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Contents

Editorial	<i>xi</i>
—M.R. Verma	
Class Consciousness and Quest for Identity in Edouard Louis's <i>The End of Eddy</i>	1
—Nibir K. Ghosh	
Language Policy & Planning: National Education Policy 2020	13
—Susheel Kumar Sharma	
Poetics of Afro-American Aesthetics	32
—H.S. Lal	
Depiction of Trauma of Cholera Pandemic in Odia Literature: Revisiting Fakir Mohan Senapati's <i>Rebati</i>	44
—Mary Mohanty	
Female Subjugation in the Select Novels of Buchi Emecheta	54
—Rajesh Kumar Lidiya	
Psychoanalytical Study of Neurotic Characters in Major Indian Women Novelists	75
—Neeraj Kumar	
—Richa Rani	
<i>The Discomfort of Evening</i> as Feminist Metafiction: Deconstructing Gender Roles and Identity	86
—Sanket Kumar Jha	
—A.K. Bachchan	

Neo-colonizing Nature: Postcolonial Environmentalism in Ngugi Wa Thiong’ O’s <i>Petals of Blood</i>	100
—Amit Kumar Soni	
—Vikas Sharma	
Ecofeminism, A Promise of Hope to Mourning Nature: A Story of Burning Rage, Shame, and Extinction	113
—Sheena Bhaskar Unmesh	
—Veerendra Mishra	
Silence is the Language of War: Laborious Conversations in Anuk Arudpragasam’s <i>The Story of a Brief Marriage</i>	124
—S. Sathiya Gnanambigai	
—R. Rajavelu	
Edwin Arnold’s <i>The Light of Asia</i>: A Saga of Enlightenment	134
—Bhavesh Chandra Pandey	
Filming Fiction: Critiquing Film Adaptation of <i>The White Tiger</i> through the Lens of Loyalty and Liberty	142
—Yugeshwar Sah	
Love-Hate Relationship in Bapsi Sidhwa’s <i>Ice Candy Man</i>	155
—Binay Shanker Roy	
Eroticism in Audre Lorde’s Poetry	163
—M. Sandra Carmel Sophia	
Quest for Self: Wanderings of a Lonely Woman: A Reading of Vikas Sharma’s <i>Ashes & Fire</i>	172
—S.Z.H. Naqvi	
Reconnoitering the Feisty Virtuoso in <i>The White Tiger</i> of Aravind Adiga	179
—Ashok K. Saini	
—Ruchi Saini	

The Poetry of Taslima Nasrin: The Voice of Protest	186
—Debasish Nayak	
That's What She Said: A Feminist Retelling of Indian Mythology in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's <i>The Palace of Illusions</i> and <i>The Forest of Enchantments</i>	196
—Komal Verma	
Gender Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's <i>Tara</i>	207
—P.K. Singh	
Voices to Choices: A Journey Towards Women's Empowerment	214
—Karthiga S V	
—Manju Roy	
Decolonizing the Green Study	221
—Krishna Nand Mishra	
Social Identity and Sachchidananda Sinha: A Study of His Memoir on Formation of Bihar	244
—Stuti Prasad	
Psyche-epipsyche Strategy in the Major Poems of P.B. Shelley: An Analytical Study	255
—Kumar Chandradeep	
Deconstructing Stereotypes: A Feminist Critique of the Film <i>Arth</i> (1982)	263
—Sweta Kumari	
Sri Aurobindo: A Prophet of the Divine Life	278
—Ram Pravesh Singh	
Dependent or Independent?: A Feminist Study of Manju Kapur's <i>Difficult Daughters</i>	287
—Bhanu Chaddha	
—Vipin Kumar	

Understanding Female Writer's Journey of Resistance, Struggle & Assertion in the Male Bastion in the 20th-21st Century	317
---	------------

—Runoo Ravi

Classroom Techniques and Strategies for Promoting Learner Autonomy in ELT	331
--	------------

—Sujarani Mathew

Silence in the Development of Stephen's Character in James Joyce's <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>	346
--	------------

—Vartika Agrawal

—Veerendra Kumar Mishra

CREATIVE SECTION

POEMS

Passing	364
----------------	------------

The Ether of Disappointment	365
------------------------------------	------------

