of the diasporic community consider the nation in which they are born as the home country, the society still sees them as outsiders and henceforth they are entombed in a double-identity consciousness. They are not delighted about the mode their parents live. It brings about quite a lot of misapprehensions between both generations. The concept of “home” continues to exaggerate inter-generational resistances that exist everywhere within the Diaspora community.

The paper shows how diasporic writers share some common traits: among the originators of the work and their protagonists, how they are engaged in a constant search for their origins. It is a quest for identity and home, nostalgia for past, yearnings for the lost principles of their ancestors, a critical sense of their “otherness”.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Identity, Home, Host, hybridity, First-generation, Otherness.

This complex identity issue is not always a result of forcible dislocation and relocation but some choose it voluntarily in terms of social development and betterment of economic status. That’s why a great change can be noticed in the concept of Diaspora, on the basis of technological development and demographic changes. As the diasporic encounter of the migrating generation of post 1965 have different views and experiences than a post 1980s and 2000s generation. Moreover, the shaping of Diaspora existence made them involved more in ethnocultural issues. Culture is one of the prominent factors in Diasporic literature as stated by Jasbir Jain in “The Plural Tradition: Indian English Fiction”,

“Diaspora writing now focuses on culture, the differences in cultural heritage and the ability or otherwise of rejecting, discarding or growing with it. Because of the inherent conflicts in the lives of immigrants and the constant

beckoning of a person or a historical past, this writing is vibrant with new approaches and strategies.” [page-81]

Thus, the identities of Diaspora individuals can neither be followed to their homeland to which they all want to return nor to the country they inhabit. They, certainly, face the dilemma of hybrid or two-fold identity, which makes their survival difficult. This is a daring experience applicable to all Indian Diaspora, nevertheless their social group, county and religious conviction. Any kind of the writers of Diaspora have the genuine power of the contemporary literary thoughts in the recreation of the individual’s dilemma in the milieu of alienation, exile, immigration, expulsion and the quest for identity.

Therefore, Diasporic consciousness is a predominant experience in world literature which incorporates the mental aeronautical of diasporas who recurrently try to streamline their current on the foundation of their past that preoccupies them. Their quest for the past, dislocation and marginalization in the host country and the accommodation into the culture of adopted country conveys the conflicting state of ambivalence. The writers of Indian diaspora have suggestively enriched the quality of creative writing in English through their literary contributions. Indian diasporas have been focusing in their writings on reinventing India by the demonstrating complexities of another cultivation, nostalgia, surviving identity crisis, cultural assimilation and impulse for existence. They plunge profoundly into the realm of creative power to delineate something fairly different and distinct from that portrayed by fellow novelists. Prominent writers of Indian Diaspora writings include V.S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Uma Parameswaran, Kiran Desai, Anita Rau Badami etc. The procedure of survival of the diasporic individual/ community between “home of origin” and “world of adoption” is the journey undertaken in the complete process from “alienation” to final “assimilation.”

As Williams and Wanchoo, have mentioned in their chapter Negotiating Des Pardes:

“Though the naming of the physical landscape continues wherever possible, it is the psychological and emotional naming of the diasporic experience through writing that has taken precedence over the earlier form of naming.”  
[Page-238]

Established writers like V.S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee and the recent ones like Vikram Seth, Moyer J. Vassanji, Anita Rau Badami, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Kiran Desai have given ample evidence of this process of naming in their works. Their works are filled with the diasporic consciousness, as they experience diasporic issues that varies as per their generations, attitudes, discernments and specific identities. Their apprehensions turn into universal concerns with the exiles sense of displacement and rootlessness”. Their works also offer a keen sense of pathos by coping with not only terrestrial displacement but also socio-cultural sense of dislocation. Even assuming writings of the diaspora writers vary in accordance with the reasons of their shifting, the shared aims among their writings are their sense of guilt for not being able to contribute to any of the societies. The racism, cultural-identical barriers and violence faced by the immigrant is expressed throughout the Diasporic literature. The tension of living in-between the two different worlds is reflected suitably in their works. Let’s take examples of few, firstly, V.S. Naipaul is one of the most renowned emigrant writers deliberates how the marginal culture adjusts to a multi-ethnic civilization and the varying value system and makes its impression on the characters. Though he allures towards India, his sensibility is British because he was raised in Trinidad. In a theoretical framework presented by Homi K. Bhabha, Naipaul’s works portray the necessary ambivalence, mimicry and in dilemmas marking the lives of refugees those who understand the voidness in their lives owing to the loss of their native-cultural identities. His novels are jam-packed with the metaphors of homelessness

and represent the divided selves of the stranded diaspora who have been trapped into the subtle realities of the host country or alien land. He remarkably presents the hunt for the roots in his “A House for Mr. Biswas”.

Similarly, Bharti Mukherjee’s works emphasised on the phenomenon of migration, the position of migrants after displacement and their effort to survive in an unapproachable world. Her own struggle with identity, first as an émigré from India, then as an Indian expatriate in Canada, and finally as an immigrant in the United States made her realize of being a settler in a country of immigrants. Bharti Mukherjee writes fiction with Indian settings and background in her mind. Her fictions deal with cross-cultural communication and cultural transformation and as several critics have critically said, Mukherjee’s body of works can be divided into expatriate and immigrant phases. In 1988, she has won ‘National Book Critics Circle Award’ for “The Middle and other stories”. Her other works are “Jasmine” and “Wife”. ‘The Middle Man’ and other stories portray the theme of immigration, while ‘Jasmine’ is the story of a woman who is reluctant to accept the old-fashioned traditional society. Also, the collection of stories *Darkness* (1985) focuses the immigrant’s experiences in the USA.

In addition to the list, next example is of an exceptional writer Salman Rushdie, he examines the issue of migrant identity. All his characters along with the author, are migrants in search of an “imaginary homeland”. The recurrent themes of all his works are: search for identity, belongingness and divided selves. The inquisitive residence occupied by the migrant or the exile is the focal point of Rushdie throughout his works. All Rushdie fictions, from his Booker winning novel, ‘Midnight’s Children’ to the ‘Enchantress of Florence’ exemplify migrant terminology. Though the two above mentioned novels are more political than fictional, their characters are the agents of the subalterns and marginal.

Next, Amitav Ghosh’s writing concerns with more in the epic themes of travel and diaspora, political scuffle and communal

violence, history and memory, love and loss, crossing the generic margins between anthropology and art work. Diasporic sensibilities can be analysed here with particular reference to one of his novels 'The Circle of Reason' (1986) and 'The Glass Palace' (2000). Nevertheless, Amitav Ghosh's diasporic affiliations are not crystal clear or straightforward as those of his contemporary novelists. While other writers made their homes in other geopolitical spaces, Ghosh's embrace of the diaspora aesthetic is evident in his fundamental denunciation of the purity of cultural identities and the idea of the coherence of "home". Ghosh himself has argued that the Indian diaspora is not so much predisposed to "roots", the desire to go back to the "homeland", as it is to "routes", the capability to recreate a distinct culture in discrepant locations. Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities in a new cultural space. In order to justify the statement, Jhumpa Lahiri is the perfect example. As Lahiri's works manifest the notion of being uprooted from the native land and also put prominence on the quest for blending in the host country. Her characters effort to become a "new- self" without really allowing to go off the "old – self" and thus produces stories that display universal appeal. Lahiri trails contradictory ways in managing the issues of diasporic life which makes her writing a delicate and dignified voice within the Indian and world diasporic literature.

Similarly, Anita Desai born to a Bengali father and a German mother, was brought up in India and she spent major part of her life in India and now lives in the USA. Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee scrutinize the theme of isolation, dual cultural shock and disintegration of personality in their works. The female characters go through depression and frustration and take extreme steps of assassinating their husbands. Besides nostalgic reminiscences, these writers reconstruct their past through their writings. They give an apprehension to the community life, to local or national politics through their understandings of being alienated, peripheralized and marginalized.

Also, Uma Parameswaran aptly states:

“Most young people whose parents keep to the old ways feel trapped by their differences, not only at school but at home. However, with the resilience of youth, most of them find balance, and some even start appreciating aspects of their heritage culture.”

Uma Parameswaran is a first-generation immigrant from India to Canada. Her works are the constitution of diasporic studies which ensure her western experience with the Indian pragmatism. In her works she has shown the shifting concepts of “home and displacement” in the successive generations of migrants. By this she has secured a commendable place along with the other writers of Diaspora. Similar to many other immigrant writers, she illustrates adoring thematic significance in the experience of immigrants, predominantly South Asian Canada, through an emphasis on issues of assimilation and racial stance. Her writings encompass different genres which comprise short stories, plays and poems with shared themes furthermore she has employed her personal experience as direct observation to underline the intensity of social alienation. As noticed in this chapter, the meaning of diaspora originated from the Greek “to scatter” and “to sow”, suggests both dispersal and settlement. Diaspora focuses on settlement after displacement which is responsible in creating transnational networks. In the post-colonial world, highly marked by globalization, transnational migration is a reality. Therefore, there are numerous groups of people who navigate across the national borders to arrive at their assured land.

### **Conclusion**

Diasporas widen and progress together with not only the original immigrants recognized as the first generation but also their ensuing generations, the second-generation, as long as they prefer to or are made to endure as a separate community. This course of actions is a very long-standing. The first and even the second generation of migrants, those who thrive in Diaspora writings

largely have to come to terms with issues and to be stricken with affects and traumas on the way to their national, gender, cultural and ethnical identities.

Indian diaspora literature apprehending worldwide consideration today is classically by and about erudite migrants or their descendants. It levers subjects like alienation, crisis, discrimination, nostalgia, identity etc. It functions in a cultural space preoccupied by heterogeneity and tries to reconcile with alien realities. A literary network connected with questions of equality and identity, it attempts adaptation with host country and society. All diasporic fiction, thus, is filled with issues associated with location, movement, crossing border, original home and espoused home and identity. The diaspora writers act like transitional beings moving from one cultural and socio-political settings to another, in a way, reacting equivocally to dual cultures, make an effort to integrate between the home and the identity.

Hence to sum-up, Indian Diasporic literature explore the cultural displacement and its impact. The whole diaspora literature can be treated as a result of experiences of immigration. This is especially noteworthy in any analysis of Indian English literature because its diaspora encompasses to almost all parts of the globe.

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## Literature and Science : A Corona's Eye-View

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### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a great havoc around the world at all levels of human affairs and impelled the global humanities to give rethinking of the concept of development and its importance in their life and living as well as their effects on the planet earth. Literature, which aims at helping the mankind to share this common property, earth, together with love, care and right attitude, and Science, which helps the humanity to have a comfortable living here, seem to fail in their respective goals satisfactorily due to having deviations and digression from their proper paths. Corona crises have presented an opportunity to evaluate the all anthropogenic activities going on the earth so that human conditions can be better than that exist today. In this article, an effort has been made to look into the crises from the perspective of a semi-life nano virus, Corona and the litterateurs and the scientists have been asked to revise their paths of progress by bridging the gap between knowledge and wisdom achieved by mankind and motivate them to create a "Lifestyle for Environment" (LIFE) so that the lurking crises as to food, energy, water and global political and economic order can be averted.

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**Keywords:** Suprasystem, Symbiosis, Extropianism, Meliorism, Speciesism, Antimicrobial Resistance, High modernism, Planetism, Anthropocentrism, Post-humanism

The Corona here represents all kinds of harmful bacteria, protozoa, virus, and all other micro organisms present on the earth which have been threatening mankind since the beginning of the green activities on it. Man has been struggling to tame them and assuredly many times overcame them too. But in this mysterious and infinite universe, which actually displays itself both as a great thought and a great machine, our earth exists with all its flora and fauna that are not only interrelated and interdependent symbiotically but many of them are antagonistic to each other's existence. To be precise, cooperation and contest do exist among the living, non-living and semi-living organisms, and as pointed out by Darwin and subsequently proved as one of the truths-only the 'fittest' are selected by the Nature to have their continuation on the earth. And the most powerful (so called, till the arrival of any pandemic) animal of the earth is homo sapiens, which is quite evident from the data of human population and the Red Data Book. But while facing COVID-19, the human race of the 21st century feels oneself at the receiving end and finds confused and disturbed while coping with Corona virus, first reported on the 17th November 2019 in Wuhan of China and officially christened as Covid-19 on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and declared as pandemic on the 11th March 2020 by W.H.O as it spread over more than 163 countries. This pandemic, in the history of mankind, is neither the first one and nor going to be the last one. Here, Corona's eye view represents a kind of perspective that would reflect on the aims and objectives of Literature and Science and to show how the subjective and objective points of view are equally inadequate till the day to redress the 'fear of death' which is destined to happen sooner or later. Death as such is not as horrible as its fear which has killed more people than the Covid-19 did. And this is due to lack of scientific point of view or temperament among the human

beings of all categories—the ruler and the ruled, the doctor and the patient, the medical attendant and the family attendant despite having advancement in science and technology to the level of Himalayan heights as well as the understanding of life and living through the study of literature as it helps us, in the words of Johnson, “to enjoy life or to endure it.” (Long, W.J., 1977).

Science and Literature with their objectivity and subjectivity respectively should have created a kind of faith in mankind of the 21st century in Extropianism and Meliorism, as these philosophies actually help us to evolve a framework of values and benchmarks for augmenting the better human condition by accepting the facts that life is an admixture of pain and pleasure, agony and happiness, growth and decay, pessimism and optimism. But the arrival of a tiny virus has created panic situation around the world. Corona has confined, for sometime, the global humanity at least in the five places in proportion to their position on the scale of so called progress and development. First, at home, not to enjoy the rest, but pangs of isolation, fear and brooding over life, living and its relationship with Nature and death. Second, to quarantine centre to suffer the association of fearful lot of Corona positive patients. Third, to hospital to struggle on ventilators, fourth, to graveyard to have the permanent rest in peace, fifth, to the research laboratory to search for the anticovid vaccine to check the growing onslaught of Corona. It has completely disturbed our ease and comfort, and forced us to think in a new way: webinar in place of seminar, work from home, online order and delivery of grocery at door step, online classes, medical advice and training and what not. We are getting smarter and smarter day by day and have started to cheat corona too by enjoying our cyber spatial closeness. What I see, Corona as an outcome of our human follies but not as an enemy as such, rather an external force, observed by Newton in his Laws of Motion, to disturb our inertia and direction of progress, growth and development. As we are aware of the nature of the Nature and capacity of human beings as opined by

James Haldane, “Two impressions remaining after a life of scientific research: the inexhaustible oddity of universe and the capacity of the human system for recovery.” (Kupershmidt, Boris A: 1992)

I wish to confine this discussion in the realm of literature and science as their roles are getting questioned in the ambience of Corona crises. Contemporary literature is still struggling to settle down the issues raised by high-modernism, and post-modernism began in the middle of the 20th century, to be exact, since WW II, saving in the arena of LGBTQ+ but unable to cope with the onslaught of alternative facts which have abdicated the space for the post-truth generations very hastily. It is also not able to foreground the Bioethical concerns relevant to the present society so that the direction of science and technology can be moderated as per contemporary requirements of the humanity. On other side, Corona has given a shocking jolt to the global scientific societies who have focussed themselves more on space exploration and God’s particle to satisfy the unending and ever-growing curiosities and to Artificial intelligence or robotics, maybe an unintelligent death-wish at the earliest and, Eugenics to avoid natural mutation and selection, and harvesting the minerals of Antarctica and Arctic, but unable to arrest or confine a micro-size virus-Corona-not so powerful to kill the strong and powerful but the weak and diseased due to poverty and sick of their life-style due to affluency.

From Corona’s eye view, it is to understand the role played or is being played by Literature, which is known to humanise the people and science, which is known to make people aware rationally, factually and finally truthfully, and at the same time, to defend Corona’s Nature-ordained nature as well as to question the human stupidity which is in the words, generally attributed to Albert Einstein: “Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I’m not sure about the universe.” (<https://www.goodreads.com.quotes>). This piece of my writing is more a meditation and reflection done in a critical way and an arrangement of dialogue

between Corona's arrival, existence and growth on one side and the literati and literateur who deal with life, living and death (Thanetism, thanotology) and the science and the scientists who too deal with the Nature in a different way and apply their study-outcome to ameliorate the human condition as done by Literature on the other side...

All of us know very adequately that both literature and science are the offspring of the same mother -- Imagination. One doesn't always linger on evidence and laboratory, only relying on experience while other does the same but nothing declares anything as truth unless and until it gets the experimental proof in laboratory but they never find unconnected to each other like metaphysics and physics. In between lies, social sciences, who enjoy the outcomes from the both—literature and science and also guide them too. On many occasions fiction points out the fact much earlier than science. The fictional works of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Issac Asimov are those pieces of evidence which prove that literature marches like a torchbearer and provides many clues to science. Sir James Jeans said much earlier:

“Today there is a wide measure of agreement which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity that the stream of human knowledge is impartially heading towards a non- mechanical reality. The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears to be an accidental intruder into the realm of matter. We are beginning to suspect that we ought to nail it as the creator and governor of this realm of matter.”  
(Jeans, James; 1937)

Literature moves from abstract to concrete ; science from concrete to abstract. The former wants to have a bird's eye view of the universe while the latter a God's eye-view. Both of them are highly revelatory in their own way. Literature may liberates us from the fear of death. “There is no cure for birth and death save to enjoy the interval.” says Santayana. (<http://www.azquotes.com>), while science tries to minimise the chances

of your untimely death—considering body as a bundle of systems which works and interacts as per programmed laws or principles without having any predetermined guidance (i.e. God). Einstein appears to reveal this law on Nature when he declares: “I am at all events convinced that He doesn't play dice.” (Britannica.com/story). This helps both literature (concept of Free will) and science in explaining any action or accidents of the universe as a result of cause and effect.

What Corona crises prove clearly that neither literature could provide the humanity at large the taste of liberation from the fear of death nor science could do anything till the day which can provide us immortality. In anyway why should we be afraid of death caused by Corona, a relatively inadvertently done mistake while we are getting died, killed, and murdered by our own stupidity and follies—war, road accidents, honour killing, terrorism, communalism, ethnic conflicts, poverty driven malnutrition and starvation etc. Death is unavoidable and inevitable even to Biblical Methuselah. Shakespeare very plainly observes in his “Hamlet”:

“Queen: “Thou knows't . 'its common—all that lives must die.”

Hamlet: Ay, Madam, it is common” (Shakespeare, William, 1902)

Joh Donne too challenges death:

“Thou art slave to Fate, chance, Kings and desperate men.

And dost with poysen, where, and sicknesse dwell,

And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,

And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?”

(Donne, John; 2004)

Shelley's reference to “Ozymandias” and Aurobindo's to Napoleon in his poem “A Dream of Surreal Science” (“From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven” -Aurobindo, Sri ; 1930-1950) clearly help the humanity to understand the inevitability of death.

Corona has destabilized the central concepts of death and development. What does it ask eloquently : If a soul is immortal why do we get afraid of death, and if it not so and death is inevitable, what is the use of having the fear of death? Corona complains: Neither literature nor science took the cognisance of virus as a segment of tree of life on earth as it embodies the features of flora and fauna simultaneously. The great worshipper of Nature, Wordsworth ignores its existence, he starts up from the creeping plant to the sovereign man:

“Happy is he who lives to understand  
Not human nature only, but explores  
All natures—to the end that he may find  
The law that governs each; and where begins  
The union, the partition where that makes  
Kind and degrees among all visible—things  
Up from the creeping plant to the sovereign Man.”  
(Wordsworth, William; 1814)

Tennyson also starts from the flower of the ‘crannied wall’ not from the semi-life corona, which is a soluble living germ, semi-microscopic infection agent that replicates only inside the living cells of an organism, can infect all types of life forms including bacteria and archaea, present in any eco-system on the earth, being 1/100th size of bacteria, and not only so, it was declared as real enemy of mankind by JBS Haldane much earlier. And we have already witnessed the tragic roles of Noro, Rota, Polio, Ebola, Swine Flu virus in our recent pasts. We have a treasure house of pandemic literature: The Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio, Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year*, Albert Camus’ *The Plague*, Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station Eleven*, Richard Preston’s *The Hotzone: The Terrifying True Story of the Origin of the Ebola virus*, John M. Barry’s *The Great Influenza: The Great Story of Deadliest Pandemic in History*, G.G. Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* and a speculative fiction of Frank Herbert’s *The White Plague* and many more around the world in different languages.

On the other hand, science has been continuously grappling with the changing varieties of different micro organisms and finds all difficulties to cope with the growing menace of AMR—anti microbial resistance. They are constantly evolving and developing new varieties of themselves after resisting the antibiotics developed by mankind and posing threats to coming generations like any other environmental crises. So as things stand today, shall we have the same time as described by Charles Dickens in his “A Tale of Two Cities”?

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” (Dickens, Charles; 1859)

In the larger perspective, Corona’s eye view means a discourse on the outcomes of Covid-19 in all the known fields of human activities as well as conjectural ones: Science, Literature, Politics, Economics, Ecology and many others as it is now an established truth—Everything affects everything (Barry Commoner). This Corona pandemic like many of the past, has rocked the anthropocentric consciousness of the mass who believed in their supremacy on the earth or maybe in the universe. It does compel the development economists to assess the condition, direction and destination of global economy in its relation to the growth of humanity. It also forces the global communities dealing with sure (relatively) knowledge and conjectural one to have a relook on their attitudes towards the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings respectively. Mitchell Waldrop too thinks like Barry Commoner, writes in his book “Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos”,

“Everything affects everything and you have to understand that whole web of connections.” (Waldrop, Mitchell. M; 1992)

As we aware of the existence of multiple systems, sub-systems, sub-sub- system in the great design of the Supra system which is commonly referred to as Universe-a unique verse, single poem-till the day a mystery, hence we have to understand and internalise the facts of interrelatedness of cycles of oxygen, carbon, water, energy, and others uncountable and unknown ones. Any anthropogenic disturbance and disorder knowingly or unknowingly done to the dynamic equilibrium of the Suprasystem—Nature-can be detrimental to the whole existence and the first to this earth. Jules Verne declares in his scientific fiction, 'Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea', "we may brave the human laws, but we can't resist natural ones." (Verne, Jules; 1870). He buttressed the same view in his work 'The Mysterious Island', "In presence of Nature's grand convulsions man is powerless." (Verne, Jules; 1875). And the convulsions may be like volcanic eruptions, earth quake and man made like nuclear holocaust, chemical war, star war etc that have made man to be critical of the concept having the same meaning and significance but different names: anthropocentrism, humonocentrism, human exceptionalism, in which human beings assume themselves as the supreme entity of the universe and help them to interpret the world in terms of their own experiences only without considering the effects of their actions and life styles on the ecosystem which is the root cause of environmental crises and Covid-19 is a miniscule part of that.

What Corona crises expect from the contemporary litterateurs and scientists: the answer of the question, "How to coexist together symbiotically and peacefully on this earth?" The balanced reciprocity would be the obvious choice as a standard parameter that would govern the relationship between and among the living, semi-living and non-living entities of the planet. For that we have to listen to Albert Einstein who advises, "This world is made up of thought; if it is to be changed, we have to change our thought and belief system." (<https://brainyquote.com>>Einstein) And to go with Einstein

is not an easy task, as Andre Aciman's declaration as to the attributes of man is to be noted, as it holds the truth, "Human beings are complex and contradictory and filled with things that do not go together." ([https://www Goodreads. com>quotes](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes))

Literature and Science along with other arenas of studies, can collaborate together to see the answer of these intricacies of mankind. Science can afford to be neutral but scientist and technologist can't. As ethics are not immortal, it varies in time and space so the litterateurs would have to meditate cogently on all aspects of anthropogenic actions and mediate with scientists and together they will have to resolve the intricacies visible and to foresee the origin of new ones. They will have to seek answers of the questions arising from the exploitative capitalism, sluggish communism, mindless consumerism, growing inequalities, climate crises, acute poverty, ethnicity, and mindless chauvinism and nationalism. They can help mankind to move from speciesism, and anthropocentrism to planetism and biocentricism (environmentalism). We have to realise first that ecocide is the result of human actions and reactions and the solutions of the problems lie within the life style of human beings. George Meredith's view expressed in individual context but it is applicable to the tragedy of humanity:

"In tragic life, God wot

No villain need be ! Passions spin the plot:

We are betrayed by what is false within."

([http://www.quotery.com>quote](http://www.quotery.com))

Let us appreciate the post-humanistic concerns.

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## Treatment of Love, Sex and Marriage in the Fictions of Raja Rao

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Love is godly. It is pious, immortal and pleasant. It is a pleasant feeling towards the object that is the dearest and nearest. Love is, in fact, a quality of soul that is as pure and pious as soul itself is. In love there is no barrier between lover and beloved. It touches two souls together and connects them forever. Love is a language without words; it speaks through gestures and postures. Love is a 'sweet fire' that consumes emotion. Love is not unilateral, but bilateral. Love happens generally between two souls that have the same feeling and liking. D.H. Lawrence says in the poem entitled *End of another Home Holiday* that love is a 'great asker'. It asks for fulfillment, and even though it does not get it, it remains burning in the finest aura. Love is very closely related to sex. Love without sex is cinder. Love is a force that generate generations of species. The two principles Feminine and Masculine having their abode in God reflected in the creation to maintain it and expand it. What we talk of Siva and Shakti (Parvati), are the symbols of Masculine and Feminine Principles. Siva without Shakti is cinder, dead and powerless. Like that a man without a woman is incomplete. The relation between the man and woman or the wife and husband is love. Raja Rao, a writer of Indian sensibility,

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knows well about India's ancient civilization, its philosophical background and religious trends. Sex, love, and marriage have always been in practice since the time immemorial. Sex is the medium of creation while love is the base of woman-man relationship. Woman has remained as a subject of wonder and mystery from the beginning. Raja Rao has tried to understand women, sex and love from very close angle.

Love needs fulfillment and that fulfillment is related to sex. Unfulfilled love remains burning inside the heart. Strong social taboo hinders the motion of love with the result that it does not get outlet and ultimately results in cinder. It is so called civilization that has blocked the path of open love. In the tribal society, when people were ignorant of civilization, privatization and secrecy, love between woman and man prevailed without any barrier. The pair existed, but according to the choice. As the age advanced and so-called civilization appeared, the dignity of women began to decline. Traditions and conventions that developed treated women as secondary sex with the result that women today, are not free and independent. So far sex, love and marriage are concerned, the women still have no freedom to express her desire and follow the course which she prefers.

The female is prone to love in a more sustained manner than the male. The unfulfilled sex in the Little Mother and Saroja (in *The Serpent and the Rope*) ignites in their bosom. Little Mother is sexually inclined to her step-son, Rama, but there is social barrier. Like that Rama's love for his step-sister, Saroja, remains unfulfilled resulting in inside burning pain. The hunger for a woman is 'ruthless and strong' and 'a woman likes to see the snap-dragon put out his tongue at her.' Lawrence feels that either satisfy the hunger with 'pure real satisfaction or perish, there is no alternative.'

In case of Little Mother and Saroja love perishes under the social taboo. Love sustains human soul in pleasing pain. The negation of love means negation of life. It is a 'purposive passion'. Love is emotion, sex power and energy. Love is a slow dragging

business in a novel. Saroja is not satisfied even after marriage because she does not get the life partner of her choice. She remains only as a wife having monotonous family life. Her entire energy of life remains suppressed. The marriage of Rama and Madeleine continues only for a decade because the temper and tone of both varies. Madeleine loves Rama so long as she does not adopt Buddhism and becomes a monk. Rama's love remains unfulfilled here. His love gets maturity when he comes in close contact with Savitri whose love for Rama is pure and durable. The emotions and temper of both are equally strong and powerful. They are in love without marriage with social permission. They marry, but the marriage is spiritual and fantastic. However, love is durable. Though Savitri finally marries to Pratap Singh, her love for Rama remains fresh forever. Again, Catherine and George remain together as wife and husband, but Catherine is not satisfied because the love what she expects is not available with George. When her relations develop with Lezo, though it is illicit, she is fully satisfied. When she is in the embracement of Lezo, her energy, happiness and pleasure come to the climax and she finds new changes in her feeling and emotions. It is all because she is sexually satisfied.

Thus, it is obvious that love in the opinion of Raja Rao is successful when both the lover and beloved have the same liking, same emotional commitment and same feeling of physical as well as mental union. So, love results ultimately in oneness, and singularity merging into ocean of pleasure. Separation is so long as there is feeling of separation. Soul has no division. It is universally undivided. It looks divided due to differences of bodies where it resides. So, sex and love are the medium which unites soul living in two bodies. When love reaches at the peak of climax through sexual intercourse, result is merger of two separate identities into one where there is no feeling, no thinking and no awareness. If there is something, it is absolute bliss. Radha and Krishna though they appear as two different bodies, are not

different. Radha, the powerful wave that rises from ocean of Krishna, merges into the ocean while the Krishna, the ocean of infinite power upholds it forever. Radha-Krishna is embodiment of love, union and constant bliss. Raja Rao knows this truth and the love what he talks, is the immortal love, a love that is divine.

In the novel the *Chessmaster and His Moves* the love between Siva and Suzanne and Rama and Madeleine in *The Serpent and the Rope* is not durable because the love for both the ladies for Siva and Rama respectively is conditional. Suzanne loves Siva, no doubt, but with the intention to get a son through him while Madeleine comes close to Rama due to her inclination towards Indian culture and civilization. She tries to change her behaviour like the Indian wife. She gets even two children through Rama who die giving great shock to her. She loves him, no doubt, but she is not yet ready to merge her identities with that of Rama. Her desire is still to be free and follow independent course of life. She moves towards Buddhism and prefers to become a monk with the result that divorce takes place between the couple. The boundary line of their love remains confined to the physical world only. It does not touch the line of spirit and fails to turn into transcendental love. While living together, both follow the different path of life. Rama's inclination is towards Indianness while Madeleine, being a French lady, turns towards Buddhist philosophy.

Love between Siva and Jaya is ideal. Though Jaya is very much free and has relation with a Muslim boy, and she is remarked by someone as a flirt girl, her love for Siva is true. It is because there is no self at all. The thinking, feeling and emotion of both are the similar. Though Jays is married to Surendar Singh, her real love develops with Siva. Surendar is her husband in this world, but Siva is her lover not only in this world but even in another world. Their love is not confined to the body, but to the spirit. They know well that spirit never dies. So, their love is also immortal. They believe that their meeting as a wife and husband is not possible in the present birth, but they have absolute faith that they

would meet in the next birth. It is also known to them that being a woman and a man which appear differently, their soul is one. Love is endless, immortal and pious. Hence, they have no fear at all that after leaving the present bodies they will not meet again. Jaya tries to rise to the level of Sakuntala and Savitri while Siva remains her Nal and Satyavan. Both feel that death cannot separate them. They are spiritually married not for one life, but for life after life. Thus, both are the symbol or emblem of ideal love in the fiction of Raja Rao. The theme of love that Raja Rao presents in his fiction is not cheap. It is transcendental. The theme of love which he presents rises to the level of love related to Krishna and Radha and Siva and Parvati.

Love and sex are closely related. On the physical level 'body is the harp and sex is its music.'<sup>1</sup> Sex is the energy. Stronger the body is, greater sex is found. A sexless person is a cloud of earth. According to Som Deva "aversion for sex is moral depravity, physical deficiency and fault for which nature can hardly be kind to him or her. Sex is the inner stream of life and it needs natural outlet. Sex is the salt of art."<sup>2</sup> Sex is present in every kind of species on the earth. No plant can spring from the seed without sex. It is the sex, amalgamated in the seed that germinates and grows up. So, sex and life are inseparable. The entire universe has appeared from the womb of the nature. Sex is present in the nature. R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* presents a very bold theme related to sex. He says a wife is wrested from the grasp of a husband. The magnetism of love has been depicted with all the power at its back. But a curtain is immediately drawn over the whole thing as soon as the sex gets consummated.

In Raja Rao's novels sex has been viewed from two angles—dormant and manifest. Saroja and Little Mother in *The Serpent and the Rope* appears sexy to Rama. Attraction is from both the side, but there is restriction of relationship. So, this type of sex is dormant. On the other hand, Lezo-Catherine affair or Savitri-Rama affair or Rama-Lakshmi affair manifests into enjoyment of

sex. Sex in Raja Rao's novels is both the happening and the presence. There is the 'touch' and 'togetherness' where it happens, and there is pathos where it exists without being expressed through the physical process. Sex in the conjugal life of Rama and Madeleine has a natural glow till the material bondage gets sundered. "The night of love", says the hero, "is an embalment, a holiness that we place outside of time, in the knowledge that creation is truth". It is said that a woman's sex rises slowly following her preferences like ornaments, the cinema, the circus, walking in the beautiful garden etc. All these are devices for copulation and fruition. Women do not like haste in sexual play. Sex in a girl gets maturity with the advancement of age and companion of the male. Raja Rao mentions the hidden fear of sex in growing girls. Catherine complains to Rama that 'it simple aches'. Rama replies "When a girl would become a woman, there's whole universe that rebels in you, as though a kingdom, a sovereignty were to be lost, as though some demons were at your carven door, and you would lose all the all, in fear, in blood and in anguish.... It is just like the great frost that falls in March before the spring comes.... This is how things happen with regard to the burgeoning-sex." (Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*). In the novels of Raja Rao sex has been presented in different tones. Somewhere it is pure and pious feeling as in the case of Rama and his step-mother and his step sister, Saroja. Sex between Ram and Lakshmi is casual so it appears to Rama as a 'pickle'. Sex between Rama and Savitri and also between Siva and Jaya is ideal, immortal and transcendental. Anyway, sex is the base of life and source of enjoyment. It is sex that expands in life.

The sex in the conjugal life is fearless, guiltless, and natural and therefore does not have the jerk of life. It is the irony of sex that the guiltier, it is the better in form. In the world of animals and birds each one has the method to attract the partner before sex. Even in the botanical world, sex can be observed. It is said "you know the banana ripens on the stem and the coconut falls

on the fertile earth-that rivers flow that the *parijat* blossoms white and pink between leaves.” Rama observes sex everywhere in the nature. Raja Rao while describing presence and attraction of sex has become a poet. The language what he uses here is really poetic. For instance, Rama, the hero of *The Serpent and the Rope*, says to his wife Madeleine, “Madeleine, let me touch you here by the waist from which rises birth, and Madeleine, let me touch you on this the right breast, that I lie there as on my deathbed.... Let me squeeze the juice out of you, let me lick you like dog, and let me see you in my spittle, on my tongue.” Here Raja Rao hints that death and birth both are hidden in sex. Sex results into birth and birth lastly sinks into death. Sex gives pleasure, no doubt, but binds persons into the world of Maya. Birth comes out of sex and it lastly disappears in death.

In Raja Rao’s novels the pain or injuries during copulation has poetic charm. Rama while copulating says to Madeleine, “Madeleine, did I hurt you, did I seek you too far and too long?” Madeleine simply says, “Lord, leave me alone. I do not belong to the man kingdom. I’m torn by a porcupine inside, I am finished, I am aghast. O TanteZoubie!” Thereafter, Madeleine cries, whether in pain or pleasure she knows only. It is no pornography in the novel but pure sex, real with all its agony and submerged pleasure. Woman is not afraid of delivery pain. Maternity goes along with sex. She likes children. Catherine wishes to have more children even before her marriage. Madeline tells Rama “I shall bear your eleven if you like.” This is the circle of life that is related to sex. So, sex is not a sin. Man-woman relation is enigmatic. Raja Rao says, “A woman hates a male when he withdraws. She cannot accept his defeat-his defeat is the defeat of womanhood.” D.H. Lawrence says that the sexual bout of a man and a woman is a ‘fight’. Before a woman attains the dignity of motherhood, she has all this as a prelude to the bearing of a child. What a life! There is pleasure, maternity, death, pain, hate love etc. Raja Rao has depicted all these facts in his fictions in the poetic and prosaic language.

One finds poetic depth in Raja Rao's fictions regarding sex and love. It touches the heart of the reader. While describing the essence and ethos of sex, he is very much realist. Woman is the 'castle of intelligence' while man is the 'lord' of the castle. Once the castle is surrendered to man, he feels himself elevated and stands at the superdome height. Woman is the embodiment of sex that attracts man. Rama says to Savitri, "how true it seemed we were to each other, a lit space between us, a presence-God." Ram while touching Savitri lips feels. "...as though there were made with light, with honey, with the space between the words of poetry, of song." When sex is of real significance, it is not obscene. It is without sin. It is poetic. Sex is music and the body seems to be the instrument that gives outmost pleasure to souls of the lovers. Sex is not one-sided affair. The pleasure what Raja Rao talks of is not in the sex that is done forcibly. The description of sexual pleasure of Raja Rao is of the highest degree where copulation is with willingness and consent otherwise it is rape or prostitution. He refers the love affairs between Gopi-Krishna where there is no shame or fear of guilt. The love of Gopies for Krishna is divine because the former thinks the latter as their Lord, their Master, and their Soul. There is complete surrender to the Lord without any hesitation or reservation. Gopies and Krishna while dancing together merge into each other and become one entity that is pure and pious. It gives them pleasure, *anandam*. Their love is so pleasant and beautiful that it gives pleasure even to those who are not participants, but viewers. So, love that is symbol of attraction and source of pleasure is like God.

One must note that Description of sex and love in Raja Rao's fiction is not of low or cheap category. The sex and love what he talks is not ordinary that result in material lust and mental enslavement. His sex and love touch the divine boundary line. It is pure and sinless. Though some characters including heroes of the novels indulge in casual sexual affairs, but purpose is not to enjoy sex, but to test love. Rama's affairs with Lakshmi may

appear awkward, but it is natural because she showers love on him. Lezo's entanglement with Catherine who is a married lady may not be permitted in the civilized society like India, but it is natural because of her sexual dissatisfaction with her husband. Rao considers that that type of sexual affairs is 'like substance floating down the holy Ganges'.<sup>3</sup>

A marriage is a bond between woman and man. A marriage where there is only sex without love between the wife and the husband is like a dried up river. Both the banks of the river run parallel, but there is no water to connect them. Raja Rao is of the view that such marriage is a bond of tradition which lacks purpose and joy of the life. Unsatisfied sex is incomplete love. Lakshmi, in *The Serpent and the Rope* feels frustrated and awfully awkward when she has sex with her husband Shamsundar because she does not receive from the husband what she expects. But when she comes into contact with a strange like Rama, she feels fully satisfied with him. In the embracement of Rama her body blossoms like a flower reflecting good smell. In the sexual play with Rama, she is fully satisfied. There is a change in her behaviour. She showers affection and love on Rama. The children find her happy without knowing the fact. Catherine, the other lady character of the novel finds in Lezo the means of her satisfaction, though she is legally the wife of George who fails to give her what she expects from him on the bed. Catherine plays with Lezo "like children in front of George." Despite that Catherine remains devoted and associated to George like a Hindu wife. It is sex that is a solar fire and compels Catherine to go to the person who has the ability to extinguish it. According to Raja Rao, sex is expressive. Its urge bursts the social dam. There are numerous stories which state that women even after marriage or before marriage escape away with the men of their liking leaving family, property and children just to satisfy sex. Thus, sex is the natural flow running inside the body which may come out by breaking embankment of social traditions, and lastly it meets to the powerful current of love.

Marriage in India is considered a very sacred bond that is to continue the whole life. A marriage strongly binds both the wife and husband to live together and prosper together. Marriage, especially in the Hindu society, is social permission with blessing to new couple to live together as wife and husband and prosper accordingly. Raja Rao passed his major part of life in Europe and America. He married even a foreign lady. But his knowledge about marriage in Indian society is not less. His experience about marriage is very much meaningful. In the USA, the bond of marriage is coming down very fast. In the USA, as describe in the *Oriental Lovers* marriage is a 'dying institution.' There, it is said that the marriage is a nine-day wonder. It often begins with the rosy promises but dwindles into a high despair. In the foreign countries the love between women and men is hardly durable because it does not touch soul, but to body and mind only. Sex there is treated like a play for physical enjoyment. There is no purity of love and sex. Raja Rao does not permit women to go to the strength where there is sex only, but no love. He knows that love and sex both are reciprocal. Love is not the subject to buy and sell or to take and give affairs. It is natural based on strong sentimental feeling from both sides. Again, durability of marriage depends upon similarity of culture and civilization from both sides.

In *The Serpent and the Rope* marriage between Rama and Madeleine fails not because there is dearth of love, but because there is difference of attitudes and culture. Rama does not find in her the Indian culture and Madeleine despite her efforts to behave like an Indian bride, turns a Buddhist. She is not ready to merge her identity with Rama. More or less Madeleine's love for Rama is not based on true spiritual basis. It is all because both differ in their social as well as spiritual background. George is cuckolded by his wife Catherine as she gets into a liaison with Lezo, a sensual creature. George and Catherine are wife and husband, no doubt, but their mental as well as physical attitude differs a lot. George is educated and simple while Catherine is a

lady who is outspoken and whose sexual thrust is greater. George fails to satisfy her sexual needs with the result that it compels her to fulfill this need in the company of Lezo. This is the reality that Raja Rao depicts in his novel.

Tante Zoubie is an experienced married woman before she marries Uncle Charles. Before marriage her sexual affairs with others made her more flirt and open. She is not ashamed of her acts because she knows the fire that she possesses. On the other hand, Little Mother suffers as a widow and takes refuge in her secret love for her step son, Rama. She has no dare to cross the boundary of morality. Saroja has to marry a person whom she dislikes. But she passes her life with the husband despite her unwillingness. This is the difference between the ethos of marriage in the West and East. In the West women have no feeling while crossing the social boundary to satisfy the sex while in the East women hardly dare to have sexual affairs other than their husbands after marriage. Thus, it is difficult to say that love and marriage are always successful. The legal sex is a routine sex and it is monotonous. It suffers from the sense of possession. Virtually a wife is reduced to the status of a 'single unit prostitute.' In the novel one finds the holy aura of a matrimony vapouring away under the strong sense of facts. In *The Serpent and the Rope* no marriage is successful. It is all because sex-love relationship is weak.

Raja Rao says that life is a pilgrimage. Getting a letter from Madeleine Rama comments that man is a 'pilgrim to knowledge.' In his accustomed cryptic style, he says, "You should know a woman and not understand her, then you can never be a pilgrim to knowledge. Women, all women speak poetry, whether they are talking of houses, or aluminum vessels.... Understanding a woman is understanding her inward soul which is yearning for love, understandably love on the fleshy plane. They always speak poetry, designed to ensnare man and that will, of necessary, shut you from internal vision of reality."<sup>4</sup> To understand a woman is,

thus, to go to her inner depth and it is possible only when one loves her in reality. Loving of a woman is related to experience. As the age advances, man understands her more. Raja Rao through Rama asks, "What does one know of love?" Rama further says that man knows it only then that one becomes immune to attraction of 'lips' or 'limbs.' He goes on, "Love demands nothing, it says nothing, it knows nothing; it lives for itself.... Who can take away love, who can give it, who receives?"<sup>5</sup> Woman is the ocean of love. The need is to go into the inner depth of the love of ocean. To Raja Rao like many other thinkers, woman is a mystery because she has a lot in her heart that is silent and unmanifested. One goes deeper to the heart of woman, she reveals greater. Woman is not only the object of sexual enjoyment for men, but she is also the best friend of men.

The saddest part of marriage in Indian society is that a bride or a girl has no chance to choose her life partner. Rather she has to adjust with what is decided without her consent. Both Anita Deshai and Deshpande have nicely depicted discrimination of women in their fictions. The women either educated or illiterate, both kinds, suffer a lot in the hands of their husbands. The women have the feeling of being discriminated, but they lack the courage to oppose that. They tolerate everything thinking that marriage is the shelter of women. The bondage of family and traditions do not allow them to be bold and fight for their cause. So, Saroja who has to marry Subramaniam against her choice, says, "We know how to bear children. We are just like a motor car or a bank account....Between a funeral and a marriage, there is not much to choose." The Little Mother says, "A woman has to marry whether he be blind, deaf, mute or tuberculosis. We cannot choose our own." Even Savitri who is Cambridge-educated princess, and who prefers freedom and fashion, has to decide to marry Pratap Singh "yielding to parental wishes." This is another fact that her love for Rama remains intact even after her marriage. Thus, it is clear that in India not love between wife and husband is

important, but it is the relationship between a wife and a husband considered more important where the wife is bound to be dutiful and serve her husband even though he is unlovable to her.

Thus, the treatment of love, sex and marriage presented by Raja Rao in his fiction is highly appreciable and imitable. His description about sex is not vulgar. Rather it is realistic, artistic and meaningful. Women represent Feminine Principles that has emanated from Supreme God with the marked objective to expand the creation and uphold it. Shakti (Feminine Principle) is the reflection of Lord Shiva. Initially the Siva and Shakti are the same. Both are integral. Nothing is possible in the absence of Shakti. Like that man and women are different in bodies only. In spirit they are one, undivided and unseparated. Their separation has divine purpose. Lastly it may be said that Raja Rao while bringing women equal to men and awarding women divine status has done a great service to womankind. The angle that he provides to understand women, to love her and know sex and marriage is highly appreciable and meaningful.

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## **Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*: Reverberations of Patriarchy and Exploitation**

**\*Sangeeta Arora**

### **Abstract**

Mahasweta Devi's story 'Draupadi' translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is the story of Dopdi, who is the most wanted tribal revolutionary woman. Two dalit men of her group Shomai and Buddha inform the officials about her hide out and she is captured by them and raped to bring out information from her. The scene is recreation of episode of Mahabharata in which Draupadi was asked to be deprived of clothes but she was saved by Lord Krishna but here no Lord comes to save this Dopdi. Dopdi gathers strength from her naked body as she knows that no other harm can be done to her. She is in the end successful in creating terror in the hearts of the officials. This paper will focus on the ill and abusive treatment i.e. the exploitation of a Dalit woman and then how Dopdi uses this nakedness as her weapon.

**Keywords:** Oppress, Brutality, Empowerment, Barbarity, Torment, Alienation

Mahasweta Devi devoted herself to chronicling the injustices done to the poor and marginalized people in her fiction. She wrote about tribal people, prostitutes, nomads, beggars etc. Her works

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spotlighted and demonstrated the problems of the people living at the extremity of social edifice. All her life she had a close alliance with the subjugated and depressed people.

The stories written by Mahasweta Devi expose the bleak realities of caste and class in Indian society. Her stories have a theme of exploitation and patriarchy. She has written about the rights and empowerment of the tribal people. Being a social activist, she always worked to lift the subjugated and raised her voice against class and caste, corruption and injustice.

She has presented the eye-opening realities and plight of deprived tribes, landless labourers and other marginalized people of Eastern India. She narrates the debauching experiences of these people and their struggle for survival. She also highlights the distress and misery of these people by narrating tales. She left her job as a lecturer to work as a reporter for a Bengali newspaper. Women in her writings have self-respect and are strong whether tribal or Dalit and disprove suppression.

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Mahasweta Devi, the most widely translated Indian writer, confronts the prevailing social system. She has worked with and for the tribal people of West Bengal for over thirty years and was involved with the life and struggles of the unprivileged and deprived tribal women and the barbarity administered on them. She was born in 1926 in urban middle class family and has written novels, plays and collection of stories. Through her writing she expresses the agony and suffering of the abused and exploited. She has dedication and passion for the poor and ill-treated people. She very precisely paints the realities of poverty and exploitation, which deprived tribal women had to undergo. She has care and empathy

for unprivileged, deprived and wants to ameliorate the existing social conditions.

Mahasweta's anger is against a system which is not able to release the deprived people from the horrendous curtailment. Her protagonists rebel against existing morals and Mahasweta Devi believes and depicts that the solution to age-old oppression, ill-treatment and exploitation is in the hands of the ill-treated only. She reveals the different types of ill-treatment and exploitation prevailing in the post-independent India. She writes about the marginalized sections and their problems. Problems of landless laborers, slum dwellers, untouchables and tribals find expression in her writings. Her annoyance and objection is always towards landlords, moneylenders, unprincipled politicians and corrupt government officials.

'Draupadi' story written in Bengali by Mahasweta Devi and translated by Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, appeared in *Agnigarba*, which is a collection of political narratives. Dopdi, the protagonist, is pictured as an unlettered tribal woman committed for the rights and deliverance of the tribal people. Dopdi occupies the lowest echelon in a class-based society as tribals are not included as a part of traditional Indian society. When the readers witness Dopdi, the protagonist of the story *Draupadi*, the readers find her living in Jharkhani forest with some other Naxalite insurgents. These Naxalite insurgents were considered to be 'young gentlemen' because of their behaviour for the women of the Santhal tribe and Dopdi was proud of her ancestors. The women of the Santhal tribe were protected by the men of the tribe.

Mahasweta Devi pictures Dopdi as equivalent to the males, who fight for their rights. She brawls shoulder to shoulder with her husband in the beginning of the story but later she has to fight alone. Dopdi Meihen is like Robin Hood who with her husband Dhulna murders rich and prosperous landlords and takes possession of their wells, source of water for the village. The setting of the story is of 1971 of West Bengal, which was politically charged.

Dopdi, Dulna and their comrades were responsible for the death of Surja Sahu, Bakuli's landlord. The army officers had hunted and killed her husband. The local police, army officers and Senanayak together tried to catch Dopdi. 'Draupadi' brings forward story of violence with frightening viscerality on one side and of unimaginable act of bravery on the other.

Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi tries to upheave her voice against the ill-treatment and brutality which the tribals had to undergo. She protests in a very distinct way which makes this story exceptionally astounding narrative. Officials try to subjugate the rebellious group. Draupadi or Dopdi, a nomadic woman was able to agitate the military authorities who want to capture her. Dopdi's character can be juxtaposed with the Draupadi of Mahabharata. In the epic Draupadi had five husbands. Spivak writes, "They are husbands rather than lovers, are legitimately pluralized." Draupadi, in the epic is treated as an object as her husband loses her in a game of dice. The episode of 'cheerharan' of Draupadi is regenerated in this story although there is certain change as Lord Krishna saved Draupadi but Dopdi is not saved.

Senanayak helps Indian forces to arrest Dopdi, during her scandalous tribal arising against the government. After the capture she is cross-examined by the officers for an hour but she does not speak because of her dedication towards the cause, so she has to face third degree in police confinement and the Senanayak orders his soldiers, "do the needful."

She is brutally put through gang rape whole night, breaching her female honour, delineating patriarchal domination over the female. The officials rape her repeatedly until she gives up. Dopdi's arrest, the most anticipated one, created an environment of triumph and relief in the government official camp. A woman has provoked their masculine recognition for years as they were not able to seize her so they crushed Dopdi, tortured and raped her to establish their masculine jurisdiction. Physical torment, psychological embarrassment and ignominy was inflicted on

Dopdi. She is seen as a target of lust and the thing to win over. No one comes up to save Dopdi in contemporary India. She is raped constantly throughout the night. In the morning, they ask Dopdi to cover her body in order to cover their deeds showing sanctimonious nature of man. Such hypocrites materialize and objectify her.

In the morning when the guard orders Dopdi to enter General's tent and offers her a piece of cloth to cover her body, she tears it and refuses to cover her mutilated body and goes into the general's tent and pushes him with her injured and naked body. General is horror affected by a captive. Unlike Draupadi of Mahabharata Dopdi responded to the patriarchal society controlling the sentiments of guilt, fear, and shame and refusing to be a victim. Her behavior leaves army men afraid. They are not sure how to deal with the women who has made them face their own vice. Dopdi is portrayed as one having a strong mind and will power. She challenges the shame and ignominy linked with sexual abuse. In Hindu mythology also the female body was exploited. This ill-treatment was rejected by Dopdi. Sati, wife of Lord Shiva self immolates her body when her father insults her husband. Draupadi's marriage to five Pandavas is another example of exploitation of female body. Patriarchal voices had forced Sati and Dopdi to be exploited.

Dopdi endures the torment of rape to save her comrades. Her reaction to the officials shows that she is not ready to be commanded by patriarchy. Dopdi, a female character has to come across the inconceivable brutality. Dopdi, the protagonist is revealed washing hair in the centre of the forest. She is like any wild animal vigilant and powerful. She is not delineated as a soft, graceful and delicate female character. She is a mutineer of the Naxalite movement, running from one place to another. She is portrayed so strong that when she is caught by army officials, she bears all type of torment but does not furnish them any information.

At the beginning of the story, readers find Dopdi as a simple tribal girl with no remarkable qualities. This name has been given to her by the wife of the landlord. She became a mutineer by chance. Mahasweta Devi has not given any particular description of Dopdi, she is portrayed as a normal village tribal girl. She has joined her husband who was involved in Naxalite movement and became informer for them. She has great strength and devotion for the group as she tolerated all the torment otherwise she could have easily moved to her camp and been safe but she did not do it to save members of the group. When armed forces were following her she preferred to be caught than letting them know her group's hide out. Being a faithful and loyal member of the group she had tried very hard to escape the police officials.

She also wanted to warn her group but was not successful. Dopdi belonged to that class of the society where the rich were given freedom to map out and break their laws. Upper class and upper caste people got more importance, infact others had to live on whatever they got from them. Landlords treated tribals brutally and inhumanly as they were considered as leading masters.

Extreme conditions made Dopdi and her husband Dulna join the militant group. They were not born militants, situations forced them to join the mutineers. Dopdi the protagonist is unwomanly, that is not having feminine characteristics. She has been portrayed as a terrorist, as an offensive element of the society. She is an uncommon woman, who is challenging patriarchal society. She has become unruly because of the brutality dispensed out on these rebels. Dopdi is of the view that quietly bearing the bodily and mental torture will never reduce the embarrassment. That is why she decides to object and protest the wrong doers. She does not want to wait for social or divine justice to get comfort rather she decides to retaliate herself. The story Draupadi picturizes the ill treatment and torment on a Dalit woman. The woman is crushed and quashed for belonging to the lowest strata of social hierarchy. Her capture was possible because two the Dalit men of her group,

Shomai and Budhna gave her information to the officials and ditched her. The Naxalite movement was generated by the lower class, tribal agriculturalist. The alliance between the agriculturists and intellectuals gave birth to this dispute. Its intention was to free the peasants of the ill treatment and they were helped by Naxalites. In this movement the tribals suffered the most.

Dopdi Mejhena is wanted by the officials because her husband had murdered Surja Sahu and his son. Captain Arjan Singh was after both Dulna and his wife Dopdi. Both Dulna and Dopdi belonged to Santhal tribe and many Santhals were killed by the officials to catch Dopdi and her husband but these killings were considered as “accident like this do happen.” Since time immemorial, the untouchables have been facing the ill-treatment but in 20th century Dalits started objecting and reacting to the suppression they had to face due to the caste system which was in vogue in those days. Dalits were not allowed to use the water resources like tube wells and wells and they had to face estrangement and alienation. The Dalits were forced to live on the suburbs of the society and were not able to support their lives calmly. Upper classes did not allow the dalits to use assets like water and land. They were compelled to protest the higher class due to brutal ill treatment exercised on them.

Senanayak is the elderly Bengali specialist in apprehending the activities of the antagonist. He trusted in catching the enemy by becoming one of them and thinking like them. He ordered his men to hunt down Dulna and Dopdi by living in the forest where they were hiding. So many Santhals were killed in the Jharkhani forest providing meal to foxes and vultures. Dopdi has a faithful spirit of a leader, “They will counter me. Let them.”

Dopdi uses her rape as her equipment and makes fun of the vigor and strength of the officials as she knows that she has received the utmost punishment and no other harm can be done to her. Draupadi in the epic was saved by Lord Krishna but no God comes to save Dopdi, no miracle comes about to save her.

She decides to retaliate it in a different way. She is portrayed as an example to show to what extent a woman can be impelled that she raises her voice after being gang raped in her own silent way. She shows a new prospect of woman challenging patriarchy without any movement.

Mahasweta Devi, a leading writer in Bengali, a fervid, passionate fighter used fiction and her political writings as her weapons. She is a prolific and creative writer known for her colossal contribution towards landless workers of Eastern India. She had a close link with these marginalized communities, which made her understand their problems at the grassroots level. Mahasweta Devi started writing at the early age of thirteen but her first book was published when she was thirty years old. This Publication can be contemplated as a landmark from where she began her journey as a writer and chronicled social realities and exploitation faced by the marginalized people. She talks about the experiences of the unprivileged.

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## Revisiting Gandhian Philosophy in the Context of Deep Ecology

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### Abstract

Addressing the climate phenomena is a way to ensure justice for humanity. Contaminated air quality, erratic weather conditions, climate change, loss of species, habitat loss, desertification & deforestation, loss of natural resources such as wetlands, ozone depletion, uncontrolled urbanisation and industrialisation coupled with emissions from vehicles, air-conditioners, etc. on the one hand and brutal exploitation of natural resources on the other hand have played havoc with the ecology. Agriculture has become a gamble and life on this planet has become precarious. Masanobu Fukuoka, a Japanese farmer and philosopher in his famous book *The Dragonfly Will Be the Messiah* makes this prognosis: “No God or Buddha will rescue the human race” and “The destruction of nature will lead to the destruction of human race.” (2021; 14). The environmental crisis is a matter of grave concern in the present time and needs to be tackled with urgency. Gandhian environmental philosophy and his philosophy of non-violence is quite relevant to solve contemporary environmental crisis. In Indian academia,

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there is a craze for Western Philosophy and Indian Philosophy is considered outmoded. In other words we can say that the entire academic discourse is Eurocentric. Arne Ness's concept of deep ecology is highly influenced by Gandhian Philosophy. The research paper attempts to study Gandhian Philosophy in the context of deep ecology.

**Keywords:** Gandhian Philosophy, Deep Ecology, Environmental Crisis, Environmental Justice.

“The climate crisis in a crisis of humanity” —”Climate Justice: A Man-Made Problem With a Feminist Solution”— Mary Robinson.

“Education should concentrate on increased sensitivity” — There is No Point of No Return- by Arne Næss.

Masanobu Fukuoka, a Japanese farmer and philosopher in his famous book *The Dragonfly Will Be the Messiah* makes this prognosis: “No God or Buddha will rescue the human race” and “The destruction of nature will lead to the destruction of human race.” (2021; 14 ). In “The Money-Sucking Octopus Economy” (Fukuoka; 2021, 49) people's value or worth comes to be determined by their possessions. The “*Myopic fog*” (Wilson; 2021, 6) of human understanding is the reason for underestimating the gravity of environmental problems. One of the greatest menaces which the entire human civilisation is grappling with today is the environmental crisis. It poses a serious threat to biodiversity. Human beings alone are responsible for growing environmental crisis. Human species is, in a word, an environmental hazard. Ethical erosion is all-pervasive in our culture. Rachel Carson calls “No witchcraft, no enemy action had snuffed out life, the people have done it themselves. We see now spring without voices. No sound only silences. *Environment-devouring technology* (Wilson; 2021, 8) is another reason for environmental degradation. We must realise that earth does not belong to human beings. They only inhabit the land, using resources to satisfy vital needs. Serving the biosphere also serve humanity in the long run.

Addressing the climate phenomena is a way to ensure justice for humanity. Contaminated air quality, erratic weather conditions, climate change, loss of species, habitat loss, desertification & deforestation, loss of natural resources such as wetlands, ozone depletion, uncontrolled urbanisation and industrialisation coupled with emissions from vehicles, air-conditioners, etc. on the one hand and brutal exploitation of natural resources on the other hand have played havoc with the ecology. Agriculture has become a gamble and life on this planet has become precarious.

“The climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination “(Ghosh , 12 ). Joseph Meeker’s *The Comedy of Survival (1974)*, proposed a version of an argument that was later to dominate eco-criticism and environmental philosophy; that environmental crisis is caused primarily by a cultural tradition in the West of separation of culture from nature and elevation of the former to moral predominance. In Indian philosophical tradition, there has always been a feeling of respect and reverence towards nature. Nature is worshipped in all its forms—living and non-living.

Since ancient past Indian philosophy has argued for environment oriented living. It emphasises that humans live a participatory life with environment. They are created by the elements of environment and they finally dissolve in the environment. Environment in Indian thought is not conceived as a physical, lifeless entity - it is a very living mechanism where humans are one of the many living creatures. The Indian textual tradition assumes that, like the rest of the material world, man is made up of elements which at death disintegrate and dissolve into nature. Indian thought explains environment as a given entity which is transcendental in nature. It perceives that there is life in all kinds of things, it might be biotic or non-biotic material. There is a greater emphasis on mutual dependence where living in isolation is not possible. Environment has been perceived as a friendly abode. Indian philosophy believes that Nature can satisfy everybody’s needs if one maintains harmony with the given Environment.

In the oral tradition in India, Environment has been perceived as a living being which breathes, feels, protects, etc. In the oral tradition, the ecological man looks upon nature as a reality of which he is an inseparable part at all levels. The oral myths do not give man a unique position in so far as his origin is concerned. He is one among many creatures, doesn't enjoy any privileged position. In other words, it can be said that Indian philosophy doesn't talk about the centrality and supremacy of an individual. He is also not in the possession of knowledge automatically. The knowledge, it is generally believed in the oral tradition, came to him from birds, animals, mountains, oceans and other natural entities.

There has been a tradition of anthropomorphism, where various kinds of plants and animals' lives have been objects of veneration and worship. To highlight the importance of various components of our Environment, various rituals have been institutionalised. Man enjoys no pristine position. In Indian thought *Srsti* is conceived as a living mechanism where humans along with *Pasu*, *Paksi* and *Vanaspati*, are one of the many living creatures and non-human forms are not the lifeless entity as the physical matter alone. This has been proved by modern science also. **Fritjof Capra**, an Austrian-born American physicist and deep ecologist is his ground-breaking book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975) draws a parallel between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism. The 'Cartesian' division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Capra further writes "in contrast to mechanistic Western view, the Eastern view of the world is 'organic' for the Eastern mystic, all things and events perceived by the senses are interrelated, connected and are but different aspects or manifestations of the same ultimate reality." (Capra 29)

No object—whether physical, mental, emotional or conceptual has any existence by itself. Even quantum theory implies an essential interconnectedness of nature. According to quantum theory the universe is dynamic, the matter is thus never quiescent, but always in a state of motion. Macroscopically, the material objects around us may seem passive and inert, but when we magnify such a ‘dead’ piece of stone or metal, we see that it is full of activity.

Arne Næss’s ecosophy can be summed up as self-realisation. According to Næss, every being, whether human, animal or vegetable, has an equal right to live and to blossom. Næss states that through self-realisation humans can become part of the ecosystems of Earth. He also emphasises the need for ecological wisdom and realisation of environment as a part of oneself. Increased self-realisation implies a broadening and deepening of the self. We ‘see ourselves in others’ Identification and empathy are the keys to ensure environmental justice. Through identification, we come to see that our own interests are served by conservation. The *‘everything hangs together’*—maxim of ecology applies to the self and its relation to other living beings. Here we get echo of Atharva Veda’s metaphor of *Indra’s Net* which is used to describe the interconnectedness of the universe.

We can identify with all living beings with sufficient, comprehensive maturity, beautiful or ugly, big or small. Comprehensive means ‘all-sided’, being mature in all major relationships. Traditionally the maturity of the self—from ego to social self and from social self to a metaphysical self. We also need to develop ecological Self—identification with nonhuman living beings.

Lifestyle Trends Within the Deep Ecology Movement shows the masked influence of Gandhian philosophy. The environmental awareness and environmental consciousness is inbuilt part of Gandhi’s world view. The consciousness for the non-human life form is inbuilt in Gandhian philosophy. Both, Deep Ecology and Gandhian Philosophy talk about—

- Use Simple means; avoid unnecessary, complicated things.
- Chose activities most directly serving values in themselves and having intrinsic value. Avoid activities that are merely auxiliary, have no intrinsic value and are away from fundamental goals.
- Eliminate or lessen neophilia —the love of what is new merely because it is new.
- Appreciate the ethnic and cultural differences among people; do not view the differences as threats.
- Avoid a standard of living too much higher than that of the needy (maintain a global solidarity of lifestyles).
- Seek depth and richness of experience rather than intensity.
- Try to satisfy vital needs rather than desires.
- Attempt to live in nature rather than just visiting beautiful places.
- Realising the seriousness of the ecology problem, we have to rethink ecology by exploring the totality of all human-machine, human-animal and human-plant interrelations for the sustainable development of the society.

Gandhi was quite critical of mindless industrialisation and averse to a large-scale mechanised industrialisation because it compelled human beings to dominate and exploit the earth for their selfish needs without bothering about its deadly repercussions. Gandhi argues that unbridled industrialisation is inimical to moral standards. As an alternative to industrialisation, Gandhi proposes small-scale local industry which will be comparatively less damaging for environment and people will live close to nature. According to Gandhi, meat eating also involved “unnecessary pain to and cruelty towards harmless animals “. Animal sacrifice at Kali temple in Calcutta upset him greatly. Gandhi says : “To my mind the life of lamb is no less precious than that of a human being ...I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it to protection by man from the cruelty of man. “ (Basanjit; 64).

Self-realisation is the ultimate objective of Deep ecology. In keeping with the spiritual traditions of our culture, the deep ecology norm of self-realisation goes beyond the Western 'self', which is defined as an isolated ego striving for a narrow sense of individual salvation. To quote Gandhiji, "The rock-bottom foundation of the technique for achieving the power of nonviolence is belief in the essential oneness of all life". Gandhiji believed in the concept of advaita (non-duality), i.e. the essential unity of atman and Parmatman and body, mind and soul. In this concept the world is one, there is no division between man and nature. He believes "if one man gains spirituality, the whole world gains with him and if one man fails, the whole world fails to that extent". Thus, Gandhiji recognised a basic, common right to live and blossom, to self-realisation of all. Fighting for India's political freedom, Gandhiji propounded that India did not need freedom only from the Britishers but from the system based on master slave relations. The western model of development of civilisation is based on master-slave relations. The western model of development of civilisation is based on the exploitation of resources and exploitation of man. And there is a need for a basic change in our attitude. Saving environment means saving us. Civilisation is that mode of conduct, which points out to man the path of duty. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our mind and our passion.

Gandhiji favored the Jain Principle of Aparigraha, non-possession, i.e. we should voluntarily limit our wants. Aparigraha involves considerations of others, one to limit one's need to the bare minimum. The new environmentalism in the form of deep ecology, very closely mirrors Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi experimented with and wrote a great deal about simple living in harmony with the environment. Naess explains that 'Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realisation, non-violence and what sometimes has been called biospherical egalitarianism', and points out that he was 'inevitably' influenced by the Mahatma's metaphysics.

Deep ecology is considered as the most radical form of environmentalism. As an environmental movement it argues for the right of not just animals but also inanimate elements like an ecosystem. Deep ecology holds the view that one has to recognise the value in all species of organisms and of the ecosystems. It makes the claim that everything is connected to everything else. Gandhi also believed that all life is one and the whole gamut of man's activities constitutes an indivisible whole. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself." (Prabhu and Rao 101)

Although Gandhism is not widely discussed under the light of environmental ethics and eco-aesthetics, one can find a number of striking ideas of present environmentalism in his life and works. In some select writings of Gandhi one can find certain day to day prescriptions of what should be the ideal human-nature relations. In other words, the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence is quite apt for environmental justice. In Gandhi's view of the self, human beings contain a divine spirit and are essentially all one. The individual self is interconnected with all other beings. According to Gandhi, "For we are all tarred with the same brush and are children of one and same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being, but with him, the whole world." (The essential Gandhi 83). The Gandhian vision of unity among all living beings inspires in formulating deep ecology principles. Naess was immensely influenced by Gandhi's view of identification of oneself with the rest of nature. What Naess wants to justify is that Self-realisation in a wide sense has to be functional. Naess further maintains, "Thus, Gandhi recognised a basic common right to live and blossom, to self-realisation in a wide sense applicable to any being that can be said to have interests or needs. Gandhi made manifest the internal relation

between self-realisation, non-violence, and what has sometimes been called biospherical egalitarianism” (“Self-Realisation...” 39).

To conclude, both Gandhian philosophy and Arne Naess’ deep ecology emphasise that humanity coevolved with the rest of life on this particular planet. What makes us people and not computers is emotion. Humanity is part of nature. Preliterate societies were in intimate contact with a bewildering array of life forms. At the heart of the environmentalist worldview is the conviction that human’s physical and spiritual health depends on sustaining the planet in a relatively unaltered state. Gandhian philosophy and deep ecology are not just about discussion but must be a living reality.

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## Theorising the Alternative Forms of Masculinity: Examining Byatt's writing through a Deconstructed Gendered Outlook

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### Abstract

With its disparate, antithetical and far-flung depictions, masculinity gets investigated on while its constructive notions are debated and disarrayed. With the development of studies on men and masculinities in social sciences (e.g. Connell's *Masculinities*, M. Kimmel's *Changing Men*, Morgan's *Discovering Men*, Seidler's *Rediscovering Masculinity*), there appears to be a vivid expansion of enthusiastic studies related to this. This study particularly concentrates on analysing Phineas Nanson's personal and professional roles in A.S. Byatt's *The Biographer's Tale* (2000). The novel records the journey of Phineas Nanson, who is bored with the critical aspects of literature and decides to explore the truth of life. The study, further, involves a detailed examination of his thought process, cognitive ability and frightened self. It also dwells around the entangled aspects of the relationships in his personal life. His soul, which resembles that of an escapist, becomes the core area of study. It portrays the distinct diversion from the ideal masculine traits.

**Keywords:** subversion of hegemonic masculinity, Queer identities, deconstruction, female masculinity, pluralities within masculinity

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### **Introduction**

The analytical endeavour based on the British novelist, A short story writer and critic A.S. Byatt takes into concern the notions, “Theorizing Masculinity” (17), “Masculinity in Disguise” (119) and “Non-Male Masculinities” (131) included in Reeser’s *Masculinities in Theory* (2010). If we take Reeser’s views on “Non- Male Masculinities” (131), we observe that he examines masculinity “in its recurring relation to other kinds of bodies besides male ones.” (132) Reeser even takes on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s view in *Constructing Masculinity* (1998), where he writes “sometimes masculinity has got nothing to do with... men”. (12) Reeser yet again subverts the established notion of masculinity by conversing on “Female masculinities” (131) and depicting the traits of “power or virility” (131) ascribed to the female body. He even extends his views on such masculinity by taking Judith Halberstam’s observations in *Female Masculinity* (1998), where she writes that “far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity.” (1) Therefore, Reeser uses the concepts of “effeminacy” and “female masculinity” (133) as tools to “destabilize imagined binary oppositions between male masculinity and female femininity.” (133) He specifies these as “power [which] is so closely linked to masculinity that it may appear as inherently masculine” (133). The subversions of Phineas’s masculinity are thus analyzed through the theoretical framework propounded by Reeser.

It was right after his visit to the Linnean Society that Phineas developed an association with the “pollination ecologist” (Byatt 110), Fulla Biefeld. He had been in search of more facts about Destry-Scholes’s subjects of the unfinished biographies. It was at this very place where he met the Swedish woman “who reminded me [him] of a Picasso ceramic.” (Byatt 109) Phineas was busy observing the “stout” physique of Fulla which was “Like a squat S, with breasts pushing forwards and buttocks pushing backwards,

and solid calves under a denim skirt with a leather belt.” (Byatt 109) Phineas was so deeply engrossed in observing the “form” of Fulla that he “did not notice her face” (Byatt 110). The fact that Phineas has been deeply enamoured by the voluptuous body of Fulla, proves that he is also attracted towards the female gender. This shows that Phineas is not only suffering from a psychological confusion but also a physiological one. His sexuality gets divided between his attractions towards the male as well as the female sex.

However, Phineas’s attraction towards Fulla’s body cannot be related simply to the notion of objectification of women and visualizing them as the element of sexual desire. Phineas is rather charmed by the essence of masculinity that vehemently lies within the feminine self of Fulla. Although “the male body is the most common purveyor of masculinity” (Reeser 17), the notion seems to differ as we observe Fulla. Her masculinity is indeed something that Phineas, as a male, was lacking. “The stalwart legs furred with strong, brass-gold hairs” (Byatt 117) seemed to provide a sense of security to Phineas. Phineas became “claustrophobic” in the “mustiness” (Byatt 116) of the Linnean Society Library. This shows his inability to perceive new knowledge. It also brings out his hidden self which is frightened to confront the depths of intellectuality. At this very moment, Fulla becomes his saviour: “I slipped to my knees, losing consciousness, and my hands ran down solid thighs, strong knees, warm, muscular. The door opened and I found myself at the feet of FullaBiefeld” (Byatt 117) casts his subordination, unmanliness and necessity of security. He regards Fulla as someone on whom he can be heavily dependent. This brings out his realization of the submissive nature within him and his lack of dependence on himself. Fulla’s masculinity becomes more vivid, and it becomes apparent that “the cause or the origin of masculinity cannot be directly linked to the male body” (Reeser 18).