—Shelly Narang

Shipwrecked	366
--------------------	------------

—Soma Chakraborty

Three Poems	367
--------------------	------------

—Susheel Kumar Sharma

BOOK REVIEWS

Ramesh K. Srivastava's <i>My Best Twenty Stories</i>	372
---	------------

—Ghulam Rabani & Dr. Binod Mishra

Prof. Vikas Sharma, '<i>Sana</i>'	375
--	------------

—Suresh Dhole

Pradip Kumar Patra, <i>Voices at the Door: Critical Responses to Susheel Kumar Sharma's <i>The Door is Half Open</i></i>	377
---	------------

—K. Balachandran

Editorial

I am happy to present the 59th volume of this journal to its perceptive readers. The wide popularity and prestige that the journal enjoys is reflected in scholarly papers sent for publication in it from different parts of the country –Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, U.P., Uttarakhand, Chandigarh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Keeping the tradition of the journal, the present volume contains scholarly papers covering a wide range of topics. While Susheel Kumar Sharma has discussed the language policy in New Education Policy 2020, Sujarani Mathew analyzes classroom techniques for promoting learner's autonomy. S.S. Gnanambigai and R. Rajaveli in their discussion of Sri Lankan diasporic writer, Anuk Arudpragasam's novel on the background of war-torn Sri Lanka, claim that 'Silence is the language of war'. Ecological concerns have drawn the attention of the scholars and some of the papers touch upon their various aspects. Krishnand Mishra's paper aims at decolonizing the Green Study; Amit Kumar Soni and Vikas Sharma, while discussing *Petals of Blood* by Ngugi wa Thiong'O, show how Thiong'O has depicted the process of neo-colonization of Nature in Africa, and Sheena Bhaskar and Veerendra Kumar Mishra have given in their paper an exposition of Ecofeminism. Feminism, which concerns half the population of the world, is naturally the focal point of several articles. Rajesh Kumar Lidiya describes the feminist concerns of Nigerian novelist, Buchi Emecheta. P.K. Singh's analysis of Mahesh Dattani's play, *Tara*, shows the unequal treatment given to daughters in Indian families.

Neeraj Kumar and Richa Ravi have given a perceptive description of neurotic characters in the novels of Indian women novelists. Sanket Kumar Jha and Bachchan present a deconstruction of gender roles and identity in the Booker Prize-winning Dutch novelist, Lucas Rijneveld's novel *The Discomfort of Evening*. Karthiga S. V. and Manju Rai talk of women's empowerment in literature. Komal Verma discusses feminist retelling of mythology in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Film study has drawn the attention of the researchers of late and we have got some very good analysis of film scripts which have adapted literary works. We have two interesting papers that have taken up off beat themes. Mary Mohanty discusses the treatment of cholera epidemic in a short story of Fakir Mohan Senapati, the father of modern Odia literature. Stuti Prasad has examined the Memoir of Sachchidananda Sinha on the formation of Bihar. The journal, as usual, has some beautiful poems for poetry lovers. I hope this volume of the journal will be appreciated by readers.

M.R. Verma

Class Consciousness and Quest for Identity in Edouard Louis's *The End of Eddy*

*Nibir K. Ghosh

Abstract

The End of Eddy, Edouard Louis's debut novel, has rocked France with its debate on social inequality, sexuality and violence. Eddy is a child born to below-the-poverty-line parents in an isolated village in rural northern France in 1992. The story of Eddy's growing up amidst violence and homophobia is also the story of Edouard Louis who experienced first-hand the trauma of growing up poor and gay in a setting that threatened the existence of anyone who wanted to be free and different. The present essay is an attempt to examine the novel in the light of class consciousness, gender divide and the crisis of identity that the protagonist and his creator have to contend with in trying to live life on their own terms in a land that gave to the world the ideals of "liberty, equality, fraternity."

Keywords: Working Class, Edouard Louis, Pierre Bourdieu, Didier Eribon, *The Paris Review*, *The End of Eddy*, French

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Revolution, *Invisible Man*, Class and gender divide, Identity crisis.