In Reeser's view, "masculinity should be examined in its recurring relation to other kinds of bodies besides the male ones." (131) The fact that he regards Fulla as a masculine figure can be detected through the manner in which he constantly associates her with the males: "FullaBiefeld put on wide, narrow oval-lensed glasses, surrounded like those of the male couple in Puck's Girdle, with iridescent titanium." (Byatt118) This seems similar to Reeser's opinion which asserts that "we all know women who we consider to have certain amount of masculinity and men who we do not." (36) It seems that Phineas is more attracted towards the masculine stature rather than feminine, reticent beauty. He seems to be enticed by the masculine aspects in Fulla that he himself is lacking. Phineas meticulously observes Fulla's face for the first time while conversing with her regarding his research. He observed that "Her face is not beautiful. Her nose is sharp, her eyes too deep under the bristling ledges of her pale brows, her mouth too big for her (smallish) face, and set in what is almost a permanent expression of disapproval. Her eyes are not blue but greenish, flecked with brownish streaks. Her eyelashes are actually quite thick, but so pale that they are only visible in certain lights." (Byatt119). Fulla's masculine essence seems to get a profound expression through Reeser who proposes his views on "a woman in a male-dominated world" where the "culture does not automatically accord her the possibility of having masculinity." (18)

Fulla's projection of masculine traits reverberates to Reeser's observation of "non-male masculinities" (132). He asserts that "Masculinity inscribed on the female body is not simply male masculinity transposed, however, but should be viewed as another type of masculinity that may nonetheless have connections to male masculinity." (132). Taking the views of Judith Halberstam, in her ground-breaking work, *Female Masculinity* (1998) we locate her assertion that "far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity." (Reeser 132) Similar to effeminacy

“female masculinity destabilizes imagined binary oppositions between male masculinity and female femininity.” (Reeser 132) It “may contribute to a larger cultural anxiety about what a woman is or should be, or it may evoke a threat that men will lose their supposedly natural hold on masculinity if women do not take the flak for breaking out of their assigned gender.” (Reeser 132-133) “Female masculinity opens up a space for male masculinity to question the very naturalness of the link between sex and gender or between the male body and masculinity.” (Reeser 134)

Even though “masculinity plays an important role in the exertion of power” (Reeser 31), we can detect a reversal of role here. While Phineas regards Fulla as his rescuer, at the same point of time, he resents her presence. He looks at her as the one who destroys his happy existence in the Utopic world of Erik and Christophe. He regards Fulla as the “Valkyrie” who swept in “to defend me [him]” (Byatt 206). At the same moment, he felt that he could have resolved the matter by kissing his admired men: “I might have injured one, or both of my employers seriously. Or we might- so to speak- have kissed and made up.” (Byatt 206) Even at such an importune moment, he was extremely unwilling to leave his happy abode. He was so very comfortable with these men that he was certain of the fact that he could kiss and make up with them.

Moreover, Phineas has not only been inferior to Fulla in terms of intellectual ability. He seems rather much more comfortable in playing the role of a submissive partner while sexually bonding with her. Phineas’s sexual attraction towards Fulla becomes visible right from the very moment when he observes her “stout” structure at the Linnean Society that resembles a “Picasso ceramic” (Byatt109). He had been so very enamoured by Fulla’s “breasts pushing forwards and buttocks pushing backwards” (Byatt109) that he had hardly any interest in looking at her face. Fulla exhibits both her oozing sexual appeal as well as her strong masculine traits exposed through the “solid calves under her denim skirt” (Byatt109). These

traits indeed make her Phineas's saviour who had been feeling utterly "claustrophobic" (Byatt116) in the intellectual environment. Phineas was rescued from his gradual descent into suffocation and unconsciousness as his "hands ran down solid thighs, strong knees, warm, muscular." (Byatt117) Even inside this brawny, fibrous structure, it was only possible for Phineas to encounter "yielding soft flesh" (Byatt117). "The stalwart legs... furred with strong, brass-gold hairs" (Byatt117) appeared to Phineas as a site of security where he can "lose consciousness completely" (Byatt 117). Phineas seemed to discover the light of consciousness inside the darkness of Fulla's "skirt" (Byatt 117). He could revive his senses after attaining the sight of "the slight wiriness of her pubic hair pressing against what appeared to be alternately crimson and emerald knickers" (Byatt 117). As Phineas's nose became "alive with FullaBiefeld's sex" (Byatt 117), we can easily derive his attraction emerging out of his discovery of Fulla's masculinity concealed within the female self. Phineas's deliberates on his "weakness" as well as his tendency to "tremble" (Byatt 117). These can be viewed as shreds of evidence of his own awareness of his lack of masculinity. Getting "slipped to my [his] knees" (Byatt 117) right at the first encounter with Fulla proves his acceptance of submission against the traits that he is lacking since the very beginning. This again brings out the latent feminine self within Phineas. Such a characteristic aspect of Phineas finds its perfect revelation through Reeser who claims that "There are traditionally feminine aspects in many brands of masculinity. The sensitive man, for instance, is one brand of masculinity dependent not on a rejection of femininity but on its necessary incorporation into what a man is or should be." (37).

Even though he was "alive with FullaBiefeld's sex" (Byatt 117), Phineas was too afraid to enter into a sexual rendezvous with her. He appeared to be rather comfortable playing the role of the submissive partner during sex. Here, Phineas subverts the accepted notion of masculinity which believes that "sexual virility provides

one ontologically seeming trait of masculinity” (Reeser 45). His meek self seemed to have “trembled and exploded” (Byatt 213) at the very thought of a woman being dominant in a relationship. He seemed totally benumbed after witnessing the compelling vigorousness of a woman to sexually advance even before a man. We rarely talk about “her masculinity” in the way we talk about “his masculinity” or “her femininity.” (Reeser 134) Fulla seemed to project the “power” that is “so closely linked to masculinity that it may appear as inherently masculine” (Reeser 133). This very thought happened to make Phineas shudder: “And she opened the top two buttons of her shift, so I could clearly see her freckled brown breasts in their lacy cups... And when she saw me looking, she put up her quick little hands and pulled my face down between them. All of me, all of me, trembled and exploded.” (Byatt 213) This again brings out the effeminate aspects within Phineas. Regarding effeminacy as something that “can actually masculinize a man”, Reeser proclaims that “Effeminacy often signifies the threat of a man becoming like a woman, but effeminacy is not necessarily the opposite of masculinity.” (210)

Fulla seems to manifest the masculine traits and Phineas the feminine ones. He follows her whole-heartedly and derives his happiness and satisfaction through the fulfilment of Fulla’s sexual expectations. The very being of Fulla protruding out through her “amazing” features and her “severe little face” was “like an electric pulse” (Byatt 260) to Phineas. Each and every movement of Fulla, even “her sturdy feet in their Ecco sandals”, made Phineas regard her as “an independent creature” (Byatt 260) which was totally opposite to his own entity. Phineas’s constant realization of Fulla being “at the top” (Byatt 260) proves her strong ability that is vigorous enough to undermine the existence of Phineas. Phineas demonstrates a discourse of masculinity that “evokes an anti-traditional masculinity, the image of the “new age sensitive man” and repositions masculinity as kindler, softer, and in touch with its feminine side. Given these differences, such

discourses have the ultimate effect of constructing contradictory discursive masculinities. Similarly, masculinity may be contradictory within the context of a single discourse.” (Reeser 33)

According to Reeser, “In this gendered linguistic scenario, “masculinity” would refer to something that would be obvious to anyone hearing the word, would have a stable referent, and would stand in direct opposition to “femininity.”... An ontology of masculinity is dependent on an assumed stability of other words linked to that essence as well, including perhaps “man,” “power,” “virility,” or “penis”. (36) Such an assumption gets totally subverted through the Phineas’s physique which seems to oppose the proposed notions of masculinity. Focusing on several “phallic symbols” there exist “myths [which] function as a way to make certain forms of masculinity seem eternal and unchanging, not open to change or variation, and not ideological in nature.” (Reeser 22) Struggling with the several conflicting ideas in his mind and constantly suffering from an inferiority complex owing to his no-so-sharp and “small” (Byatt 3) features and being someone who “was a little person, the child of a little person” (Byatt 3), Phineas seems to raise several questions within his self regarding his masculinity. This clearly emerges out of the associations of several bold features and physical traits with perfect masculinity by the society. Fidelma Ashe justifies this through the opinion of R.W. Connell in her work *The New Politics of Masculinity* (2007) where she brings about the argument “that masculinity is a relational term that only exists in contrast to what it is not, namely femininity” (145). There happens to sustain profound doubts regarding the masculinity of Phineas Nanson throughout the novel which he himself realizes but is immensely afraid to resolve or even encounter them.

### **Conclusion**

Phineas, being a male projecting the feminine traits exhibits the predominant femininity and timid nature within his male self. Such masculinity of Phineas which deviates from the conventional

form of masculinity can be established by the theoretical ground propounded by Connell. She argues and wishes to “bring to light the conflicting interests of different groups of men” (*Masculinities* 238). She (*Masculinities* 220-24; *The Men and the Boys* 205) even argues that “it is possible for men to refuse hegemonic masculinity”. This becomes expressed through Reeser as he asserts that “Instead of considering the two genders as opposites, one might think in Derrida’s terms of femininity as “supplementary” to masculinity, meaning that masculinity can exist only by virtue of its dependence on femininity. While masculinity might be defined in language as inherently different from femininity, the very fact that it is the opposite of femininity suggests that its definition requires femininity.” (37)

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## The Representation of Women with Disability in the Movie *Black*

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### Abstract

Cinema is viewed as a mirror to the society. It plays a significant role in entertaining individuals, educating them and impacting their viewpoints, practices and mentalities. Bollywood is the biggest maker of Indian cinema and subsequently, the depiction of any issue turns out to be very crucial here.

The disabled individuals are discriminated and treated badly by the people. Their hardships are essentially amplified when the disabled individual is a woman. Women with disabilities are doubly discriminated; firstly, being a woman and secondly, being a disabled individual. Women's disabilities are used as justification for continued discrimination against them. There has been a little endeavor to showcase the collective experience of women's disabilities in contemporary Bollywood movies.

In bollywood movies, women with disabilities are often presented as a weak character in need of a support system which they find in others. These women with disabilities; facing different challenges in their life are not different from us and must be portrayed as a normal individual with an identity of their own. This papers aims at studying the representation of women with disability in the movie *Black*.

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**Keywords:** women, disability, impaired, character, Indian, disorder, significantly.

### **Introduction**

Cinema is a visual art. It is considered to be a mirror to the society. It brings us close to different cultures around the world. It serves as an important means of entertaining people, enlightening them and bringing a behavioral change in their perspectives, practices and attitudes. It deeply influences our sense of right and wrong. Cinema is a good source of promoting traditions, values and also norms concerning society. It presents before us the journey and experiences of people who have the ability to transform and shape us into an incredible new person. Our perception of the world and the society is deeply affected by the ways in which the individuals and groups are represented through the medium of cinema. It enlightens us and forces us to think in a broader perspective. Indian cinema is the largest producer of feature films in the world and hence, the portrayal of any issue becomes quite significant here.

### **Disability**

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, the word 'disability' is defined as "a physical, mental, cognitive or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions". This may affect body organ of an individual and their participation in several areas of their life. According to Barnes the term 'disability' represents "a complex system of social restrictions imposed on people with impairments by a highly discriminatory society" (Barnes 1991:1). There are three dimensions of the disability recognized by International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, known as ICF:

1. Body Structure and function
2. Activity (activity restrictions)
3. Participation (participation restrictions)

**Women with Disability**

Women are marginalized as victims of the patriarchal system, but women with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in Indian society. Women with disabilities are doubly discriminated; firstly, being a woman and secondly, being a disabled individual. Women's disabilities are used as justification for continued discrimination against them. They are discriminated at multiple levels. They have been denied opportunities in various spheres of their life. They are considered subordinate and are neglected in the decision-making processes. The restrictive condition of disability poses problems when it comes to the fulfillment of the role of women as a mother or as a wife which is considered as their primary role.

Disability is a physical construct that completely overlooks personhood. Disabled women are considered to be incapable of fulfilling the role of homemaker, wife and also of mother. They are also incapable of conforming to the stereotype of femininity and beauty in terms of physical appearance. They are also stereotyped as passive, helpless and dependent. The vulnerability of the disabled women is multiplied due to their dependence on a caregiver and sometimes due to their immobility and lack of access to support system. They lack the self-esteem which stems from the societal attitudes. They are vulnerable to abuses and exploitations.

The disabled people analyze their own experiences of disability. In this regard Paul Abberley in his seminal work "Work, Utopia and Impairment" writes, "Disability is a particular form of oppression, in that sexual and racial oppression are 'wholly ideological'; whereas impairment is 'real' and 'forms a bedrock upon which justificatory oppressive theories are based'" (Abberley, 8). The disabled people are discriminated and treated feebly in society. Their difficulties are significantly magnified when the disabled person is a woman. Disabled women are significantly more disadvantaged with respect to women in general. Women

with disability are doubly discriminated on the basis of their socio-economic as well as their political participation in India. There has been a little endeavor to showcase the collective experience of women with disability in contemporary Indian cinema.

### **Women with Disability in Contemporary Indian Cinema**

Contemporary Indian cinema portrays handful of women characters with disabilities. In the movie *Kaabil* (2017), we see Yami Gautam as visually impaired and a rape victim. She is shown as weak and a victim of sexual exploitation. The character of Jhilmil Chatterjee in the movie *Barfi* (2012) played by Priyanka Chopra shows her as a girl with autism. She is shown a dependent, frightened and childish. She wears pink frocks and pink ribbons. In the movie *Woh Lamhe* (2006) based on the life of Parveen Babi, Kangana Ranaut plays the role of a girl (Sana Azim) who struggles with schizophrenia. The movie portrays her as a demonized character which forms a negative image of misconceptions about schizophrenia. In the movie *Heroine* (2012), we are introduced to Kareena Kapoor as an actress Mahi Arora who is a sufferer of bipolar disorder. We see her destroying her glamorous career due to her serious psychiatric disorder nervous breakdown. Other movies, like *Fanaa* (2006) shows Kajol as a blind girl. Kalki Koechlin plays the character of a woman with cerebral palsy in the movie *Margarita With A Straw* (2014). In *Ajab Prem Ki Gajab Kahani* (2009), Katrina Kaif has a speech impairment that causes her to stammer.

This paper focuses on the movie *Black* which represents Rani Mukherjee as a disabled woman. The movie *Black* (2005) based on Helen Keller's life and struggle shows her as a visually and hearing-impaired girl. She overcomes the misfortune of being disabled with the help of her teacher who brings a ray of light into her world of darkness and helps her overcome her misfortune.

### **Disabled Women in the Movie *Black***

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Black* is loosely based on Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life*. This magical movie depicts the

journey of a hearing, speech and visually impaired girl from a dark, empty, black world to a world of realization of her dreams and actualization of herself. Michelle McNally with the support of her teacher, Debraj Sahai dares to tread upon a path full of insurmountable challenges and reaches a point of excellence beyond everyone's expectations. While talking to Mr. Fernandes, he strongly affirms that, "Impossible is a word that I have never taught her Mr. Fernandes" (Black 1.00.40-1.01.00). Again, we see when she sits for the interview in the university, she is asked by the interviewer, "Why do you want to study? To this she replies with confidence, "I want to study and learn so that I may live with dignity, with independence, to be alive" (Black 1.03.28- 1.03.41). Though Michelle has several problems, it does not hinder her way to reach a level where many people do not reach.

The movie represents disability at the centre and the normal people are pushed to the periphery. The title of the movie symbolizes the dark world of the protagonist. She is blind, deaf, and mute. These impairments make her live her life in the dark. Even her father Paul (Dhritiman Chatterjee) is fed up with her tantrums and makes up his mind to put her in an asylum. Impaired hearing, vision or speech leads to many problems in learning, socialization and intellectual development. Debraj Sahai teaches language to Michelle and gives her wings to fly. He takes her from darkness to light and eventually succeeds in enrolling her to a regular degree college of a prestigious British University and she becomes the first deaf and blind girl to graduate from that university.

Sahai, reconfigures and redefines the world for Michelle. For Sahai - black is not the colour of darkness but the colour of celebration and the colour of the graduation robe; disability is not a deficit or an impairment; it is a stage we all will reach if we live long enough. Debraj, in a similar vein, underscores the similarities between the disabled and the able-bodied by speaking of disability as a stage and not a medical condition. The latter half

of the film shows how Michelle uses the same pedagogical approaches to teach Debraj who is in an advanced state of Alzheimer's. The film depicts the challenges as well as the joys of inclusive teaching. In a lecture, when Mitchell listens to her teacher talk about aspirations and the dreams that we see with our eyes, she passionately disagrees- "Aankheinsapnenahidekhti, mansapnedekhtahai. Main aankhon se nahidekhsaktiphirbhi main sapnedekhsaktihood. Humarasapnahai ki mai graduate banu" (Black 1.12.55- 1.13.25). (Eyes don't dream, the heart does. I can't see but I dream. Our dream is that I may become a graduate.). This incident highlights that disability is not an excuse of limitations. Michelle overpowers her disability and reaches a stage which is difficult for normal people to reach. Movies like this throws light on the urgent need for innovation and alternative pedagogical techniques for teaching language to the disabled students. It portrays the disappointment of not being understood by people and not being able to communicate with others. It highlights the crucial role that language and communication play in the development of an individual.

It is a difficult task to teach a disabled person. The movie criticizes the idea of the segregation of disabled people. Through the character of Michelle, it has been shown that if a deaf, mute, and blind girl with so many limitations can be a graduate then nothing can get in the way if someone has a strong determination.

### **Conclusion**

The ways in which individuals and groups are portrayed in popular cinema has a profound effect on how they are viewed by the society. The movie *Black* presents a changing perspective of disability as represented in contemporary Indian cinema. Women with disability; facing different challenges in their life are not different from us and must be portrayed as a normal individual with an identity of their own. The movie *Black* goes beyond the usual pity reaction that one usually associates with a disabled person. The invisible and mute category of women with disability

is now provided with sufficient care and opportunities. Through this movie, it can be observed that contemporary Indian cinema has transformed in terms of disability portrayal. The Indian viewers of Hindi cinema are mostly ignorant of human rights. There is a need of more movies like these to break the social and attitudinal barriers in the mind of people on the rights of disabled women.

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**Education as a Means of Social  
Mobility and Change for the Dalits in  
Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *The  
Scavenger's Son***

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**Abstract**

The paper aims to critically analyze the role and theme of education in Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *The Scavenger's Son* (1947). Pillai portrays three generations of manual scavengers and their quest to improve their plight through education. The author attempts to dismantle the age-old hierarchy of the caste system that continues to keep the lower-caste community ignorant and oppressed. Individuals, especially manual scavengers, are regarded as untouchables and looked upon with contempt and disgust. Education and its objectives as propagated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar would be the stepping stone towards their upliftment. The paper primarily deals with the purpose of education, to enable the lower caste individuals to look and think for themselves through social consciousness. It also allows them to question the injustice and ill-treatment imposed upon their community. In addition, the paper explores the possibility of social mobility as provided by the attainment of education.

**Keywords:** Education; Social-mobility; Dalits; Ambedkar; Pillai

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The paper explores the intricate issue of what it means to be literate, to be educated, for those who are in the lowest rung of the social strata as depicted in Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's 1947 novel *The Scavenger's Son* (*Thottiyude Makan* in Malayalam). Firstly, understanding the sociology of education broadly & how it can be regarded as a means to break the age-old hierarchy of dominance of the upper caste over the lower caste in mainstream India and the intrinsic political structure of power which is at the centre of such hierarchy, needs to be investigated. Secondly, how the Dalits, the scavengers in particular, themselves conceive the idea of education – whether it is seen as an agent of social mobility which will liberate them from the curse of the caste system or whether it is just a tool for assuming a semblance of identity and position of the upper caste, needs to be questioned. Thirdly, whether being educated would wash away all the stereotyped notions and prejudices attached to being an untouchable necessitates an academic inquiry.

Pillai in *The Scavenger's Son* portrays three generations and the slow transition from tradition to modernity, from silent subjugation to self-realization and resistance. Ishukkumuttu represents tradition. He is acquiescent, and ignorant, and he silently accepts his fate without questioning the tradition that subjugates them. His biggest fear is losing his job and the right of his son to be a scavenger because he is aware that other than being a scavenger there is no hope for another job to sustain them. Chudalamuttu though uneducated has higher hopes and ambition to change their sorry state of affairs. However, his idea of social mobility is problematic as he is disgusted with himself and his community instead of being angry with the caste system. His attitude may be because of the influence of the society where the upper-caste dominates but it shows that he distances himself socially and psychologically from his people while trying to identify with his oppressors. This reveals an attitude similar to what Ngugi (1986) terms as “(de)colonizing the mind” in revering the culture, lifestyle and ethos of the

dominant (colonizers) caste while undervaluing his own system of thoughts and living. But, with the younger generation like Mohanan and Pichandi's son, an increased level of awareness and the ability to question the system can be witnessed. They are not ashamed of being scavengers, because they regard it only as a job. This self-reliance and self-esteem developed through the questioning of the old age caste system sow the seed of change which can deconstruct all the notions associated with being a scavenger and, thus, establish a new social order.

Education "is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela). Pillai addresses the promised change to be brought by education in the living conditions of the Dalits, uplifting and improving the lives of those who have been subjugated and marginalized for centuries. Denying access to this golden gate to the Dalits exposes a serious problem as education allows an individual to gain knowledge and power to think individually and look critically into the prevalent customs that allows him/her the space to question the existing state of affairs. The Dalits are already living in the margins of the society-culturally, socially, economically and most importantly mentally driven into the realm of silence. They are made to believe that they are different, so coerced into living in the periphery. Social reformers and educationists such as Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, Guruchand and Dr. B.R Ambedkar were pioneers who fought for education for the Dalits as they were aware of the liberating and uplifting factor of education. Guruchand advocated freedom from subjugation for the Bengali Dalits. He stated that 'Education, Wealth and Political power' can only liberate and emancipate the downtrodden untouchables. BR Ambedkar incorporated Phule's agenda and strove to uplift the Dalits with the slogan 'Educate, Organize and Agitate'.

Ambedkar believed that emancipation and liberation could not be achieved through education alone and that untouchability is not an isolated problem. In order to understand how education can be

a tool to redefine their identity not on the basis of caste but on the basis of integrity and for the betterment of their life in the society we first need to understand the sociology of education. Sociology of education regards education as a public institute where it affects the individual or public experience and values/ notions prevalent in the society which is again simulated into the system of education. In Ambedkar's opinion, education would free the Dalits from the shackles of superstitions, ignorance and the traditional occupation that deems them untouchable. This would enable them to break the hierarchy founded on the divisions of labour. This desire to be free from inherited occupation is evident in the character of Chudalamuttu. He never wanted to be a scavenger but the norms prevalent at that time left him with no other option. His ignorant father believes that his son has to live according to the occupation imposed on them, no matter how demeaning it is for them as long as it can sustain them. He says while blessing his son "God will take care of my son. It is a father's tin and shovel that I am giving. By that means my son must live" (Pillai 2). Chudalamuttu's repressed anger is relevant as he cannot understand why he has to be a scavenger out of all other occupations to make a living.

This sense of helplessness at a fate decided by the society is what Ambedkar terms as injustice. He states:

To deny them that right (i.e., education) is to create a situation full of injustice. To keep people illiterate and then to make their literacy the ground of their enfranchisement is to add insult to the injury. But the situation indeed involves more than this. It involves an aggravation of the injury for to keep illiterate and then to deny them franchise which is the only means through which they could effectively provide for the removal of illiteracy is to perpetuate illiteracy and postpone indefinitely the days of their enfranchisement.

(DR. Ambedkar)

Though Chudalamuttu is illiterate, he is well aware that education can be the only way to put an end to their suffering. He is a man

of ambition and aspiration and he wants his dreams to be realized through his son. He questions his wife Valli, "Must we be satisfied to live forever as a scavenger?" (Pillai 35) exposing his desire for a better life. However, Valli is unable to understand the idea that the scavengers have always been hegemonized by the prevailing social, political, economic and religious situations. The custom-bound society that prevents the Dalits from progress keeps Valli wondering "Is not a scavenger a scavenger? Is it possible to become something else? (35). The possibility of becoming something else is imagined and aimed by Chudalamuttu with his well-structured plans for his son. He is determined not to make his son a scavenger. But in this process, he is portrayed as an ambition-driven "devil", a person who is ready to betray his community and friends for the sake of his personal gain. This is the context wherein questions need to be considered about the writer's standpoint and who he is writing for or whose voice he takes the responsibility of portraying. In this regard, what Arjun Dangle observes maybe quoted: "The difference between the two kinds of writers (Dalit and non-Dalit writers) is not just because of their castes but also due to differing experiences and their ways of interpreting them" (Dangle 264-65). Pillai's stand on the Dalits has a political agenda in addition to social and cultural aspects as the novel explores revolutionary elements such as the scavengers' attempt to form a union for fair wages, Chudalamuttu trying to educate his son and so on though these aspects do not seem to go further.

Chudalamuttu can be considered as a modern man who tries to go against the tradition but in the process of realizing his dream, he is portrayed as someone who wants to climb the caste hierarchy rather than to do away with it. In trying not to become what is perceived of a scavenger, he almost cuts off all his connections with his community. He even forbids Valli from interacting with their neighbors. His idea of social mobility is neither of going against the hierarchy nor of eradicating the demeaning notions the

society has for scavengers whose caste is built on a person's occupation. It is because he has internalized the attitudes of the upper caste who would look at his son with disgust and horror upon the idea of his son being a scavenger's son. It is manifested in his unwillingness to caress his son or eat with him because he does not want his son to be associated with the filth that is attached with his community. His idea of upliftment is through attaining the position as enjoyed by the upper caste.