Before exploring Louis's novel, *The End of Eddy*, in the context of class consciousness and identity crisis, I find it pertinent to engage in a flashback to bring into focus what I had read as a student and scholar of English and French Literature about the gains of the French Revolution of 1789. I had read that the French Revolution inaugurated a new era in the history of human race by giving a death blow to the last remnants of feudalism which had been regulating the relations of nobles and peasants in France and other countries, and proclaimed in its place the doctrine of equality. Denouncing the idea of governments based on the "Divine Rights of Kings" and preparing the way for the rise of the popular constitutional governments based on the consent of the governed, the Revolution opened a new epoch in the social, political, economic, and literary history of Europe. According to Wordsworth "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,/ But to be young was very Heaven" (Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Bk. IX). Victor Hugo, in his pioneering novel, *Les Misérables*, hailed the Revolution as "the most important step of human race since the advent of Christ. Incomplete it may be, but sublime it was. It set free all the unknown social quantities, softened spirits; it calmed, appeased, enlightened; it caused the waves of civilization to flow over the earth. The French Revolution is the consecration of humanity" (Hugo 69). Similarly, in his "Preface" to the *Revolt of Islam* P. B. Shelley, the romantic revolutionary, records how he was inspired by the Revolution to "kindle in the bosom of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever wholly extinguish among mankind" (Shelley 435).

In a nation where the glorious ideals of "liberty, equality, fraternity" brought about by the French Revolution two centuries and a quarter ago, the appearance of Edouard Louis's debut novel

The End of Eddy in 2014 came as a sensation that rocked the complacency of contemporary democratic France. Against the backdrop of revolutionary idealism, one may find it intriguing to see how *The End of Eddy* brings to light pressing facts of social inequality, sexuality and violence in contemporary France that seem to be at glaring variance with the avowed democratic principles of the nation.

Edouard Louis's autobiographical novel about growing up amid poverty and homophobia in rural France brought Edouard Louis instant fame at the age of 22. With a sale exceeding half a million copies, the novel, translated into 20 languages, was hailed as an authentic insider's story of "that demonised demographic, the provincial poor, living on minimum wages and diminishing benefits, instinctively homophobic and reflexively racist" (Adams).

Born Eddy Bellegueule on 30 October 1992 in the town of Hallencourt in northern France to parents who live below the poverty-line, Edouard Louis portrays with acute sensitivity in the novel what he experienced as a child in his home and outside it. "From my childhood," says Eddy in the novel, "I have no happy memories. I don't mean to say that I never, in all of those years, felt any happiness or joy. But suffering is all-consuming: it somehow gets rid of anything that doesn't fit into its system" (EOE 10). In an interview to *The Paris Review*, Louis frankly admits: "Eddy Bellegueule is the name my parents gave me when I was born. It sounds dramatic, but yes, I wanted to kill him—he wasn't me, he was the name of a childhood I hated" (Farsethås).

What appears to dominate the narrative of Louis's novel includes the abject poverty that Eddy experiences at home, the constricting workingclass environment characterised by violence at home and outside it, his strained relationship with his family, particularly his alcoholic father, and his struggle to come to terms with his bodily orientation as a gay.

As a child, Eddy becomes accustomed to suffer humiliation constantly "asking for credit or going to the food bank for food"

(EOE 37). He and his siblings had to go without bath for days at end because there wasn't enough hot water available. Eddy says with all honesty, "On days when we did take baths, my mother insisted that we not empty the tub when we were done, so that all five kids could use the same water and not waste electricity" (EOE 50). In place of doors and real walls, what separated the bedrooms were mere "sheets of plasterboard and curtains." (EOE 60). Dinner appeared to be a luxury: "At my parents' house we didn't have dinner; we ate" (EOE 87), remarks Eddy. Reflecting on his predicament, Eddy points out quite emphatically how they were victims of "social forces" rather than what could pass of as their destiny: "My parents had no phone line and no Internet connection, as was true of the majority of people living in the village, and as is still the case for my mother as I write these lines." (EOE 148). The only source of keeping themselves entertained was the Television. It was just taken for granted "like language or the ways we dressed" (EOE 48). Eddy's narrative graphically recounts the deadening effect of the working conditions in the factories where his father and uncle had worked. He says his uncle, like his father, drank a lot after work

in order to forget the exhausting days of hauling around cases and crates, of having fifteen minutes in which to eat, with your eye on your watch, the lousy heated-up lunch your wife had prepared the night before and put in your lunch tin. Then there was the noise of the sorting room, deafening, a kind of assault, even. There's barely enough time to sit down for lunch, and if you go a minute over the foreman starts to yell (EOE103).