Chudalamuttu's only fear is that his son will become a scavenger. This is evident when he chides Valli "If you think of him as a scavenger's son, he will become a scavenger" (Pillai 70). He views his child as someone who should not be polluted by the touch of an untouchable. Though he does not want to be a scavenger, the idea of being untouchable is still ingrained in his mind where he hesitates to take his own child into his arms: "He was a scavenger. How could he take that child with hands that had cleaned out latrines?" (Pillai 71). This aspect of the inferiority complex prohibits the Dalits from alleviating their condition and only education can be a savior as mentioned by B.R. Ambedkar in his welcome speech at Milind Mahavidyalaya :

Coming as I do from the lowest order of the Hindu Society, I know that what is the value of education. The problem of raising the lower order deemed to be economic. This is a great mistake. The problem of raising the lower order in India is not to feed them, to clothe them and to make them serve the higher classes as the ancient ideal of this country. The problem of the lower order is to remove from them that inferiority complex which has stunted their growth and made them slaves to others, to create in them the consciousness of the significance of their lives for themselves and for the country, of which they have been cruelly robbed of the existing social order. Nothing can achieve this purpose except the spread of higher education. This is in my opinion the panacea of our social troubles. (as quoted in Pinto 192).

Chudalamuttu's first challenge towards the upper-caste is by naming his son. We may argue that this challenge can be regarded as the ground for resistance against the hierarchy that even disallows the right to name one's own child. But this resistance and his idea of social mobility is steeped in ambiguity and uncertainty as his behavior towards his family and community is one of an upper-caste towards the subjugated ones. Another challenge is his attempt to get his son admitted to school. The teacher refuses to admit his son to school in the following words: "It's not possible here. You understand? How on earth could you be so presumptuous? You thought you could bring your children here and have them sit next to these children, didn't you?" (Pillai 86) "It had never been known for a scavenger to get his child admitted to school. It had never happened that a scavenger's child had been sent to school. How could that unwritten law be broken? (87). Through the trials of Chudalamuttu, the author shows the true picture of the Dalits which in the words of Reddy is: "Denial of education to the Dalits perpetuated their social humiliation, economic exploitation, political marginalization and cultural subordination" (4). The upper-caste didn't allow education for Dalits because it was unthinkable for a scavenger to send his child to school.

Despite the humiliation he faces, he never gives up on his son's education. The school administrations were hesitant to enroll a scavenger's son, and Chudalamuttu had to bribe the teacher to get his son Mohanan admitted to the school by assuming another identity- as the nephew of the president's driver. But they had to face another problem too, even if they were successful in admitting their son to school, there was no surety if it "would [it] be possible for his son's education to continue?" (Pillai 88). This fear of insecurity adds to the cause of the Dalits getting discouraged from improving their situations. Moreover, the students had to bear the brunt of the teacher's wrath, his anger stemming from his caste prejudices which led to students quitting education altogether. It is clear when Mohanan comes home crying from school because

the teacher beat him. He loses interest in going back to school. When Valli saw three marks on his thigh she realized that her precious and adored son has been hit. On being asked he replied that “He said, “Aren’t you a scavenger’s son? If I tell you, you won’t understand,” and he beat me. If that schoolmaster tells us anything, we can’t understand.” (Pillai 92). Valli could not bear the fact that even after learning that her son is a bright pupil in school, just because he is a scavenger’s son, he has to silently accept the beatings.

It is not that they are ignorant of the cause of not being allowed to be educated, they are well aware of the discrimination as Chudalamuttu mentions: “Do you know why our kid was not admitted to school? If a scavenger’s children start getting educated- then people worry that there will no longer be any scavengers” (Pillai 88). We can also find this dejection echoed in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935). Bakha laments that his father did not send him to school because no schools would allow him to be admitted. This system of injustice is questioned by Valli: “Who were those schools that one saw all over the country actually for? ‘One thing’s for certain,’ she said, ‘they won’t let scavengers and beggars study.’” (Pillai 88). Discrimination in school itself is an aspect that would discourage any children from attending classes and violence towards the Dalits can be seen as an act of asserting supremacy by the upper-caste. Humiliating and denigrating Dalit students in the institution of knowledge and enlightenment itself confirm Ambedkar’s idea of education where he “emphasized that education alone would not automatically eradicate untouchability, but by restructuring and transforming the entire anatomy of caste relation and attitude one could certainly strike at the root of social prejudice and inequalities. The individual and collective agency of the Dalit was essential for bringing about a social change” (Paik 83). So it becomes important to reconstruct and reform the social and economic norms that contribute to their stunted growth and oppression.

Shailaja Paik describes Ambedkar's and Gandhi's ideas of the necessity of hygiene and cleanliness for the Dalits to be accepted by the other pupils in the class. Cleanliness is for all, it need not be associated with "touchable" or "untouchables". Due to lack of awareness and ignorance the Dalit students would sit in class dirty and unclean. It leads to their further avoidance and humiliation. Mohanan despite being the cleanest becomes the object of spiteful trick played by the other children because of his caste. He complains "All the children say I stink and run away from me holding their noses." (Pillai 89). All these reveal that a wholesome reconstruction is needed, even with the religion and tradition that upholds caste hierarchy.

Education is needed to dismantle the customs and traditions that construct walls deeming some inferior and some superior. As advocated by Ambedkar, education is essential because it will help the person to have a sense of self-respect, dignity, and self-esteem. It makes the people aware of their position and standing in society and his relation with the society. It is not about opposing a person or an institution but it is about deconstructing a whole system. Mohanan wants to take revenge for the injustice done to his community and his parents by the upper-caste. Pichandi's son also says, "We should forget the individual and oppose the state of society that individual represents" (Pillai 112). The individual is influenced by existing norms so the resistance should be against the tradition and culture that dehumanizes a certain community just because he is termed "Untouchable".

Thus, Pillai shows that education is not only about developing one's personality or securing job opportunities for social mobility but it also empowers individuals with agency to bring about desired changes in the society. Education can serve as a means of liberation from the social, economic and political subjugation but it alone cannot bring all these changes. Chudalamuttu's idea of social mobility and change to be brought through education is individual/family oriented and the stand of the younger generation

like Mohanan and Pichandi's son focuses more on the social changes.

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## Shakespearean Sonnets: Fair or Foul?

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### **Abstract**

More than four hundred years have passed since Shakespearean sonnets were published. Although much has been written about them, yet there is scope for their further exploration, assimilation and synthesis of the opinions of the critics in order to understand them in a better way. A modern reader oscillates between the two types of opinions - one that the sonnets are “the key with which Shakespeare unlocked his heart” and the other that “if so, the less Shakespeare”.

This paper aims to discuss the opinions of the critics, the thematic pattern of the sonnets, and their literary qualities due to which the sonnets are immortal. The literary devices such as metaphors, similes, symbols and images that have influenced and inspired the writers are of immense value and they give us the clues to interpret the sonnets as a drama. On the other hand every sonnet can also be analysed and understood independently.

A perusal of the sonnets reveals that the sonnets are directly addressed to the readers who feel that the emotions,

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ideas and experiences reflect the emotional ebb and flow of their own lives and thus are closely related to the readers.

**Key Words:** summer, eternal, dark, fair, bud, rose, increase.

Love has been an evergreen theme of literature. Shakespearean sonnets celebrate the idea of love. Critics have different opinions about them. Francis Meres appreciated them in 1598 "...the soul of *Ovid* lives in the mellifluous and honey tongued... sonnets" (Jones 35). John Benson in his *Epistle to the Reader* of 1640 edition of the Sonnets wrote that the sonnets were "excellent and sweetly composed in which we find the perfect use of eloquence, such as will raise your admiration to his (Shakespeare's) praise" (Jones 35). Since then, critics have expressed positive and negative views about the sonnets. William Wordsworth had high admiration for them. He considers them to be the key with which Shakespeare "unlocked his heart" (Jones 41). In 1803 he harshly criticised the 'Dark Lady Sonnets' saying that those sonnets were "worse than a puzzle-peg. They are abominably harsh, obscure, and worthless" (Jones 41). But in 1815 he wrote "...in no part of the writings of Shakespeare is found, in an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed" (Jones 43). S.T. Coleridge who was idolatrous about Shakespeare wrote "...I do not know any sonnets that will bear such frequent re-perusal; so rich in metre, so full of thought and exquisite diction" (Jones 43).

John Keats, Hazlitt, Lytton Strachey, L.C. Knights, G.W. Knight and a host of writers had all praise for the sonnets but there are also many who hold different opinions. A.C. Ward wrote "If Shakespeare had written nothing but his *Sonnets* he would still have a secure place among the great poets." (Ward, Vol. I, 215) John Crowe Ransom criticized the structure of the sonnets. To him "Shakespeare is a careless workman" (Jones 104). M.M. Rees thought that Shakespeare's faults in his sonnets were due to his erroneous preference for the sonnet-form of survey over against the background of Petrarchan form. Browning reacting

against “unlocked the heart” opinion of Wordsworth asked “Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare is he!” (Jones 44)

A modern reader oscillates between the two contradictory forces and fails to have a firm opinion about the *Sonnets*. In order to understand the *Sonnets* in a proper perspective, one needs to understand their thematic patterns. If they are not studied in isolation but in a sequence, then one can have a positive opinion. Oscar Wilde suggests that the Sonnets 1-154, if taken together, form a whole drama of love. He opines that Sonnets 1-32 constitute the first Act of the drama in which the poet falls in love with a beautiful youth. The youth is asked to become a player in his company and the youth consents. Sonnets 32-52, 61 and 127-152 form the second Act in which there is an appearance of the dark but attractive lady and the youth cools down and as a result the speaker repossesses the youth. But again he loses the youth. The last Act comprising *Sonnets* 100-126 the speaker recovers the lost youth. This division of the *Sonnets* presents them as a tragic-comedy or as a dark comedy. According to L.C. Knights the Sonnets are “a miscellaneous collection of poems written at different times for different purposes and with very different degrees of poetic intensity (Jones 75). To him the poetic beauty of every sonnet is different.

The above informations shows that there are two types of opinions “fair and foul.” And the other issue whether the sonnets should be read in isolation or in a sequence in order to understand them in totality is also very important. As the *Sonnets* got published in 1609 during the lifetime of Shakespeare, we should not disturb the sequence and read them in order to get aesthetic pleasure. If we make a perusal of them we find that in Sonnets 1-16 the speaker requests the youth to marry to beget children so that his beauty can be retained:

From fairest creatures we desire increase  
That thereby beauty's rose might never die

.....  
 Pity the world, or else this glutton be

To eat the world's one, by the grave and thee (*Sonnet 1*)

The speaker continues his argument in favour of marriage in order to give immortality to his youth and beauty. Various metaphors, similies, analogies and variety of arguments are used to persuade the youth but all become effectless on the fair youth. Getting no positive response the speaker praises youth's beauty and says that his beauty would be made immortal by the power of his verse. Anyhow the "more lovely and temperate" than even the "summer's day" beauty of the youth has to be kept intact. For this poetry becomes the medium-

So long as men can breath or eyes can see

So long lives this and this gives life to thee. (*Sonnet 18*)

The endeavours to make the youth immortal continue upto Sonnet 126 in which he is addressed as "minion of Nature's pleasure." Nature will disgrace time but will not allow her (time) to erase the beauty of the youth.

Sonnets 127-152 are considered as 'dark lady Sonnet' sequence. The poet celebrates black beauty which earlier "was not counted fair" but the poet considers it as "beauty's successive heir." In Sonnet 127 the superiority of black beauty is established over white beauty. This indicates that the poet believes more in natural beauty. It is a revolt against the traditional concept of beauty in which artificiality, hyperbolic statements, exaggerated feelings got prominence. In Sonnet 130 the speaker is against the idea of comparing his mistress with the sun, coral, snow, wires, roses, perfumes, music and goddess. This derides the Petrarchan conventions in which the natural beauty of the beloved is asserted. He challenges the attributes and values to beauty that the traditional poets have put into them.

Sonnet 144 is a repentance of the speaker for falling in love with a lady who was not only "colored ill" but also a "worser

spirit.” It follows the pattern of the morality plays in which an everyman figure is torn between good (an angel) and evil (a devil) and must make his crucial choice. We witness a tripartite conflict in which the speaker loves the youth, and the youth is being lured by a lady. The young man is the male angel and the lady “the worser spirit.” The woman is wooing the speaker’s pure virtue (youth) with her pride. The speaker guesses that the youth is in hell. The lady has taken him to hell (enjoying sex with him as hell is a slang for ‘vagina’). The tone of the Sonnet is vindictive. The speaker knows that the lady would also desert the youth because she is faithful to none as she is a devil to whom every fair thing is foul.

The two Sonnets 153 and 154 are quite different from the rest of the sonnets. Some scholars pronounced them non-Shakespearean and struck them from the canon. Sonnet 153 is about the effect of love on the lover and the beloved presented through Cupid, the love-god and Diana, the goddess of chastity. A maiden in the retinue of Diana sees an ‘advantage’ and seizes it. When Cupid falls asleep, she steals his brand, the torch which was his weapon against his chastity. The torch is the “holy fire of love/a dateless lively heat, still to endure.” When the maiden takes the brand, she plunges into a cold fountain nearby. That becomes a seething bath that men still test as a potent cure for “strange maladies.” The brand was rekindled in the mistress’ eyes. As a trial of its power, Cupid touches it to the speaker. He sickens from it and looks for help from a bath. But he finds no cure. The speaker suffers from a fatal disease.

Sonnet 154 is about the effect of lust on human beings and the disease/restlessness from which they suffer. “Love’s fire heats water, water cools not love” suggests that even after the speaker has taken bath but there is no cure. The implication is that there will always be lust which no virgin can suppress. “The general of hot-desires” with his “legions of true hearts” will always conquer and men will be his slaves. The “holy fire of love” kindled

in Sonnet 153 and the well in Sonnet 154 from Love's fire (takes) heat perpetuates." The sentiments shared by these two sonnets underscore the idea that the heart is more reliable than the eyes.

The sonnets deal with various themes such as love, Hellenism—appetite for beauty, despair due to personal frustration, jealousy owing to two rival poets, time and its destructiveness and Christian ideology. As the themes are different, the critics (some of them) do not find any coherence but we should not forget that all the epics and dramas also deal with different themes. If we make a careful study of the sonnets as a story, we find that there is beginning, middle and end in them. The speaker in them reveals to us through his lyrical interior monologues, his experiences of emotional tensions, largely derived from his sexual impulses. There is an intelligible sequence, in them which gives it an organic unity. By altering the sequence Oscar Wilde opines that sonnets form a tragic-comedy but if they are studied in the sequence as presented in the 1609 edition we find that they present a human tragedy the impact of which is far more potent than the response evoked by a single lyric.

Keneth C. Bennet in his book *Threading Shakespeare's Sonnets* (2007) opines that the sonnets are woven in threads that are many and varied in type and length. The major threads are the symbols like 'rose', 'bud', and 'time' etc. The beauty of the rose is transient and Time is an all powerful destroyer but the rose of poetry will not fade and will defeat time. 'Rose' stands for youth and beauty. Gluttony is another long thread that crops up in Sonnet 1 as a fatal sin of the youth. It is linked to Pride, the most dangerous of all sins which causes the downfall of the speaker. From rose to pride resulting in the betrayal, especially self-betrayal due to his pride as the youth's mentor. The speaker accuses the youth to be a foe to himself but seems to be unknown of his own errors until he becomes a victim himself of the fatal disease.

The speaker of the sonnets is the protagonist/hero, who is largely credible. He is a poet but would be called an anti-hero.

He is clever, proud of his logic but not on self-knowledge. He acts like a tutor to the youth but fails to persuade him to his arguments. He is also a lover divided about his loves and whose emotional swings are swift and strong.

There is a young man who is beautiful, aristocratic, a paragon and a cynosure worshipped by the society. The speaker and he become bosom friends but after some time the young man deserts the speaker for the latter's mistress. The speaker has some other friends mentioned in Sonnets 30 and 31 who are like ghosts, serving only to confirm the youth's faithlessness. There is also a rival poet who appears on the stage for some time being and eclipses the speaker. He appears in Sonnets 78-86.

The 'Dark Lady' is the mistress to more than one male-both the speaker and his friend. She is tyrannical and capricious. She forms a triangle as mentioned in Sonnet 144 "Two loves I have of comfort and despair."

The sonnets form a world in themselves and the 'world' indicates the public, the court and the upper class which determine social laws. The speaker in Sonnet 36 feels that he must stay away from his friend in society so that his friend's image is not tarnished by his associations with the speaker, who has fallen from grace to certain circles.

The threads of the sonnets indicate that they affect the action all the way through to the catastrophe. In the beginning the speaker tries to convince the youth of the virtues of procreation but the youth's silent response suggests that he has rejected the idea of the speaker, who gives up trying to convince the youth to get married and falls in love with the youth himself. They become 'one soul in bodies twain' but very soon a mistress appears and becomes the mistress of each man in turn. The speaker discovers that he has been betrayed. Even then he continues to praise his friend. The infatuation with the mistress comes to grief when the speaker loses her utterly to the young friend, whom she keeps in thrall. The speaker's descent into hell, then, is complete when he loses both his loves and fails to find a way out.

In Sonnet 152 we learn that the mistress has been unfaithful to her husband and has betrayed at least three men. The speaker feels betrayed even by himself by swearing her 'fair' all along.

In Sonnet 153 the speaker has contracted a venereal disease and is seeking a cure in the sweet baths that are built to relieve afflictions like syphilis. The story that emerges out of 154 sonnets is tragic like all major tragedies of Shakespeare. It is life like and life size. It reflects the emotional ebb and flow of our lives. It is an account of the qualities of Shakespeare as a writer that Ben Jonson paid tribute to him in the following words:

Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show  
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe  
He was not of an age, but for all time. (*The Sonnets* 3)

As love is a permanent and universal emotion to all human beings of all times and Shakespeare has dealt with the various shades of it in his sonnets, that are so "varied and complex" in their feelings, experiences, and attitudes that they have received diverse critical reactions for the past four centuries, the sonnets "eternal summer" will not fade till the day of judgement. The sonnets have inspired lots of creative writers beyond the English language all over the globe and some of them have elevated their art by translating the sonnets. The sonnets are so relevant to us that they show our own glass when we look in it (Mirror).

Every sonnet is beautiful exhibiting the double beauty that Stevens called "the poetry of idea" and "the poetry of words" (Vendler 4).

The sonnets are successfully put together ideationally structurally and linguistically. They are new in the sense that we find the speaker rebelling against the traditionally received ideas. Every such idea of sexuality is investigated and the ideals of heterosexual desire, chastity, continence, marital fidelity, and respect for the character of one's sexual partner have also been critiqued. Seeing the poetic excellence of each sonnet independently

and considering the sonnets as a story it can be said that human life is beautifully portrayed in them. Any work of art that deals with the ebb and flow of human misery is bound to the fair.

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## Karnad's Plays: A Study of Man's Identity

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### **Abstract**

Thanks to the audio-visual medium of expression, drama has been a very powerful and influential medium in English Literature. As it is a truthful and mimetic representation of human life, it enjoys the combination of reality and fiction. It depicts the changes in social, political or cultural scenarios of a society. So far as Indian English Drama is concerned, it has developed as an important and versatile body of English Literature and has caught the attention of the global audiences. It finds its impetus from Indian sensibility, philosophy, myths and religious beliefs and attracted the attention of the people beyond boundaries. Modern Indian English Drama has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the field of drama by exploring new vistas through reinvestigation into history, legend, myth, folklore and contemporary socio-political issues. A whole new theatrical perception is evolved by the modern Indian English playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir and Badal Sircar.

Girish Karnad's genius lies in the fact that he draws a parallel between antiquity and contemporariness. His plays

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like *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavandana*, *Nagamandal*, *Tale Danda* and *The Fire and The Rain* are based on History, Myths, and legends. The present paper focuses on Karnad's understanding and deliberation on man's incessant search for his identity in modern society.

**Keywords:** existentialism, alienation, isolation, Indian English Drama

Indian drama in Indian language and drama in English translation have registered a remarkable growth in recent decades under the scholarship of eminent writers like Badal Sarkar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Manjula Padamanabhan, and Mahesh Dattani. During the last five years, several plays originally written in regional languages have been translated into English. Today a sizeable number of such plays are in existence inviting attention. English translation of classics in the Indian language forms an important component of Indian English literature. The translations have forged a link between the east and the west, north and south, and contributed to the growing richness of contemporary creative consciousness. Thus regional drama in India is slowly paving the way for a national theatre into which all streams of theatrical art seem to converge.

Girish Karnad is the foremost playwright of the contemporary Indian stage for giving the Indian theatre a richness that could probably be equated only with his talents as an action director. His contribution goes beyond theatre. He has directed feature films, documentaries and television serials in Kannada, Hindi and English, and has played leading roles as an actor in Hindi and Kannada art films, commercial novels and television serials. He has represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture.

Girish Karnad is a master dramatist of existential philosophy which concentrates on man who is at the centre of the universe. He is free to choose his action which can free him, but he is chained everywhere and seeks his salvation from the inescapable

situations. He is captured in the trap of his problems and as a result, he becomes lonely, rootless and disconnected and searches his 'self' in the society like an outsider, stranger, and absurd which generates a sort of frustration, despair and fear in his mind. The search for identity is symbolic, experimental as well as existential.

The publication of *Yayati* in 1961 and especially of *Tughlaq* in 1964 established Karnad as a master dramatist. Subsequently, he published *Hayavadana* (1971), *Angumalige* (1977), *Hittina Hunja* (1980), *Naga-Mandala* (1988), *Tale-Danda* (1990), and *Agni Mattu Male* (1995). He wrote all his plays in Kannada. These have been translated into major Indian languages including the national language Hindi. Five of his plays – *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala*, *Tale-Danda* and *The Fire and The Rain*- have been translated into English. The first three of these have been published by Oxford University Press in India and the remaining two by Ravi Dayal Publishers, New Delhi.

Karnad's characters are always in search of identity. His male and female characters try to find their roots and they want to set their real image in the mirror of contemporary society. The identity depends on the essence of existence which is controlled by the Purusharthas- Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha- of man as conceived in the Indian philosophy. According to Abhinava Gupta, drama should direct one's mind towards the realization of Purusharthas. Karnad elucidates the concept to his contemporary audience as well as readers:

The Purusharthas are the four ethical goals of human existence; Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Very roughly, Dharma relates to the spiritual sphere, Artha to realm of political and economic power, and Kama to that of sexual or aesthetic gratification. In these cases, what a person understands as his or her Purusharthas could vary according to his or her background, the stage of and station in life, sex etc, as well as the nature of the crisis he or she is facing. The fourth goal Moksha is released from the cycle of birth and death and hence final liberation from human bondage.

This is the supreme goal in the achievement of which relates the human being to the absolute. The concept therefore belongs to a realm beyond where the first three are relevant.<sup>1</sup>

In this way, the identities of man are channelised in this world. In *Tughlaq*, *Yayati*, *Hayavadana*, *Tale-Danda* and *Naga-Mandala*, we find a constant search for identity of characters.

*Yayati* (1961), winner of Mysore Stage Award in 1962, has an existential framework. In the characters of *Yayati*, *Puru* and *Chitrlekha*, the search for existential identity is perceptible. The change of youth is a great setback to a man as youth is essential for creation. Though the change enriches *Yayati*, *Puru* is deserted and destroyed which questions his identity as a man. It projects the serious existential problem before *Puru* who is more sinned against the sinning. The wife of *Puru* is in the search of her authentic identity and *Puru* also seeks the context of meaning. Regarding *Yayati's* case, it is *sharmishtha* who reminds him to his sense in the following words:

Why should they accept the result of your actions? Sins and good deeds are not money which can be given and taken back... Do not beg any insane person or a hermit to transfer your curse to him. Let us quietly go to the forest.<sup>2</sup>

She makes him realize the harsh reality of the life. Nobody will have to lose his identity willingly as one's identity gives one an authentic existence. If one accepts to retain the identity, one is alienated from his own relationships. *Yayati* is perplexed, turns violent and refuses to accept old age. He craves for his identity and remains adamant:

If I have to retain my identity then I should retain my youth,  
*Sharmi*. I should remain young.<sup>3</sup>

The existentialists like *Sartre* and *Camus* put a great stress on the choice and responsibility of man. In an interview, *Karnad*, therefore, says:

I was excited by the story of Yayati, this exchange of ages between the father and the son, which seemed to me terribly powerful and terribly modern. At the same time, I was reading a lot of Sartre and the existentialists who were indulged in thinking up with the story of Yayati.<sup>4</sup>

Karnad's second play *Tughlaq* (1964) explores the paradox of the idealistic Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq whose reign is considered to be one of the spectacular regimes of history. In connection with this play, Karnad has revealed in course of an interview that "he read a work of Kannada criticism which proved that many historical plays written earlier were costume plays and that no one attempted to relate a historical episode to modern sensibility like Shaw. This inspired me to write such a play in Karnnda."<sup>5</sup>

The play is an abiding contribution to modern Indian English Drama. It has been remarkably successful on the stage as it appeals to the audience most because of its dramatic excellence. The play is of a vital king who struggles too much to make his existence authentic and faces existential alienation. The greater part of the fascination and appeal of the play surely arises out of the complex personality of Tughlaq who has been realized in great psychological depth. Attention has been paid to the political theme of the play as it reflects the political mood of disillusionment in the sixties. In Karnad's own words, what stuck him "absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary".<sup>6</sup> In this play Karnad has depicted the psychological state of Tughlaq. Very nicely, Tughlaq's determination and anguish are revealed. M. K. Naik feels "Tughlaq is basically concerned with the tragedy of the limits of human power in a predominantly psychological context."<sup>7</sup>

Initially, important incidents or happenings in the play are obliged to Tughlaq. He did what he wanted. But out of the burden of responsibility, Tughlaq falls to his knees, clutches his hands to his breast and desperately pleads with God to help him:

God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don't let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in your path. Lord, why am I wandering naked in this desert now? I started in search of you. Why am I become a pig rolling in this gory mud? Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with your infinite mercy. I can only clutch at the hem of your cloak with my bloody fingers and plead. I can only beg – have pity on me. I have no one but you now.<sup>8</sup>

In brief, Tughlaq is an existential character who decides his own fate and becomes a maker of his universe. He seeks his identity as an idealist and a realist and confusion looms large which makes him a lonely figure.

Regarding *Hayavadana* (1971) Karnad maintains, "I remember that the idea of my play *Hayavadana* started crystallizing in my head right in the middle of an argument with B. V. Karanth (who ultimately produced the play) about the meaning of masks in Indian theatre and theatre's relationship to music. The play is based on a story from a collection of tales called the "Kathasaritsagara" and the further development of this story by Thomas Mann in "The Transposed Heads".<sup>9</sup> The play is also expressive of Karnad's mirroring the search for identity through his characters. Mann uses the story to ridicule the philosophy and holds the view that the head is superior to the body. For Mann, the human body is a suitable instrument for the fulfilment of human destiny and even the transposition and transformation will not liberate the protagonists from their natural psychological demands. For Karnad, the confusion of the identities reveals the ambiguous nature of the human personality.

We witness a search for identity in *Hayavadana*'s life. He has a man's body and a horse head. He has been trying to get rid of his head all his life because he is neither a horse nor a man. His frustration surmounts because of his own identity. The following lines are an instance in point:

Hayavadana to Bhagavata: I have become a complete horse-but not a complete being! This human voice – this cursed human voice – it's still there! How can I call myself? What should I do, Bhagavata sir? How can I get rid of this human voice?<sup>10</sup>

The plight of Hayavadana represents the human being with a mock existence in the world of responsible parents. He cries with anguish in lack of proper identity which questions his roots and makes him rootless and meaningless.

*Naga-Mandala* (1988) was written during Karnad's residency as a Fulbright fellow at the University of Chicago. The play is the reflection of two oral tales that the writer had heard several years earlier from his friend and his mother. A.K. Ramanujan, "The First story, about the lamp flames that gather in a village temple to exchange gossip about the households they inhabit, is part of the outer play and gives imaginative expression to the idea of community life. The second story, about the woman who was visited by a king in the form of her husband, is personified in the play as a beautiful young woman in a sari, and It "tells itself" (as the inner play) to an audience composed of the playwright and the flames."<sup>11</sup>

The couple of the play – Rani and Appanna – lives a life full of a bog of dull and drab matrimonial relationship with mostly no emotion and love on the part of the husband. The writer presents a true picture of an exploited wife in the character of Rani, who is in the search of identity of her matrimonial life. Without a relationship between a husband and a wife, there is no future and no identity of the conjugal life.

In our society, a good woman has to be a good daughter, a good wife as well as a good mother. These are the touchstones of a good woman which establish her identity as a woman. Appanna treats Rani like a maid servant. Snatching her freedom he confines her in a locked house. She is not allowed to talk with anyone. She becomes rootless and stranger to her society. She

craves for her authentic existence. Sudhir Kakar points out, "the dominant psycho-social realities of a woman's life can be condensed into three stages. First, she is a daughter to her parents; second, she is a wife to her husband (and daughter-in-law to his parents); and third, she is a mother to her sons and daughters."<sup>12</sup> It is through these three important relationships that a woman realizes her 'self' as well as her 'identity' in society.

Rani is shattered into pieces after getting the blame of illicit relationship. She prefers death to humiliation. She does not want to be insulted amidst the people. But she faces snake ordeal before the people. Though nervous and frightened, she finds within herself a new courage and confidence. She takes vow in these words:

Yes, my husband and this king Cobra. Except for these two I have not touched any one of the male sex. Nor have I allowed any other male to touch me. If I lie, let the cobra bite me.<sup>13</sup>

In this way, there is no false vow and she succeeds to live a happy life. It is not the time of abuse by her husband but now she is being worshipped by the villagers and Appanna himself.

In *Tale-Danda* (1993) Rambhavati and Sovideva's wife are in search of their identity. The drama has wice, presence and power of men whereas the female characters are silent, absent and powerless. They are devoid of their identity in the world of mankind. In case of Rambhavati, we find that she is a frivolous queen but in reality neither her husband nor her son gives value to her ideas. She does not dare to revolt against her husband, son and the system of society. She fully knows that escape is not a solution to any problem. Therefore, she compromises at every step of life. Bijjala, Rambhavati's husband, has unpredictable moods. His moods are expressive of his arrogant behavior towards his wife and it tells her suffocating state of mind.

The identity of Sovideva's wife is also under an/the illusion. She does not find love and warm affection for her husband. She is discarded by her husband and sent to her parents' home. Her

husband does not think about bringing her back home. She feels much humiliated. She does not exist in her husband's scheme of things.

In conclusion, we see that Karnad's plays are the selected studies on the plight of men and women in our society. His characters are best representatives of those who struggle very hard rather incessantly for their existence with meaningful identity in the modern society.

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## Discovering Social and Cultural Perspectives in Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry

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Among his contemporaries, Nissim Ezekiel, a modernist poet in Indian writing in English, identifies the areas of cultural and social conflicts in his poetic volumes. Few poems of his poetic volumes are extremely important to be discussed to present and reflect the poet's concern with social orders, religious orthodoxy, communal clashes and cultural discrimination meted out to people throughout the world.

Ezekiel's first volume *A Time to Change* encompasses poet's sense of cultural perceptions that informs his entire poetic output in unique manner. The poet seems to undergo a different kind of experience to find his own personal voice. He seems to present his struggle to gain an inner peace in this vast world. The little poem is a moral allegory using 'journey,' 'quest' and 'motif,' together: "We who leave the house in April, Lord,/ How shall we return?" His mind refuses to be tormented by the worship of false gods. The poet does have misgivings about "The flesh defiled by dreams of flesh, / Rehearsed desire dead in spring, / How shall We return?" He is longs for stability, peace, discipline and harmony because of the belief that "The juice of life is in us still". The poet talks about – "redemption/Never fully won", "The leap is never

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made” and also about the music “Never quite completed”. He seems to wait for religious freedom from those who are “With faults concealed:”

“The pure Invention or the perfect poem,  
Precise communication of a thought,  
Love reciprocated to a quiver,  
Flawless doctrines, certainty of God,  
These are merely dreams; but I am human  
And must testify to what they mean.” (*CP*, 5)

The poem describes the poet’s initial desolation followed by a quest for new life because he believes in gaining ‘vigour’ and ‘vitality’ by exploring the primal roots of creation:

“So, in our style of verse and life  
The oldest idiom may reveal  
A smile never seen, limbs retain  
A virginal veracity and every stone  
Be as original as when the world was made.” (*CP*, 4)

Ezekiel’s love for the world was perceivable right from the beginning of his poetic career. The poet works like a workman to ‘loosen the soil’ and on one lucky day, he finds his metaphor and vision. Poetry thus, becomes the religion of the poet:

“Perception in April  
Of my condition  
Secret faults concealed no more.” (*CP* 5)

His insight is enlightened after prayer and he feels to be saved from the corrupt and unfriendly world. The poet would like to work like a river without a rest the wind that blows and the sun that shine forever:

“The talking voice  
For hours and days  
The singing voice

To utter praise  
 A bit of land  
 A woman too" (*CP*, 6)

When the poet writes, "What terror wrestled/ With what peace of soul/ In what primeval jungle never shall be known," we find his real feelings as a poet. In the poem "On an African Mask" the poet explicates the coexistence of terror and peace together, within the redeemed soul. In the poem "Communication" the poet expresses the chronic worries under which he groans and feels the horror and terror:

"Our silences betray us, friend, I said,  
 But he was past believing, I was old,  
 Collected all our years and they were cold  
 Among the voiceless millions of the dead." (*CP*, 7)

The poet in the poem "The Double Horror" is torn between the demands of time and those of himself:

"Corrupted by the world I must infect the world  
 With my corruption." (*CP*, 8)

The poet presents his horrible condition at the end of the poem:

"Only being what I am  
 Hurts, and hurts the world although it does not know.  
 Between the world and me there is a frightful  
 Equipoise, as infected I corrupt the world." (*CP*, 8)

Ezekiel's selection of language, too, has religious connotations. In his poem "On Meeting a Pedant," he asks for giving him 'touch of men' to 'send out songs:'

"I swear I will not argue any more.  
 Do not be combative, my heart; rest or ride  
 Superbly with the senses. Send out songs." (*CP*, 9)

The poet does not wish to be surrounded by corrupt people as he reveals in "Robert": "When things went wrong I pulled

through with a jest, / Avoided failures, questioned what I read". He presents modern-human-will-dilemma through the image which is alienated from religion and nature and is trapped in an urban wasteland:

"The god who made you to be Wiser than  
The cunning subtleties within my brain  
Shall know by this the anger of a man." (*CP*, 10)

Eventually, the poet presents a relationship between art and religion in his poem "Poetry". "In which the savage and the Singular, /The gentle, familiar/Are all dissolved;" The poet is too much concerned to adopt a temperate way of life and then be reconciled to the universal religious truths. His poetic graph since the beginning of his career is remarkably marked by this pursuit of honesty towards the pious growth of poetic composition.

Ezekiel's each volume has at least a couple of pieces which revolve around his own cultural perspectives at times bordering on didacticism. "Something to Pursue", the longest piece of the volume is one such poem which is divided into four sections with a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue refers the urgency – "That I may see myself/No longer unresolved/But definite as morning," – of the persona as he cannot bear to be any more indecisive in respect of his emotional concerns and feelings. The poet therefore decides to stick to his decided way because to him, "The end does not matter, /The way is everything," – and these ways are depicted in each section of the poem in unique manner. In the first part of the poem he wishes a life of liberty, and lived according to nature. He has an appetite for the life of simple pleasures and "of unambiguous speech:"

"One must be out of doors also  
Within, break the barricades  
Of pettiness and pride, overcome  
The schizophrenic agonies." (*CP*, 15)

The poet aspires in the second section, "To the Good, which may be God." He devotes time for meditation and prayer in life to fulfill this goal. He says in these words:

"This theme, with variations, turns the mind  
To meditation, morning and afternoon,

...

Prayer and poetry, poetry and prayer." (CP, 16)

The third section of the poem presents that there is no redemption for the suffering of man who is:

"Empty of faith in the comeliness of God,  
Empty of faith in the shapeliness of Man,  
Contemplation turned to pus, incapable  
Of action..." (CP, 17)

So many mentioned phrases in the above poem like 'the comeliness of God' and 'the shapeliness of Man' refer Ezekiel's reading of a branch of Bhakti poets of India who worship God. Ezekiel uses disgusting images in order to present his own hatred towards irreligious people. He generally questions whether the 'Beatitude' was meant for just a few or all. Here he draws everybody's attention to the suffering of Jews at the hands of orthodox people in European countries during the Second World War:

"But the scriptures were fulfilled  
And Jesus rose again, the stone was rolled away,  
Our dissonance may yet be willed away.  
But is there at the end  
Beatitude, achieved by few?  
Or will it be the tragic view?" (CP, 17)

The above notes aptly and appropriately present the doubt which begins to heighten whether one can save oneself by getting involved in the world. He speaks that one can escape 'the road to dissolution' only "When all is known. /When the female animal

no longer/Haunts the bed in flesh or dream.” By ‘arriving at the unity’ the tragic perception is to be discarded as the poet thinks:

“Out of doors where the winds of God  
Make our minds sweet with love,  
The answer is: There shall be no more quest,  
No more expenditure of doubt  
But only a limpid style of life  
Whose texture is poetry.” (*CP*, 18)

In the last section of the poem, he returns to his city, ‘to save’ himself. Ezekiel’s poetry moves forward out of a conflict and tension between the two selves - the self that has been gained by the feeling of ‘a natural outsider’, being a Jew of Israel origin and the self that strives to get an identity that is completely Indian. Here he appears to get ready to form a mindset totally devoted to serve the tired world - which will be evident in the study of his later volumes of poetry. In the epilogue of “Something to Pursue” he presents the fact in these words:

“It will be more than play  
Of poetry and prayer,  
It will be life itself  
Singing to the air,  
Unity established  
In the open air.” (*CP*, 20)

The poem “And God Revealed” depicts the poet’s inclination towards merging secular and religious thematic perceptions into one whole. He is in appreciation of ‘wiser love’ only which can support us in spreading the horizons of our minds in complete freedom which may be physical or spiritual:

“Yet we with wiser love can master love  
And with the news we bring of other worlds  
Enlarge the world of love with love of worlds.” (*CP*, 25)

Ezekiel occupies the tradition of Tagore in more authentic manner and follows his moral and spiritual vision in contemporary idiom. The result is that he moves forward through his poetry as an unyielding pilgrim of eternity - "Truly I wish to be a man." But this 'man' is rather particular or individual than general because in his poem "Commitment" he looks for 'a world of old simplicities' where "turbulence/ Is stilled". The poet does not dive deep into the intricacies of life and he simply wishes for an ethos that could expand 'unambiguous joys' everywhere in life. The poet in "Planning" revises his vow to harmonize 'the impulse with the general tone'. He is determined to work as he had designed plan except for the fact that he will not trespass 'the Unknown', and 'The Unseen:'

"Then, absences and quarrels, indifference  
 Sucking like leech upon the flesh,  
 Crude acceptance of the need for one another,  
 Tasteless encounters in the dark, daily  
 Companionship with neither love nor hate  
 By an image are redeemed,  
 By a mode of love expanding to a way of life,  
 In high gentleness and power from the perfect will,  
 Enduring all and coming through at last  
 From a not-this not-that to the final goal." (CP, 29)

"When, with sudden smile, the visions come  
 Inviting us to sweet disaster,  
 We envy saints their martyrdom  
 And press the accelerator." (CP, 121)

Ezekiel always craves for an absolute relationship with the elements of nature as they symbolize the central point of man's material as well as spiritual existence in this world. In his poem "Morning Prayer," the tone of the poet is meditative and full of concerns:

“God grant me privacy,  
Secretive as the mole,  
Inaccessibility,  
But only of the soul.” (*CP*, 122)

The poet believes in the inaccessibility and immortality of the soul which can be artistically recreated for the use of humanity and harmony. The proximity with nature will enable him to realize his own self as he writes in the poem at one place:

“God grant me certainty  
In kinship with the sky,  
Air, earth, fire, sea-  
And the fresh inward eye.” (*CP*, 122)

The poet would like to uplift himself up to real life situations because he wants to imbibe the spirit of humanistic values in his life. Indeed, through the perception of beauty in Nature, this spirit can be visualized. In “Marriage,” Ezekiel portrays two of the three essential stages of growth in a marriage in human life. The first is the stage of honeymoon ecstasy and illusions, which is invariably followed by the stage of disillusionment and bewilderment, a time of neither honey nor moon, which may or may not be followed by the third stage of peace and joy built on the solid foundations of reality and material. His protagonist says in the poem in these words which show the reality:

“Lovers, when they marry, face  
Eternity with touching grace,  
Complacent at being fated  
Never to be separated.” (*CP*, 123)

In the poem, the ironic laugh of the poet is obvious in this poem and he does not hesitate to present his emotions and feelings in these words:

“The bride is always pretty, the groom  
A lucky man. The darkened room

Roars out the joy of flesh and blood.  
 The use of nakedness is good.  
 I went through this believing all,  
 Our love denied the Primal Fall.  
 Wordless, we walked among the trees,  
 And felt immortal as the breeze.” (CP, 124)

The poem is full of reality. The ecstasy was short-lived, contrary to the hopes raised by the first flush of marital joy. Sooner than later, the inevitable stage of disillusionment, marked by frequent quarrels, presented itself in more vibrant way in the poem. As he confesses at one place in the poem in remarkable manner:

“.....many times we came  
 Apart, we came together. The same  
 Thing over and over again.  
 Then suddenly the mark of Cain  
 Began to show on her and me.” (CP, 124)

A sense of darkness and failure marks Ezekiel’s utterances on married life. Though he is not against the family as such, he has quite enough points to say about it on the authority of his first-hand experience in the poem:

“Although he loved his children when they came  
 He spoilt them too with just that extra doll,  
 Or discipline which drove them to the wall.  
 His wife and changing servants did the same.  
 A man is damned in that domestic game.” (CP, 125)

The poet was not prepared for the intricate and nerve wracking domestic games and tangles. His egoistic and complicated predilections prevent him from offering his self on the altar of marital sacrifices, and he is quite aware of it. As he is aware that he confesses it while attempting to understand his married life all the time. Familiarity that breeds contempt in all human contacts gets heightened in marital relationship in this world. The poet is

perennially threatened about the possible loss of the freshness of his wife's love and the consequent weariness of domestic life. "Marital failure is as much the theme of the poet as his other failures experienced from time to time. Neither marriage succeeds nor love, and the choice to live alone is not good either even if one fails."

The poem "Case Study" is one of central poems because it reflects poet's belief in Christian idea of man's alienation from God through Disobedience. The poet, too, looks upon himself and his wife as being murderers of something within themselves in the eyes of God. Yet, the poet all the time interrogates the primeval pattern in his own way in these lines:

"He came to me and this is what I said:  
'The pattern will remain, unless you break  
It with sudden jerk; but use your head...  
Not all returned as heroes who had fled  
In wanting both to have and eat the cake.'  
Not all who fail are counted with the fake." (CP, 125)

There is a marked shift and transformation in emphasis from *A Time to Change* to *The Exact Name*. In the earlier volumes, the poet had been preoccupied with self-questioning to resolve his dilemma by a more intelligent understanding of his multiple problems. The poems included in this volume were written before 1965 and unfold his absorption in the panorama of Indian cultural heritage characterized by a curious observation. He looks at Indian cultural ethos in all its religious diversity and differences. The human reality is extremely confounding and illogical, therefore, the poet attempts to define it in metaphysical terms with the help of his experiences.

"Philosophy" is one such poem where Ezekiel admits frankly his weakness for indulging in abstract ideas concerning to life and death:

“There is a place to which I often go,  
 Not by planning to, but by a flow  
 Away from all existence, to a cold  
 Lucidity, whose will is uncontrolled.  
 Here, the mills of God are never slow.” (CP, 129)

In this mortal world, human reality itself has its own consequences which alone can explore the rhythm of life lived on pragmatic plane. A rare kind of explored truth reached at by philosophical considerations is explored away by the poet who feels “what cannot be explained, do not explain.” Further he assumes in the same poem in his own style in these words:

“The mundane language of the senses sings  
 Its own interpretations. Common things  
 Become, by virtue of their commonness,  
 An argument against the nakedness  
 That dies of cold to find the truth it brings.” (CP, 129)

Ezekiel’s religious as well as philosophical sense is grounded in human feelings and emotions. At many stages he appears to be even more critical of philosophical things in which there is no clue of human considerations. The egotistical-philosophical concerns become meaningless and absurd in the context of poverty and suffering. In keeping with this perception, Ezekiel writes his poem “Perspective” which is an improvisation of his unique poetic perception with a commitment to truth, innocence and purity. It begins with questioning the authority of many sects. In an imposing manner, the poet brings out their motives in these remarkable words:

“They say his call to serve is all pretense,  
 Who pushes you ahead, then falls behind  
 While you are tortured, pleading innocence:” (CP, 134)

Nissim Ezekiel is a wonderful poet of optimistic thoughts and visions. He has always loved the word ‘light’ consciously and all

it stood for, yet more than half of his hours are 'heavy and dark'. In the poem "Transparently" the poet takes himself to be a victim of indecisions and dilemma but this depressing-self becomes the source of his poetry and it also provides him an opportunity to dive deep into human emotions and passions. He wishes to identify this paradox and settle for its resolutions as well are mentioned below in these lines:

"All I want now  
is the recognition  
of dilemma  
and the quickest means  
of resolving it  
within my limits." (*CP*, 150)

The poet "In the Theatre" shows his own "innocent movement/ like the flight of a migrating bird", to reach, "the promised land". The quoted phrase appears to have a religious undertone due to the poet's desire for a communal peace and harmony. The poet at the same time seems to search freedom for his own Jewish community and to make the world realize its importance and existence:

"I act to end the acting,  
not to be known but to know,  
to be new, to become a form and find  
my relevance." (*CP*, 151)

In his poems, he gives sufficient ground for us to believe that he was gradually moving to "create/the script of the universal theatre-/this is commonplace." He prays for a 'common religion' to rule the world. In his another poem "A Small Summit" he does not love to live "among the accepted styles" instead plans to move ahead in this world:

"If nothing else, I'll keep my nerve,  
refuse the company of priests,

professors, commentators, moralists,  
 be my own guest in my own  
 one-man lunatic asylum,  
 questioning the Furies, my patron saints,  
 about their old and new obscurities." (CP, 153)

All these things make clear that the poet is quite eager to question the orthodox nature of religions and fight back to set harmony and peace in the society. This becomes the absolute desire of the poet, "that to be the healer, /not the sick/or the indifferent one." In the poem "After Reading a Prediction," he commemorates his vision of survival though marked by a rare kind of tolerance and appreciation:

"This is the place  
 where I was born.  
 I know it well.  
 It is home,  
 which I recognize at last  
 as a kind of hell  
 to be made tolerable." (CP, 155)

His next poem "Theological" seems to be an excellent treatise on the principles of religion and ethics. Though Ezekiel has not rejected spiritualism the logic of theology is interrogated time and again in his poems. If the world of God is intended to instruct humanity then why God is so unapproachable to know the fact. The poet writes in these lines:

"I've stripped off a hundred veils  
 and still there are more  
 that cover your Creation.  
 Why are you so elusive?" (CP, 156)

The elaborated lines of the same poem have relation with the concept of illusion in the Hindu philosophy and its concerns. This enigmatic nature of God alienates Him from humanity and this is

the reason for poet's agony. He pronounces his confused considerations of God which permits life without vigour and death without meaning. Ezekiel writes in these lines:

“Vigour is sad  
when it doubts its purposes,  
but release from  
it is merely death.” (*CP*, 157)

Absolute thoughts, purpose and meaning can never accommodate doubt, dilemma and paradox. The insistent weariness from an unproductive search for an elusive meaning escorts the poet to nihilism and negative thoughts and meaning:

“I am tired  
...  
of categories and labels  
and of that which is beyond  
of the divisible and the indivisible  
of the Many  
and even, yes,  
of the One.” (*CP*, 157)

The poet feels boredom of countless dogmas and doctrines in life, and is baffled between ‘Many’ and ‘One.’ His complain and anger explode at the end, “But You don’t help/of Your own accord”. In a state of acute helplessness and hopelessness, he confesses too, “Or perhaps You do/and I don’t recognize.” All these things appear to be fleeting for the poet because he has enough reasons to indicate that faith in God’s existence can perform unexpected resolutions in this world.