Eddy is not a mere fictional creation of Edouard Louis. It is the tale of the author himself told against the backdrop of a series of people and situations that exemplified the impact of poverty in a nation that is known as the cradle of modern democracy. Louis says in *The Paris Review* interview that "the real subject of the book is how people like the ones in my village suffer from exclusion, domination, poverty" (Farsethas). Citing the "principle

of the conservation of violence” propounded by Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), French sociologist and public intellectual), Louis elaborates how these circumstances produce brutality ending in perpetual conflict across class category: “When you’re subjected to endless violence, in every situation, every moment of your life, you end up reproducing it against others, in other situations, by other means. One of the instruments of this daily violence is the cult of masculinity” (Farsethas).

However, it may be pointed out that coming to terms with the working class setting Eddy is born into is superseded by the scorn and violence, both physical and verbal, he is subjected to on account of his sexual orientation that leans essentially on the effeminate. At the very outset of the novel, the author gives the reader an idea of what to expect from the book with a statement about its child protagonist, Eddy Bellegueule:

Before I had a chance to rebel against the world of my childhood, that world rebelled against me. In truth, confronting my parents, my social class, its poverty, racism and brutality came second. From early on I provoked shame and even disgust from my family and others around me. The only option I had was to get away somehow. This book is an effort to understand all that (Louis – About the Book)

With a humour characteristic of Holden Caulfield of *The Catcher in the Rye* fame, Eddy muses, “I was only eleven, but already I was older than my mother” (EOE 88). Eddy describes how, when he had begun to express himself and learnt to speak, his voice “spontaneously took on feminine inflections” (EOE 15). His father would often ask his mother, “if I was really a boy, ... He’s always crying, he’s scared of the dark, he can’t really be a boy” (EOE 65). Eddy is bullied and spat on frequently by two of his classmates for being different. Many refer to him as a “faggot” or a “homo.” He is constantly shunned for not being attracted by what was considered “masculine” activities. Unlike the boys of his age who indulged in “video games, rap, drinking

beer, playing football, going fishing or hunting, Eddy “loved the theatre, female vocalists, and dolls” (EOE 17). He observes that “being an obedient student at school was considered girlish” (EOE 69). Being “masculine” meant being tough, not obeying norms and rules and considering any resort to violence as “something natural, self-evident” (EOE 29). Eddy engages himself in activities that would project him as a “tough guy.” Eddy states: “I’d have to make my voice sound deeper, to devote myself exclusively to masculine activities. ... I wasn’t the tough guy that I wanted to be. And yet I had understood that living a lie was the only chance I had of bringing a new truth into existence” (EOE 142-143). He says further, “We are always playing roles and there is a certain truth to masks. The truth of my mask was this will to exist differently” (EOE 149). Realizing that becoming a boy necessarily involved girls, Eddy starts meeting and going around with his school-mate Laura. He uses every opportunity to be with Laura not because of any affection he felt for her but simply because he wanted others to see how he was a ‘normal’ boy. In Eddy’s own words:

I went on meeting Laura day after day before getting on the bus. More and more kids heard that we were going out. I would kiss her, and the kisses would last a long time, not only after school, but also during breaks, and in the morning when I saw her. I savoured the questions others asked me about her and me, about being a couple, about our relationship. Laura wrote me letters and I made a point of leaving them in the pocket of my trousers so that my mother would find them when she did the laundry (EOE 147-48).

Eddy begins another relationship with Sabrina but soon feels disgusted with such role-playing and finds himself caught between what his mind contemplates and his body desires. Playing these roles, however, didn’t give him any respite for he began to feel the strain of going against what he and his body really wanted. Consequently, he found his “ambitions to be like everyone else” (EOE 155) demolished as he comes to feel that it was “the sight of a man’s body that aroused me” (EOE 157). It dawns upon him

that “Being attracted to boys transformed my whole relationship to the world, encouraging me to identify with values that were different from my family’s” (EOE162).