He is a poet of visions. Ezekiel’s fresh inward eye or cognitive self-delves deeper into the earth and takes cognizance of the ‘botanic turmoil’ in ‘the heart of earth’ leading to the birth of fresh grass there. He pronounces in the same poem in these words:

“a silence in the depths  
 a stir of growth  
 an upward thrust  
 a transformation-  
 botanic turmoil  
 in the heart of earth.” (CP, 162)

This incident of scientific turmoil in the heart of the earth is symbolic of poet's symbolic orientation. The next poem “Testament” reveals his basic belief in the “moment of winging.” The poet writes in these words:

“More should be remembered  
 than is forgotten;  
 and that's  
 only the beginning, the silent hour,  
 later, the moment of winging....” (CP, 159)

The poet is highly critical against the rampant poverty which seems to be the main reason of many social ills in India. The poem reveals the grim and realistic picture of poverty. The flood affected people of Bihar are captured in his poem in unique manner:

“The villagers ran to them.  
 They slapped their bellies  
 and whined:  
 ‘I have not eaten for three days.’  
 ‘My husband has been washed away.’  
 ‘My parents have abandoned me.’  
 ‘My son is dying.’  
 ‘I cannot find my daughter.” (CP, 187)

Many tendencies of exploitation of the weaker by the upper is marked today in Indian society has been presented by Nissim Ezekiel in his poems at many places in realistic manner. A critic like Prem comments in this direction in these words:

“It may not be all correct but what the poet emphasizes is the truth that most of the people involved in the relief and rescue work perform duties sans love and mercy. A simple narration evokes pathos and that is its strength. Nissim Ezekiel speaks about the destruction floods bring to villagers and people and make even the local officials helpless in rendering adequate assistance. Here he underlines the unsympathetic attitude of the people supposed to provide relief.”

Ramanujan also describes his same view towards pathos of flood affected people. He gives horrible and terrible picture of a house, a pregnant woman and cow which have been washed away in flood in his poem “A River:”

“He said:  
the river has water enough  
to be poetic  
about only once a year  
and then  
it carries away  
in the first half hour  
three village houses,  
a couple of cows  
named Gopi and Brinda.  
and one pregnant woman.”

Keki N. Daruwalla in his poem “The Ghaghra in Spate” equally presents a murderous river when it overflows. It washes and destroys everything that comes in the way. It is a symbol of destruction and demolishment. The poet describes the horrible flow of the river in this way:

“And suddenly at night  
the north comes to the village  
riding on river-back

Twenty minutes of a nightmare spin  
 and fear turns phantasmal  
 as half a street goes  
 churning in the river belly.”

Ezekiel was aware of each and every thing of the urban life in India and for instance makes fun of the cheap restaurants in Bombay in his poem “Irani Restaurant Instructions” and brings the ethos and culture of Indians. In Bombay, the cheap restaurants display bizarre boards of artificiality as:

“Do not write letter  
 Without order refreshment  
 Do not comb,  
 Hair is spoiling floor  
 Do not make mischiefs in cabin  
 our water is reporting.” (*CP*, 240)

This detail and deep analysis shows that poems written in the early period appropriately manifest the anguish and eagerness of a growing artist in India. This is a unique phase of interrogation and not negation which is marked by his desired bitterness for too much orthodoxy in religious attitude of the people in general. The Jewish poet is awfully concerned in fighting in conflicting cultural space in the society. Subsequently he realizes that change of heart of the people is possible only through reverence to the Almighty. Gradually he attains a maturity and presents his desire to associate himself with cultural ethos of his native country which is everything for him. Despite a sense of eagerness to know his surroundings, the poet finds many a time and finds it difficult to ‘find his songs’. He seems to be a poet of doubt, of failure, of desire, of questioning and of an unquiet mind with an emptiness as well as demand within. The poems of Ezekiel which have been taken up for analysis and explanation in the succeeding chapters show poet’s mature sense of resolution and accomplishment which consequently leads him to commit himself culturally and mentally to his ‘backward place’ even more emphatically with authenticity.

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## CREATIVE SECTION

### SHORT STORY

#### Clipping the Wings

**\*Ramesh K. Srivastava**

At one time, university professors had an aura of dignity which drew the best talents of the country and abroad to the teaching profession. They were looked upon as creatures specially made by god to shape up the destinies of students and to take them to the Himalaya heights. I, Ayush Sinha, had my Ph.D. in English from the University of California at Berkeley and served for a couple of years in various American institutions. At one time, I had thought of joining one of the prestigious universities in any metropolitan city in India but on second thought, I decided to go to a lesser known university in Punjab so that I could raise the standard of education, particularly in the subject of English, for the benefit of thousands of anxious bright students. Hence I joined the University of Karmapur in Punjab.

It was a middle class institution which had the potentiality of being a standard one, particularly in the English Department in which one well-qualified teacher, among others, was already there. The university had an impressive wide campus. I went to the Vice-Chancellor, thanked him for my selection in absentia as also for granting me additional time to join in September. When I reached the Department of English, the Head Dr. Radha Sharan Singh called the other teachers, and exchanged my introduction with

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them. One was Dr. Chakkoo from Kashmir and I commented over him, “Your name shows you must be very sharp.”

Another teacher was Mrs. Preeta Chonni who introduced herself: “I am wife of the Head of the Department.”

I smiled and quipped, “I hope this introduction of yours will remain valid even after the rotation of Headship in the Department.”

There was a tinge of crimson colour on her near-white cheeks but she said nothing.

Dr. Singh asked the Head Clerk to bring a typed joining report for my signature. When he brought the one-line joining report for my signature, it read: “I, Ayush Sinha, is joined the department of English on 18.9.1985.” I corrected it by writing simply “join” after crossing out “is joined” and changing the date to “9/18/1985.”

Mrs. Chonni cautioned me, “Sir, India has only 12 months in a year; may be there are many more in the U.S.” Then she clarified that the order for writing dates in India is: day, month and year. The first lesson I learned was: I have to be very vigilant.

In order to promote qualitative teaching and research, the library must be well-equipped with complete works of reputed English and American authors like Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Dickens, Henry James, T.S. Eliot—the list could go on, but I was horrified to find no good books of reputed authors at all; instead, there were some cheap notes on various English and American authors. When I pointed out this fact to Dr. Radha Sharan Singh, he told me, “Now I make you Incharge of the Library books for the department. You recommend the standard books and they would be purchased.”

It was a very healthy attitude and I reciprocated it by saying, “You will see that I make the Library so rich with standard books that researchers from neighboring universities and colleges would come here to consult it.”

I collected the addresses of all the reputed publishers and book sellers, wrote letters and left them in the office, asking Manjit

Singh, the Department clerk, to mail them after affixing postage stamps. After a month when I asked the Head Clerk whether any response was received from any publisher, his answer was in the negative. Then I asked him, “Were the letters mailed or not?”

“No, Sir,” Manjit Singh said. “The department gets very limited contingency grant for postage and if all the teachers’ letters were to be mailed by the department, the amount would be exhausted in a month while it is meant for the whole year. Hence you will have to mail them with your own money.”

Quite angry and upset, I asked him, “You could have told me of this problem at that time.”

“I thought you would be angry.”

“Do you think I am very happy now?”

He did not answer. I mailed the letters with my own money. After waiting for one month, I asked the Head Clerk whether any communication was received from the publishers and his answer was again in the negative. It was quite puzzling why would the publishers not respond to my queries when it was going to be beneficial to all of them!

## ii

At the time of selection of teachers in English, I, Dr. Radha Sharan Singh, had felt a little panicky on realization that Dr. Ayush Sinha in the University of California was getting all ‘A’ grades which is not easy in Graduate Studies in the U.S.A. and I myself had never got anything beyond a B+. It is true I have got a Ph.D. degree in English from the University of Wisconsin at Madison but who knows better than I that it is *not all* on merit. There is no doubt that I was basically a third-divisioner in M.A. English from Hoshiarpur and had forged my documents to take admission again in M.A. English Part I in Kurukshetra University in order to improve my division. It was illegal at that time. Since Kurukshetra University was a residential institution, I had managed to improve my division to first class. It was because of my Ph.D.

degree from the U.S.A. that I had got a job and became Reader and Head of the English Department in the University of Karmapur.

Once at Ambala Cantt bus stop, I happened to meet Jaswant Singh and shivers ran down my spine. He wished me, “Dr. Radha Sharan Singh, how are you?”

Nervous and perplexed, I attempted to dodge him by saying, “I don’t know you. Excuse me, I am in hurry.”

Jaswant held my one hand, satirically smiled and asked, “You don’t know me? It was I who had given you all my notes with which you had improved your third division. As my class fellow, you had a third division in Hoshiarpur.”

Wiping off the sweat from my face, I said, “You are mistaken. I never met you.”

Jaswant Singh laughed loudly and staring into my eyes said, “I could complain to the University of Karmapur that you had done second M.A. fraudulently and your degree of first class marks could be cancelled while you could be jailed.”

The bus was ready for Karmapur and as I went towards the bus, Jaswant Singh yelled back, “So you are one of the Kruks now.”

I yelled back, “How can you call me a crook?”

“As people from Oxford are termed Oxonian, you are from Kurukshtra and hence should rightly be called a Kruk in more than one sense.”

I ran away from him and took my seat in the bus moving to Karmapur.

Completely disturbed by the incident, when I reached home, my wife Preeti asked me, “What happened Sharan? You seem to be totally distraught.”

Sitting down and taking a glass of water, I said, “I had a narrow escape today.”

“Was there any bus accident?”

“No,” I said. “I met Jaswant Singh about whom I had told you earlier.”

“Was Dr. Sinha with you?”

“Luckily no. Dr. Ayush was taking tea quite faraway”

Preeta coolly said to me, “You have done a blunder in appointing Dr. Sinha in the Department. You don’t know how intelligent and clever these Sinhas from Bihar are.”

“What could I do?” I wailed. “There was an American Professor in the Selection Committee who recommended him very strongly. I was helpless.”

Becoming serious, Preeta confided in me, “Don’t worry. I’ll find a way to ease him out. Meanwhile, cooperate with him outwardly but place as many obstacles in the way as you diplomatically can. On my part, I have given detailed instructions to Clerk Manjit Singh not to do anything which Dr. Sinha asks him to. He says he has destroyed all the letters addressed to him.”

### iii

In order to spread the word around in academic circles about the existence of this new university, I requested Dr. Singh to write to well-established professors from various reputed institutions for extension lectures so that the students breathe fresh academic air. Professor Margaret Solanki from S.N.D.T. University, Bombay did come to the university. When I reached the classroom for my period, one student informed me in the class, “Dr. Sinha Sir, Dr. Mrs. Margaret Solanki is going to deliver a lecture in the Department.”

I paused for a moment, smilingly looked at him and casually asked him, “When is the delivery?”

The moment my words were uttered, there was a loud uproar of laughter. Realizing that it might disturb the teaching work in other classes, I closed the door.

Rather than distributing all the eight papers of M.A. English by genres, such as, poetry and fiction or chronologically, such as the Romantics and the Victorians, Dr. Singh had given all the teachers individual authors from different periods or genres. I was given Wordsworth, Marlowe, Henry James, Bacon and Lamb, among others. Since prose writers are often considered not very interesting, if not boring, I had kept the prose writers for the end of the term. One student asked me, “Dr. Sinha Sir, when are you going to take Bacon and Lamb?”

Smilingly, I said, “I am vegetarian and hence cannot take Bacon or Lamb” and the whole class had a hearty laughter. A little later, however, I assured them to teach these authors soon.

In order to keep the students attentive and awake, I often indulged in interpolating witty remarks and humorous anecdotes. This practice became so popular in my class that a few students from other departments would attend my classes for the sake of having good time.

In order to discourage such casual students, I asked one of them, “Can you tell me what is irony?”

He scratched the side of his turbaned head but no words came.

“Any guess work?”

“Something made of iron...”

“... by Tata Iron and Steel Company.” I added and the whole class burst into laughter.

“What is poetry?” I asked another intruder.

“Pottery is a concern which makes china clayey pots...”

“... Like Bengal pottery,” I added.

The whole class burst into laughter and the intruding students never came to the class room again.

The next day, there was a meeting of all the Department teachers along with M.Phil students. The atmosphere was informal.

After talking for a few minutes about the completion of the course work of M.Phil and the problems which the students might be encountering, Dr. Radha Sharan Singh said, "To lighten the tense atmosphere, I'll tell you a joke."

This was a welcome sign and the faces of teachers and students lighted up a little as they looked anxiously at the face of the Head. He narrated, "Once an elephant was going at the outskirts of a village. It did not see a deep, grass-covered pit and fell down into it. It attempted to get up but found it difficult and lay there helplessly. Other people also tried to help it get out but it did not succeed."

There was complete silence as everyone waited to hear what happened to the elephant. It was Dr. Radha Sharan's turn to complete the joke and he said, "Then the elephant got up and walked away."

None laughed. Everyone looked confused but dared not comment anything. I asked him, "How did it get up?"

"It just got up and walked away," Dr. Singh replied.

Again there were puzzling looks all around. No one had the audacity to ask the Head any question, but I was irrepressible and asked, "Sir, the joke is not complete. There must be some reason for it to get up."

For sometime there was no response from Dr. Radha Sharan Singh. Everyone looked at his face and finding all the people gazing at him for an answer, he said, "I don't know how. It simply got up and walked away."

I asked him, "If you don't mind, I will complete the joke."

Dr. Radha Sharan Singh's silence was an unwilling invitation for me to go ahead. I took the initiative and said, "After all the village people had tried in vain for the elephant to get up, one boy, obviously a student, went to it and whispered something into its ear and the elephant suddenly got up and ran away."

There were anxious looks all around because suspense was generated in a heavy dose and they all wondered what the boy must have told the elephant. Looking towards the teachers and students, I asked, "Can you guess what the boy must have told the elephant?" Finding no response from any side, I continued, "The boy said to the elephant, 'Get up you stupid elephant and run away otherwise the Head of the English Department is coming and he will make you do M.Phil in English.'"

With this sentence, there was a spontaneous uproar in the class with their bodies shaking spasmodically in laughter whereas Dr. Radha Sharan Singh, somewhat bewildered, just showed his teeth.

**iv**

"Sharan, you worry too much over small things," Preeta said to me. "Give me enough time and you'll see Dr. Ayush Sinha running away not only from Karmapur but also from the Punjab as well."

I thought for a while and asked her, "What would you do which I cannot?"

Preeta showed a villainous smile on her lips and said, "You know well that I am from Miranda College, Delhi, and give you an analogy. Lady Macbeth could easily do what Macbeth could not. Hence don't underestimate a beautiful woman's true power." After a short pause, she whispered, "I have cultivated good relationship with a gangster. If other things don't work, I'll use him for a decisive victory."

I cautioned her, "Remember Preeta that all the students are with Dr. Sinha. His way of teaching, particularly his sense of humour, has endeared him to them."

"Ch! Ch! Saran," Preeta said in a patronizing tone. "I had advised you to cultivate a little sense of humour to add to your popularity. I talk to the students and they told me that your lectures are quite dull and uninteresting. You should at least memorize a joke or two and tell them in the class."

I giggled a little and explained, “My dear Preeta, it is not so easy as you think. I had memorized a joke about an elephant who had fallen into a pit and I narrated it in the meeting but forgot its conclusion and Dr Sinha completed it. It was really very shameful for me.”

“Don’t tell a long joke,” Preeta suggested. “Tell a small joke—to begin with.”

I remained quiet for sometime and said, “Dr. Ayush Sinha otherwise is very good as far as cooperation in the department is concerned. Sometimes I have hesitation in writing correct English, whereas he not only writes excellent English but even types out urgent letters for me without having a sense of inferiority complex that as a teacher he is not supposed to do so.”

In order to check my appreciation of Dr. Ayush Sinha, she cut me short by saying, “But he overshadows you, Sharan. You don’t know the Sinhas from Bihar. Tomorrow he will be your main competitor for Professor and Headship and once he is in power, he could dethrone you. And then you won’t have the power to appoint even a peon.”

I kept quiet and found that there was some truth in what my wife had said, though many times I felt that Dr. Ayush appeared to be such a good person. But you never know; the looks could be quite deceptive.

v

Since a lot of time was needed to equip the library with standard books, I thought, meanwhile, to do some creative writing, particularly short stories in English which do not require library facilities. In Bihar, I was writing short stories for Hindi newspapers and magazines before going to the U.S.; now I had lost control over Hindi and hence decided to write in English. In addition, I thought that the published short stories in English would inspire my junior colleagues towards writing work and at the same time spread my name around.

Based on my real and vicarious experiences in India and the U.S., I began to publish one story after the other in English in popular magazines. and circulated their photocopies to my colleagues. While one teacher praised them, others, mostly to flatter Preeta Chonni and her husband, spread the rumours around on the campus that I do obscene writing and that I must have indulged in sexual activities in the U.S. as portrayed in the short stories. This was particularly emphasized because I often used the first person narrative in order to give a touch of reality. Some expressions and even sentences from the stories, torn out of context, were paraded before others as evidence of my obscene writing. Dr. Radha Sharan's comment was more political than academic as he had said, "Dr. Sinha is a good writer of *kisse kahani* (spinner of tales)." The implication was that I am not good enough for serious critical writing.

Brushing aside all the disparaging remarks as of no value, I continued writing and publishing my short stories. It gave me such a peace of mind that nothing bothered me. As a creative writer, I always had my mind preoccupied with one or the other short story. When I went to bed around 10 in the night, I would often go on thinking of some story, imagining which twists or turns to give, how to create suspense and how to bring an effective conclusion. The result was that the imagination-pressed brain would create a spiral staircase of all these things and naturally make me sleep.

Besides, I had a sense of humor so that during half-an-hour of tea-break in the Department, I would make the conversation or discussion very lively, turning spoken words or sentences in such a light that the seriousness would be turned into fun and humour. A few teachers stealthily confided in me that my company and my sense of humour are very refreshing so that when they go back to their next classes, they are quite refreshed.

Preeta Chonni, being a Research Fellow, was Incharge of the Departmental Tea Club. She was undoubtedly exceedingly beautiful

with bubbling youth as if forcibly packed into an extremely fair-complexioned, tight, fleshy container. She had mesmerizing large attractive eyes and swollen cheeks. It was no surprise that because of her charming personality and being the Head's wife, she was able to bring most of the teachers to her side.

One day Preeta Chonni opened a new topic in the tea-room by saying, "Books are the greatest possession of man. Dr Ayush, which book do you value most?"

Smiling, I said, "Cheque book."

Everyone laughed. She felt somewhat embarrassed.

After sometime, Preeta asked another question addressed to all: "What kind of writing is important—critical or creative?"

Everyone said, "Critical" while I remained quiet.

She asked me, "What is your opinion Dr Ayush?"

"I would say one cannot categorically term one better or superior to the other. How can there be critical writing without creative writing? Only after Shakespeare had composed dramas could there be Shakespearean criticism."

"It's a very clever answer with which I don't agree," Preeta argued. "I consider creative writing as something cheap which does not need any mental activity and only those who can't think and analyze critically do creative writing."

I was taken aback a little and thought she was attempting to hit me, though not directly. Since all the teachers knew that I was a creative writer, their faces turned towards me and I said, "You mean I don't have a mind."

Preeta dryly observed, "I haven't said this but you are free to take it anyway you like."

From that day, I realized that Preeta Chonni was posing as a real boss of the department which others could accept but not I, and hence stopped going to the tea-room. Afterwards, the tea began to be served to me in my room.

One night I had some disturbed sleep. It was unusual because sleep caused no problem to me. I would fall asleep briefly but after sometime, my entire body would be shaken with a jerk and I would wake up with sweat all over my body. My wife anxiously asked me, “Not getting sleep?”

“No,” I said. “I go to sleep and then suddenly wake up. May be the tea I had taken along with the guest in the night is the cause of it, but don’t worry much. I’ll take a short walk, wash my feet and it will bring sleep.” Afterwards I went to sleep. This happened for a couple of nights. During my sleepless hours, I thought of the absence of letters from the publishers, even from home, or sometimes thought of various faces seen in Preeti’s room, one of them having the look of a gangster. I had asked my most faithful student to find out about him, and he said the man was a gangster with the name of Ganda Singh. I also saw them many times sitting in the university canteen downstairs and thought of them as the beauty and the beast.

Since the absence of uninterrupted sleep had made me tense, I did not talk much in the department. Even as I was teaching, I was not my usual self. I cracked no jokes, provoked no laughter and found the students looking at their watches—something they had never done before.

One student came out after the period and asked me, ‘Sir, you don’t seem to be well. Is there anything I could do for you?’

“No,” I answered. “I am fine” and went to my room.

After the uneasy sleep had gone on for some more nights, one night I lay completely awake without even a moment’s sleep. My wife suddenly asked me, “Do you take tea in the department?” and on my affirmative reply, she advised, “Stop taking tea there.”

Though I considered her suggestion extraneous to the matter because the tea was being prepared for all even though one cup was brought for me to my room. However to satisfy my wife’s anxiety, I stopped taking tea in the department and my sleep began to be normal again.

## vi

“You know,” I said to my wife Preeta, “I had ridiculed Dr. Sinha’s creative writing before other teachers and students with the purpose of discouraging him, but it has backfired. Instead of stopping creative writing, he has also started writing critical papers in the area of Indian Writing in English, though our library has neither texts nor critical books in the area.”

“Then how does he do it?” Preeta asked me.

“He has his own library—quite rich, I am told. He had brought a large crate of books from the U.S.A., including all the volumes of the *Encyclopedia Americana*.”

Preeta Chonni remained quiet, thinking, and then suggested, “Radha Sharan, I have heard that creative writers are very sensitive. Sometimes even the most trivial matters trigger the disturbance of their mental equilibrium for hours. Our department peon can be asked to do something.”

“What can the poor fellow do?”

“A needle can do what a sword cannot,” she said grandly using some movie dialogue. “He can be asked to put an anti-sleeping pill in his cup of tea. If Dr. Ayush does not get sleep, he is bound to be disturbed.”

“But he takes tea along with all other teachers in the tea room,” I whined. “How can the poor peon place an anti-sleeping pill only in his cup of tea?”

With a lot of confidence in herself, Preeta said, “I have an elaborate plan for it. He is fond of discussing things. During the discussion, I’ll insult him so much that he will be cut to size and won’t come to the tea room again. It is then that the tea would have to be served in his room and the pill will go into his cup of tea. Beginning with one pill, the dose would be increased till he has no sleep at all. Since it may not work for long time, I have our Ganda Singh who is ever willing to do anything for me. I have shown Dr. Sinha to him many times.”

**vii**

During the 1990s, there was a wave of terrorism in Punjab. Some kiosk owners from U.P. and Bihar, selling tobacco and betel leaves, were selectively shot dead to create terror among the Hindus, particularly from outside the State, so that the panicky exodus of one community from Punjab could facilitate the establishment of Khalistan. At such times, the role of Punjab police was dubious or at worst partial. To have some money from extortion and to settle personal scores, they also started selective killings surreptitiously.

Though the university campus was relatively peaceful, different kinds of man-made problems began to crop up. Many aspirants for prestigious jobs in the university sent anonymous letters to those teachers who were occupying such posts, threatening them in the name of terrorists and asking them to leave the university or to face elimination. Some teachers began to resign and leave. I nervously waited for the dreaded letter, but before that one afternoon some uniformed policemen with others invaded into my house, put revolver on my chest and asked me to resign the job and leave Punjab. Among the gun-totting, turbaned intruders, I could recognize two of them. One was Ganda Singh, the ruffian who used to frequent Preeta's room and the second one was a teacher from within the department anxiously thirsting for promotion. I had no option and complied with their wishes. Rumours were then spread around on the campus and outside that I had resigned my job voluntarily for personal reasons. This was widely publicized in the newspapers of Punjab.

Since this was not the fact and I did not want to leave the job without fighting legally, I went to Chandigarh, sent a telegram to the university authorities not to accept my resignation. I also hired a good advocate to get me the stay order from the High Court. As the case was being prepared, the advocate assured me that my job would be saved after getting the stay order from the High Court, Chandigarh.

Meanwhile, the-then Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced over 25 percent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC). The students staged violent protests all over the country. One of them immolated himself in Sector 17 of Chandigarh, The entire city, including the High Court, remained closed as the curfew was clamped indefinitely. Meanwhile, I rang up the Vice-Chancellor not to accept my resignation but he, being under the threat of terrorists, had already accepted it.

Shocked and helpless, I felt like the mythical Jatayu, considered to be the king of the skies, who, in fighting against the demon Ravana in order to save Sita, had his wings cut off and then pushed down to the ground in which he was fatally injured—incapable of doing anything, Jatayu merely waited for Lord Ram to narrate his pathetic tale.

## **POEMS**

### **Muse's Mistique**

**\*Pashupati Jha**

Emotions stir and implode  
striving for an outlet,  
a blank sheet, virgin white  
sneaks near to be seeded;  
I want my youth back again.

Forget my thick, embossed papers  
I have a wild side too;  
When I am alone, utterly denied  
bent down and writhing in pain,  
the sea rages within with leaping tides;  
when everything is eaten, embers remain,  
to tell of another loss, another gain.

### **Making of a Poem**

The light of the hazy night  
peeps through the moon-lit window  
opened by the frequent flow of breeze  
bringing scents of pollen  
into my lazy bed room.

A shape breaks that silence  
of sound sleep spread all around

I know not what to do,  
for things are barely visible  
around me and my mind.

But that shapely figure does know  
and with steady steps nears my bed  
to stir my body away from sleep.