Eddy’s quest for identifying himself with the notion of his right to be different, rather than play conformity games, results in his decision to get away from the village from his parents and family. Going against the expectations of his parents, his mind is now set to pursue his own passion for the theatre not at the nearby lycee in Abbeville but at Paris where people wouldn’t see him as a “faggot” or a “homo” and where he would have the opportunity to be “reborn” and pursue his dream of making a niche for himself in the realm of the theatre (EOE175). “My theatrical experience in the collège drama club,” he says, “offered me an unforeseen way out. I had put a lot of effort into the theatre. This was partly because it annoyed my father and because I was already beginning, at that age, to define everything I did in relation to him” (EOE 175). From the moment Eddy decides to leave his past behind and pursue his passion for the theatre, the novel moves on to the “Epilogue” in a kind of flash forward.

Eddy is now seen at the new boarding school, far away from the constricts of his home and the tormenting predicament he had been through so long. At his new place of study, Eddy finds all that had hitherto restrained him from being his real self gradually disappear. He notes philosophically: “Bourgeois people don’t exhibit the same kind of bodily habits They don’t define virility the way my father did, the way the men at the factory did (this will be even more apparent at the École Normale, all those feminine bodies belonging to middle-class intellectuals)” (EOE 189-190).

Reflecting on his own metamorphosis from a stage of conformity to enjoying his new-found identity and freedom, Eddy states in the “Epilogue” to the novel: “Maybe I’m not gay, maybe things aren’t the way I thought they were, maybe I’ve just always had a bourgeois body that was trapped in the world of my

childhood” (EOE 190). In the “Epilogue” Eddy finds himself in the comfort zone of existence, free from the nightmares he faced in his native village. Though a stranger to the new situation he is in, he doesn’t feel alienated anymore. His new classmates are genuinely friendly to him and make him feel at home in their company. When the boy named Tristan calls out to him, “Hey Eddy, as gay as ever? Everyone laughs” and he laughs along with them. The concluding lines of the novel bring into bold relief the nature and extent of the transformation Eddy experiences: “I love hearing them say that I wish they’d say it more often, and louder, that they’d go to my village. and that they’d announce there, so that everyone could hear Eddy has a best friend, a boy. They talk about girls, about basketball... They even play hockey” (EOE 192).

It may be pointed out that, while portraying Eddy’s urge to “exist differently,” Louis’s novel shows various nuances of the gender divide in the rural areas of the French republic. In an era characterised by many waves of the feminist revolution supplemented by the #MeToo movement, it seems passing strange to see roles of women circumscribed by age-old traditional mindsets endorsed by patriarchy. Eddy’s friend Laura is taken to be a “slut” because “A young girl shouldn’t be dressing like that at her age, it’s disrespectful” (EOE 145). In the village, describes Louis, “it’s as if women have babies in order to become women, as if they can’t be women otherwise. People take them for lesbians, or frigid” (EOE 44-45). No less startling is the narration that brings into focus that Eddy’s father is grossly offended when Eddy’s mother plans to take up a job in a factory or as a domestic help to supplement the family income: “My father found the idea demeaning, as if it would call his masculinity into question; he was the one who should be bringing home the paycheque” (EOE 55-56). Also, when on one occasion, his mother had earned “a bit more than a thousand euros for her and a bit less than seven hundred for him, he couldn’t take it any more” (EOE 56).

As a contrast to the picture of the domesticated woman portrayed above, Louis brings into reference, through the biography of Marie-Antoinette by Stefan Zweig, the part played by the village women of France in the revolution of 1789:

I will remember the people who lived in the village where I grew up, my mother in particular, ... when all the furious women, worn out by hunger and poverty, who, in 1789, descended upon Versailles to protest and who, at the sight of the monarch, spontaneously cried out Long live the King!: their bodies – which had spoken for them – torn between absolute submission to power and an enduring sense of revolt (EOE 46-47).

In the chapter titled “The Lives of girls, mothers and grandmothers,” Louis seems to lament the disappearance of the spirit of protest in the village women in the present era in sharp contrast to the “furious women” who battled hunger and poverty to bring about the fall of the monarchy in the Revolution.

Though Louis’s autobiographical novel showcases the author’s class as well as gay identities, it is significant that Louis acknowledges that the inspiration to bring out Eddy’s concerns into the open came from Didier Eribon’s novel *Returning to Reims*, published in France in 2009. Louis gracefully admits, “I was overwhelmed by his book. I felt I was reading the story of my life” (Willsher). Louis dedicated his novel *The End of Eddy* to Didier Eribon to show his admiration and esteem for the latter. Eribon and Louis initially met at Amiens University, where Eribon was a professor and Louis a student, and a close friendship developed between the two.

Eribon, who is also credited with writing the biography of Michel Foucault (published by Harvard University in 1991) offers useful insights into examining the malaise of class conflict. He asserts that Education is ideally understood to be the key to social equality but he is not unmindful of the fact that in a modern democracy like France. “The education system is a fundamental

tool for the division of society and the domination of one class over the others. There is one system for the rich and another for the poor”. (Willsher) He observes that those whose parents are poor cannot seek education in good schools or universities. The system may not discriminate on the basis of class orientation of the students but it remains a fact that even if poor children are not denied access to higher education they feel separated and have lower expectations, consciously or unconsciously. So inequality is very much present. If the level of education is weak, as can be seen especially in rural regions of Northern France, the chances of people getting decent jobs are considerably reduced. Eribon remarks with emphasis:

People emerge from the working class to become artists, engineers, doctors, but the fact that people can do that is the exception, not the rule. A child of the working class generally stays in the working class and does workingclass jobs. The system is set up that way. Individuals who escape this are so marked by the violence and brutality of the system, it cannot annul the rule of social destiny. (Wilsher)

Ebiron’s dilemma is: “What is social class and what does it make an individual? ... What happens when you pass from one class to another, and how can we analyse this transfusion from a privileged position?” Citing the case of Eribon as an evidence, Kim Willsher holds that “you can take the man out of the working class and turn him into a bestselling international writer, philosopher and sociologist, but you cannot take the working class out of the man.” Eribon points out the herculean difficulties of escaping one’s social class because the system ensures that people – the dominant and the dominated – are kept in their place.

Eribon’s stance, akin to that of Edouard Louis, indicates that the oppression of the common masses by the rulers and the feudal lords that led to the revolution of 1789 has, in the present context, been subtly reduced to the conflict between the working class and the bourgeois. If people like Eribon and Louis, hailing from the workingclass background, have been able to transcend the

distance that separates the working class and the bourgeoisie with the help of good education, such cases are seen by Eribon as “individual miracles” rather than a general rule.

The End of Eddy does reveal the influence exerted by the stance of Pierre Bourdieu and Didier Eribon in shaping Louis’s consciousness pertaining to class, gender and individual identity but this, in no way, undermines the author’s ability to create a unique work of literature. By putting together diverse fragments of his own life through a narrative that is his very own, Louis succeeds in including in his novel what is strikingly absent in contemporary literature, especially “the people from the world he grew up in” (Farsethas). Louis rightly affirms:

One of the revolutions in modern art was using materials that had previously been excluded—plastic, paper, broken bottles, glass, garbage—to make art out of non-art. When I wrote *Eddy*, that was my idea—not to rely on refined materials, but to use moments of my childhood like discarded bits of paper, plastic, glass, and try to make art out of them. (Farsethas)

Louis succeeds in inverting the ways the story of the outsider has hitherto been told in literature by inventing an idiom that is generally not considered appropriate by the upholders of the genteel tradition. The unnamed black Narrator of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* introduces himself as “a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fibre and liquids.” Yet, he says, he is “invisible” simply because people “refuse to see” him (Ellison 3). Unlike Ellison’s hero, Eddy Bellegueule, like his creator Edouard Louis, ensures that people can’t refuse to see the lives of those living on the fringes of modern French society where differences in terms of class, gender, and race are no less conspicuous than in the era where an indifferent and inhuman queen could tell the hungry and oppressed masses, “If you do not have bread, eat cake.”