Initially, I don't respond and lay still  
but that soft touch flickers from my crown  
down to hairy forest of my chest  
turning into intense, leaping flame  
taking my blood into rebellious run.

I struggle to rescue my ego  
and try to cover my naked pride  
yet Adam is once again  
defeated by a determined Eve.

In the early morning when  
others are still fast asleep  
I wake up to pen down  
my lost innocence.

*(Readers are requested to read these two poems on poetic  
creativity and compare them with "Thought-Fox" of Ted  
Hughes.)*

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## **Visions of Delight**

**\*S.A. Hamid**

*“Poetry makes nothing happen” (Auden)*

Through visions of delight  
he looks at the world  
screening everything undesirable:  
dirt, squalor, poverty  
lack of love, hatred, violence.  
For him singing brooks, whispering trees  
perfume-laden breeze, interlocked tongues  
long kisses in the moonlight  
and the lie called conjugal bliss.

Skipping the initiation into adulthood  
he shirks from cruelty, deceit,  
backstabbing, selfishness  
and if he hears of them  
he falls down to pray to God  
to protect him from all evil  
as he believed He would, the faithful.

But where was He when he suffered,  
the treachery of his very own  
the lust he succumbed to  
sometimes greed, selfishness too.

Will he be deprived of Paradise, the hours  
as the maulvis had warned him?

Then he turned to the master poet Ghalib,  
his yearning for wine  
his contempt for Paradise  
his fascination for a nautch girl  
That's more authentic, he concluded,  
better than being sincere  
A late realization  
But as they say  
It's better late than never  
And poetry does make things happen.

**\*S.A. Hamid** (retired Professor of English, Kumaun University Campus, Almora, Uttarakhand) has published five book of poems, the latest being *The Alchemy of Ageing* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2021). He is currently working on his book of short stories. He can be reached at [syedali.hamid2@gmail.com](mailto:syedali.hamid2@gmail.com)

## **Three Poems**

**\*Susheel Kumar Sharma**

### **1. TEA**

One's age evaporates with time like  
Sugar crystals do in the boiling water.  
With every passing moment the speed  
Gets enhanced. Some cold milk needs  
To be added to slow the process and let  
The crystals stay for a little while more.  
Sugar disappears leaving a sweet taste  
Behind like divine moments do. Tea  
Leaves do to the milk what the impatient  
Dreams do to life. Some cardamoms bring  
Flavour like some proud moments do.  
A little ginger works wonders like  
Praises do in an office. Over-heated  
Tea gets impatient to pour out of the pan  
Like silly abuses in a fit of anger. The  
Tea served with some tangy snacks gives  
Some warmth in the cold winter like the  
Grand-kids in a lap. Hands feel the warmth  
Of the past and bring a smile on the wrinkled  
Face. Teeth are not necessary to enjoy tea but  
The lips should know how much is too much  
For the tongue and the cavity at a moment.

Tea makes following friends, understanding  
Enemies' sly smiles, chasing and being

Chased on the chessboard of life easier,  
Cosier, smooth and playful. Tea-parties  
Colour one's invisible dreams with pride,  
Jealousies, passions, gratitude and hopes.

## **2. THE LAST EPISTLE**

I have carried your letters for  
Over fifty years; the letters  
Written in different inks and  
Different moods, scented with  
Perfumes; laced with different  
Lipsticks and written in your  
lovely hand. They still exude  
The same fragrance as came  
From the white jasmine  
Flowers in your black braid.  
How will I survive without  
Them, your precious memory?

The letters soaked in your love  
Will not get burnt silently nor  
Can they be carried away by  
Flowing water easily. They will  
Shriek to tell the world how  
Passionately you had loved me  
Against the will of your parents  
And friends; the letters that I

Remember by heart as a mother  
remembers every child by name and  
By the history of the wounds s/he gets.

They were written stealthily,  
Many in the day hours, some  
In the night hours, a few in the  
Wee hours, waking out of dreams,  
Many to cajole me, some to scold,  
A few to reprimand me; all carried  
Your fragrance, your love; hiding  
From people, I kept them close to  
My heart, like people carry their  
Talismans close to their chests.

I have known these epistles by heart  
I feel their colours, I sense their words  
I see their alphabet, I live their times  
I have survived by them in the forlorn times  
Like a nun in a convent does by various  
Biblical verses and epistles in her seclusion.  
They have helped me come out of  
Griefs and sorrows and have guided  
Me on the difficult terrains of life.

I am going to lie buried now with your  
Memories; your fragrance will envelope  
Me like fresh dew; nobody should soil

These testaments with their carnal hands.  
They have been my ethos, my religion;  
Don't soak them, don't burn them;  
Don't pound them into the stream;  
To destroy others' gods is impious.

### **3. RADHA'S UNUSUAL PRAYER**

O Kanha, you cared more for Arjun  
than for your old love. Where was  
your judgment lost? When Arjuna did  
Hesitated to touch your wounds  
Why didn't you remember me?  
My love would not have diminished  
Unlike Arjun's powers. O Pitambar,  
Come to me again; lie down here in my lap.  
Let me wash the blood-stains on your dress;  
Be assured, you will be fit again;  
Fit to dance again in the orchids  
With your gopis; no goon will  
come to violate your gopis; no  
KalYaman will come when  
Radha is by your side."

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## **Let *Bharat* Be the *Guru* of the World**

**\*Kalinkar Pattanayak**

*Bharat*, the land of my birth  
Is more than a piece of Earth,  
Presents a picturesque image  
Of a global village.

The sages, here, down the ages  
Have enlightened the masses  
Of the realization of universal kinship.

The sight of the *Himalayas*,  
The dance of the peacocks,  
The flight of the doves,  
The flow of the Ganges,  
Correlate the lessons  
On pride and peace.

Tearing veils of mortality  
The seers of *Bharat* penetrate  
Into the heart of immortality  
An illuminating experience for war-torn humanity!  
The horrors of war between Russia and Ukraine  
The threat of Sino-Taiwan invasion

The preparation for a nuclear holocaust  
Instill fear into the hearts of men.

Our planet needs to be safer and greener  
With plantation and realization of the seer  
Renouncing savagery, war and massacre.

Surely, the times are crucial,  
The incarnation of God is essential.

Let *Bharat* be the *guru* of the world;  
The term in true sense is antithetical to bloodshed.

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gmail.com, Phone- 7978799898

## **Corona's Questions**

**\*Shiv Kumar Yadav**

O Animal Thinking! Questions from a Being sans Thinking;  
Your tall claim: Live and Let Live!  
For whom: Just for flora and fauna?  
Or is there some space for Corona?  
Oh! Selfish! Even you grabbed their arenas.  
Imaginative Billions! Me too millions in names.  
Generously you made a tree of life,  
But placed me at nowhere at all.

Unwilling to make me your own part;  
I make you separate and apart.

How do you feel in the house arrest?  
Where is your Aristotle's and Buddha's Golden Mean?  
Lost the dynamic equilibrium and vital interferon.  
In years, you wrote the Prologue of civilization;  
In months, I may finish the Epilogue of annihilation.  
Shun your ego and monologue; Go for multilogue.

Aware of your ingenuity and stupidity;  
You are in search of my essence and entity,  
Within the span of your efforts I change my identity.  
Observing the universe and experimenting on God's particle;  
Moving from this planet to exoplanets;  
Meditating on the limited seen and unlimited unseen;  
Pining for life in numbers and whining at death;  
Alas! But unable to understand the self and the earth.

May I advise you on your crime, vice and sinful deed?  
Think on your anthropocentric feed and greed;  
Move beyond your humanistic and transhumanistic breed;  
Share the earth with biocentric heed and need.  
End the primordial binary and dichotomy of Satan and God.

**\*Shiv Kumar Yadav**, Associate Professor, Department of English,  
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## BOOK REVIEWS

Rajnath. *Postcolonial Criticism and Theory: A Critique*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, Price: ₹ 995/-

The reading of literature and society through the lens of postcolonial theory proliferated in 1960s and 70s when critics like Edward Said, Homi K Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Robert Young, and others started to write against the Western canon. This canon was established in order to see race, ethnicity, power, culture, imperialism, and hegemony through new perspective. Amid the exhaustive list of theorists and critics constantly writing under postcolonial discourse, Prof. Rajnath is an accomplished name in India. His critical books on different theories have been responded well in the last two three decades. His books like *Essay in Criticism*, *T.S. Eliot's Theory of Poetry*, *Critical Speculations*, *The Identity of Literature: A Reply to Jacques Derrida*, have been widely read and reviewed by critics in India and abroad. His broader perspective of looking at literature gives reader a fresh understanding of texts and contexts.

Rajnath's latest book *Postcolonial Criticism and Theory: A Critique* is an in-depth delineation of postcolonial praxis that addresses both the classical canon and contemporary criticism of postcolonial theory. It brings a comprehensive understanding of imperial culture and their dominance over colonised nations, and the concepts like race, culture, authority, power, resistance, reconciliation, ambivalence have been explained and critiqued in an illustrious manner. The critique of the Western epistemology along with the critique of most recognised postcolonial thinkers compel readers to develop a new understanding about thinkers like Said, Spivak, Bhabha, and T.S. Eliot. Rajnath's rigorous research

on postcolonial theory and concepts associated with it reflect through this retrospective book on postcolonialism.

The book is divided into three parts—each comprising three chapters that delineate the historical, theoretical, and aesthetic aspect of postcolonialism. The very first chapter gives an account of postcolonial theory and its limitation regarding lack of attention to “specificity of literature” and “evaluation” (16-17). The subsequent two chapters analyse Edward Said’s idea of Orientalism which was developed by him from Gramsci’s idea of hegemony, and limitations of Said. Said has been celebrated for giving an alternative understanding of the East, but at the same time he has been criticised for “his silence about texts which do not have colonial contexts” (43).

The second part of the book analyses at length the views of two other most recognised thinkers of postcolonialism, namely, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak and Homi K Bhabha. The first two chapters of this section is devoted to a critical analysis of Spivak’s entanglement with the deconstructionist approach, her use of language, and the concept of ‘subaltern’, again derived from Gramsci. She is in a fix about being a deconstructionist. Rajnath pertinently argues, “Spivak has had two options; first to reject deconstruction in order to embrace the new dispensation of postcolonialism, feminism, and Marxism or to remain only a deconstructionist throughout her critical journey, but she does neither” (76). The final chapter of this section explains Homi K Bhabha’s position on the inseparable relation between modernism and postmodernism, his concept of culture, nationalism, and the ambivalent relation between the coloniser and the colonised. Rajnath criticizes Bhabha for blurring the boundary between literary and non-literary texts. The problem also lies in his rejection of “the referential properties of language which he needs to describe postcolonial reality” (101).

The book under review further provides an exegesis of the aesthetic aspect of postcolonialism. The delineation of literature

by Said, Spivak, and Bhabha comprises the first chapter of this section. The lack of exact focus on the literary aspect is the main concern of Rajnath. Further, the penultimate chapter of this book presents a comprehensive analysis of culture through Said, Spivak, Bhabha, Jameson, and Derrida. The last chapter of this book (re)visits Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* through postcolonial lens, the way Said analysed Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Here the problematic delineation of the East by the West is the main concern of Rajnath, who posits, "Eliot shares the Orientalist attitude of extolling the past and denouncing the present of India in culture and religion" (140). The Appendix towards the end of the book presents an in-depth analysis of the historical picture of English studies in India which will enable the readers to understand the development of English language, education, and research in India in an analytical manner.

Rajnath intentionally blends the two terms theory and criticism as he believes that "we cannot draw a watertight division between them" (09). He finds himself less convinced with the study of the two terms- criticism and theory as synonyms. Instead, the two terms though subtly different can be taken as "the obverse and the reverse of the same coin" (10).

*Postcolonial Criticism and Theory: A Critique* is an invaluable contribution to modern readers who want a critical understanding of postcolonial perspective. It can be a two-way read for readers in the sense that it not only enables the readers to understand the core concepts of postcolonial theory but can also enable readers to interrogate the canon already established by celebrated thinkers like Said, Spivak, and Bhabha. Along with its convincing quality, the book carries the burden of too many concepts of postcolonial theory which sometimes may block readers' thought. The book could have included the contemporary thinkers and critics who have moved further from the canon set by these early thinkers that Prof. Rajnath has analysed. Yet the book can prove to be reader friendly because of the author's ease

of language and his control over vocabulary. Readers can harvest rich dividends from the rigorous endeavours put by the author and make their understanding of criticism enriching in an age where the said discipline at times becomes tiring and taxing. The compendious presentation of facts, arguments, and analysis can unequivocally offer *Postcolonial Criticism and Theory: A Critique* the space in the study rooms of prospective researchers and scholars.

**Reviewers : Rangnath Thakur and Binod Mishra**, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India.

**Ramesh K. Srivastava.** *A Man of Gold and Other Stories*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2022. pp. 203, ₹ 395.

Ramesh K. Srivastava's *A Man of Gold and Other Stories*, his latest contribution to the literary world, is a collection of twenty short stories. The book under review sprinkles varied and vivid experiences crafted in a subtle, succinct and spontaneous language familiarizing readers to the everyday realities that they come across and forget in the hurly-burly of present day world dominated by the wings of technology. In a world dominated by novels, Srivastava's stories of this collection lend a fresh gust of wind in an atmosphere of crass-commercial writings aimed at receiving instant name and fame. A good short story, according to Prof. Srivastava is 'like a supply of fresh air that makes the human life delightful, meaningful, and no less healthy' (10). Besides short stories, he is credited with publishing two novels also. Srivastava has also recorded the various ups and downs of life in his autobiography *My Father's Bad Boy*.

Kaleidoscopic in nature, Srivastava's short stories radiate with various colours necessary for making human lives interesting.

What makes his stories distinct is the realistic portrayal of incidents and characters drawn from various professions. People of all ilks—the rich and the poor, men and women, the old and the young, teacher and student, potter and goldsmith broaden Srivastava's canvas reminding readers of various congruities and incongruities of life. The writer seems to have equally treated 'love and infatuation, crime and punishment, materialism and spiritualism, poverty and riches, illusion and reality, villages and cities' in his stories.

Many stories of the collection have their basis in the writer's own experiences, such as the title story "A Man of Gold" depicting his childhood friend—Ghasi Ram—a goldsmith, who showed "his golden heart" by saving the writer's life albeit jeopardizing his own life in the flooded river. In "The Beauty and the Beast," initially these terms were meant respectively for human beings and animals in a circus but later become opposite in their connotations at the end of the story. "The Bicycle," presents the pathetic picture of a helpless father who eventually succeeds in converting the unrealistic and dreamy son to see the stark reality of life. "A Teacher of Humanity" gives a realistic picture of a Sikh dentist—a personification of humanity, who had to revolt by putting aside religious fanaticism aimed at making lives of the people all around miserable, even hellish. The story is autobiographical as the author has portrayed his real friend in it. "Blessed be the Dark" shows how one dark-complexioned girl transcends the colour-consciousness in transforming her life in such a way that she becomes adorable. "The Reconciliator" is in a lighter vein where the warring couple ultimately reconciles to peace through a cockroach.

A reading of the stories of *Man of Gold and Other Stories* reminds us of O. Henry as regards depicting the reversal of protagonists' fortune. In "The Bicycle", Pandit Sukh Ram, unable to purchase a bicycle for ambitious son Hari Lal, sells the old mare to fulfil his promise, making the former dumb-founded. The

discovery behind the purchase affects the son so much that he declines to take the bicycle. In "Different from Others," eunuchs are mostly looked down upon by most people because of their unreasonable demands and indecent activities, but Monika, by her helping nature and social service, changes their attitude altogether.

An expert at creating humor even in difficult situations, Srivastava's preference of the first to the third person narrative lends "the former generate feeling of intimacy between the writer and the reader" (15). He identifies himself with some characters, namely with Namrata in "Two Faces," in "A Teacher of Humanity" with a university teacher, in "The Reconciliator" with Aniket, the creative writer, and in "A Man of Gold" with Vipul Asthana, the childhood friend of the goldsmith. In all these roles, the narrator gets so much immersed in the character that he becomes an inalienable part of the story.

Srivastava considers comic mode "an important aspect of life" (16) and believes that a judicious use of it can make a story quite interesting. "In Perils of Simplicity," Ruby teaches Dayal Sharma how to tie a note around his neck and then fools him by explaining that it is put on by the people "to wipe the nose off when it runs" (28). Sometimes it is in characterization. In "A Memorable Present," the character of a forgetful professor has been comically drawn and comes very close to caricature. In "Sweet Revelations," Vivek, a seven-year old boy, blackmails both Shekhar and his wife Anshika by playing one against the other and claiming sweet chocolates from both of them. In "Two Faces," Dal Chand is portrayed as a funny character who attempts to fool everyone who comes in contact with him.

In modern short stories, the conclusions are often left in the air, since the story competes with life having no neat conclusions. Thus, it is left to the reader's imagination. Henry James, too, believed in it and in the *Portrait of a Lady*, the ending is left in the air. The best part of Srivastava's stories lies in the use of familiar language interspersed with wit, humour, fun and pun, irony,

satire and suspense besides other devices. For him “a short story is the food that cannot go down the gullet without being palatable even if comprising all healthy and nutritive elements” (16). On the whole, the collection is not only worth preserving but worth reading as it commingles human nature together with adequate salt and pepper to make the stories eminently readable. In an age driven by social networking sites, Srivastava’s *The Man of Gold* is pure gold as it glitters through laugh and love leading to new alternatives unusual though to imagine yet happening in the contrived corners of the world at large.

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Agarwal, Beena and Neeta. *Ecocriticism in Indian English Literature: Impressions and Expressions*. Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2022. pp. 212, ₹ 1495

Beena Agarwal and Neeta’s book *Ecocriticism in Indian English Literature: Impressions and Expressions* is a new contribution in the field of eco-critical studies. Eco-critical studies, of late, has become very relevant in a globalized world blindly following the spree of high rise-buildings, deforestation, rapid urbanisation, leading to demolition of natural habitats.

The book under review comprises fourteen chapters and is significant because of its focus on Indian English literature, especially on some major novels and some poetry collections. Beginning with a chapter on the critical paradigm of Ecocriticism, the book introduces readers to eco-criticism and maps the trajectory of ecocriticism through various changes. The scope and importance of ecocriticism are studied in detail as an eco-critical

perspective is the need of the hour. The role of eco-critical texts in sensitising the people is crucial as the actions of today's generation are the foundation on which the future of our planet rests. Various aspects like deforestation, land encroachment, urbanisation, human greed, etc. have been cited as reasons prompting the study of eco-critical studies mandatory to carve a balance between human beings and nature for a sustainable future.

The writers duo discover Tagore's *Muktadhara* employing realism and symbolism in his play, discussing the bond between the human spirit and the soul. The effects of industrialisation transform nature and deform traditional norms, creating an in-between space, which acts as a warning sign for the "new intellectuals" (p. 31) to regain the balance of the ecosystem. Sarojini Naidu's poems have been revisited through the eyes of an eco-critic, allowing the poet to find a sense of calm and solace in the lap of nature found prominently in her poems. The lyric stake the readers beyond the desolate days of modern civilisation to the rejuvenating dawn in nature's haven.

An endeavour has been made to explore Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, wherein eco-centric awareness witnesses a uniting force among humankind. The idea of saving nature becomes an antidote to casteism and social prejudice in the novel. Raja Rao understood that the survival of the human race depends on their compassion towards every other species including people, flora and fauna, and the rest of the planet. He also advocates a sense of sympathy towards others, thus moving away from 'the domination and snobbery of the industrial world' (56).

Rapid industrialization that marks Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, a novel set in post-independent India, connects this chapter to the previous chapters of this book. The boom of industrialisation in the post-independent era and its effects, especially on the poor peasants, is the main concern of this novel. Markandaya does not consider the arrival of factories as downright evil; instead, she emphasizes upon their role in the country's

progress. Although acting as a background, nature becomes a living character that undergoes change, and sets the novel's tone. Markandaya respects the traditional values of treating the land as a mother. The innocent nature of the farmers, content with what they get, is contrasted with the greedy capitalists bent upon exploiting everything. The novel balances between both worlds where the new ideas of industrialisation are incorporated with the traditional values so that the progress dreamt is sustainable and lasting.

The chapter on Ramanujan's poems coheres with the previous chapter, as it is also based on the importance of balance in nature. Ramanujan's work reflects his faith, but he was a man of science, who tried to bridge between these two worlds. The conflict between modern man and traditional values becomes a subject in his poems. The greed of the human race is also addressed in his poem 'Prayers to Lord Murugan'. He prays to God for a sense of wisdom to be granted to the people, enabling them to care for and to protect nature.

Beena Agarwal and Neeta discover in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, the coexistence of humans and nature in the Sunderbans as the center stage. Various ideas like poverty, preservation, hostility, adaptation, etc., also find space in the narrative. Ghosh manoeuvres through dilemmas like conserving the tiger population while the human population in the adjacent village fights for survival. The novelist's notion of self-preservation and equality for every living being is a voice against the opposing forces that oppress nature and humans. The work unearths a middle ground where harmony between humans and wildlife could transform humans' devastating ways. While Ghosh's work is based on life in the Sunderbans, Ruskin Bond's *The Himalayan Tales* presents a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature in the Himalayan region.

The novels of Anita Desai have been explored from an ecocritical perspective in the ninth chapter. Though Desai does not

claim to be an eco-critic, her use of landscapes to depict the characters' turmoil is astounding. She also advocates harmony between humans and nature, an absence of which could lead to destruction. Human encroachment is one of the topics which she delineates especially in *The Artist of Disappearance*. Desai also deals with the impact of nature on the human psyche in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Concepts like eco-therapy or green therapy are brought to light, making the readers think about the mysterious ways in which nature helps improve human lives.

The tenth chapter deals with Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Map* that takes into account the tribals and their tribulations. The leading cause of the problems faced by the tribal community has been discovered as the government's policies after independence. The negligence in framing these policies have resulted in the disruption of the lives of the tribals as well as the destruction of forest and other natural resources. Mahasweta Devi believes that tribal culture could be an alternative to sustainable resource management.

Anthropocentric approach of modern society has been traced as reflections of Ecocriticism in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* deliberating upon inanimate characters like trees, mist, rivers, mountains, and animals are shown to be alive and have a role in the narrative. The necessity for ecological balance is the central theme of the work. Although the work is set in Kanchenjunga, this is a plea to conserve every species whose existence is at stake and necessitates as a sustainable approach toward our resources.

Agarwal and Neeta also bring into their discussion a few new texts, such as Usha K.R.'s *Monkey Man*, set in the technological hub of Bangalore. The boom of the IT industry in Bangalore resulting into a complete makeover of the city, with flats and companies mushrooming everywhere, becomes a major concern because of increasing population and urbanisation, and affect people's mental health. The citizens of Bangalore, especially Ammanagaudi Street, start seeing a creature in the night roaming

the street. As the novel ends, this creature moves to different parts of India and reaches Canada too. Depression and insecurity—the primary ailment of today’s society has been linked with the ecological imbalance in the novel.

Narmada is the focal point in Gita Mehta’s *A River Sutra*. The chapter on Mehta’s work studies how Narmada blends nature with humans, revisiting various traditional and philosophical ideas rooted in Indian society that led to the treatment of nature. The concept of treating the river as a goddess and as a mother is given importance. It acts as a source of creation and destruction at the same time. Narmada is a beacon of growth and development as it interlinks different aspects of human life.

The last chapter of the book explores eco-critical concerns in the poetry of the north east and deals with all the major environmental concerns of the world. While the authors have vehemently attacked humans’ greed resulting from land encroachment to deforestation and species endangerment, poets like Nongkynrih have exhibited “faith in the benevolence of nature” (p. 195). With the celebration of the beauty of nature, the poets have also expressed their agony in the present state of affairs. These poems encourage readers to evaluate the ways of humans and prompt them to convert their greed into benevolence.

Texts like *Ecocriticism in Indian English Literature: Impressions and Expressions* can help readers re-evaluate and reassess whether their actions towards nature have been right. This requires contemplation of the self, where the atrocities on nature merely for a sense of comfort, have harmed the planet. The only redemption that can save everything on our planet is to find an ecological balance in which humans and nature can survive hand-in-hand. What makes the book an additional help, especially to students of English literature, is its detailed analysis of major Indian novelists such as Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Amitav Ghosh, Ruskin Bond, Anita Desai, Mahasweta Devi, Kiran Desai, Gita Mehta and poets such

as A.K. Ramanujan, TamsulaAo, and Mamang Dai etc. Most of these writers, being a part of several university syllabi, can provide a significant role in guiding both the living as well as the upcoming generations in keeping our world as a habitable space and not turning it into a dead rock with no hope for the living. The book despite some shortcomings, surely, deserves some room in our personal as well as departmental libraries.

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