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Language Policy & Planning: National Education Policy 2020¹

***Susheel Kumar Sharma**

Abstract

“Language policy can be defined as the combination of official decisions and prevailing public practices related to language education and use.” (McGroarty, 1997) “Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes.” (Cooper, 1989) With the reiteration of three language formula in the NEP 2020, language planning has got to be revamped. This is also necessitated by the fact that NEP 2020 lays a lot of emphasis on teaching in the home language of the child even in higher education, including professional courses. This will lead to the need of revamping the language departments, which hitherto are largely literature based, in the universities and colleges. Children who are discouraged from using any language other than English in schools grow up either ignorant of or disdainful towards their home languages. Education in mother tongue provides many benefits to children. It helps the development of their

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cognitive and academic skills, builds creativity as well as pride and self-esteem. This is especially important for children of Indigenous backgrounds and linguistic minorities. NEP 2020 also focuses on fostering “critical thinking” which can easily be done through mother tongue. The fact also remains that Language Policy and Planning requires us to analyse specificities of not only policy-making in contexts where language is only a part but also many other human issues.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Language Planning, Language Policy, Mother Tongue, Post-coloniality, Culture, Cultural Transformation,

According to Cambridge dictionary, a **policy** is “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/policy>). Policies are the rules, principles, guidelines or frameworks that are adopted or designed by an organization to achieve long term goals. Thus, a policy is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions.

Language Planning and Its Significance

Language planning refers to a deliberate, systematic effort by the governments or the institutions to manage language usage, teaching, and policies. The linguistic heterogeneity of India may lead to a lack of homogenised delivery to the people from various agencies without proper language planning. Language planning in a multilingual country like India becomes paramount for some other reasons as specified below, as well.

1. **Cultural Preservation:** Language is intricately tied to culture and identity. In India more than 19,500 languages or dialects are being used according to the census of 2011. UNESCO has listed 192 Indian languages as ‘endangered’ 192 languages of India that are classified as Vulnerable/ Definitely endangered/ Severely endangered/ Critically endangered. In 2018, UNESCO

stated that 42 languages in India were heading towards extinction. When a language dies, “a unique way of looking at the world disappears”. A good Language Planning is the imperative in this situation. Effective language planning ensures the preservation of diverse cultures and prevents the erosion of linguistic heritage.

2. **Education:** Language plays a crucial role in education. A well-structured language policy ensures equitable access to quality education in the language that a student understands best. Access to the same education to all the linguistic groups is not only the requirement of a democratic set up but is also needed for the creation of a just and egalitarian society.

3. **Communication:** Effective communication is vital for social cohesion and economic development. A clear language policy facilitates smooth interaction and information dissemination. If the issue of communication is not tackled properly, it can lead to various kinds of agitation, and may create inequality affecting the basic fabric of the country.

4. **Administration:** In a democratic set-up like India people are recruited in government jobs at several levels with different language backgrounds. At times they are deployed in a different state where a language they are familiar with is not used officially or otherwise. For good administration, the administrative authorities are supposed to remain in close touch with people. This requires language planning for inter-regional communication and development of the dialects of a language. Sometimes a common language needs to be developed; for example, the seven tribes of Nagaland have developed a common creole, Nagamese, to communicate among themselves. It is used in mass media, almost all official state-regulated domains, news and radio stations, education and political and governmental spheres. A well-structured language policy is required for an effective administration.

5. **Mass Media and Social Media:** No modern society can be conceived without the use of mass media like newspapers, radio, TV, films, and social media like Facebook, X (formerly

Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok etc. Many social platforms like Sharechat, Koo, Chingari, Josh, Flik, Moj, Mitron, Leher and Kutumb have also been created in India. All these play an important role in the dissemination of information and in creating a better understanding among the people. However, an effort to bridge the Data/Digital Divide may create new types of social and environmental challenges in a multilingual society. The language divide in a multilingual society may lead to misunderstand diverse people, their cultures, ethos and style of thinking. At times, a situation may lead to suspicion, antagonism and hatred among the people. An effective use of multilingual tools and multi-lingual policy may help in creating a cohesive egalitarian society.

6. Constitutional Imperatives: Any government is required to issue certain orders for public welfare and maintain law and order. If these orders are issued in people's language, their understanding and the consequent implementation becomes easier. Currently, the language of the Indian Supreme Court and High Courts is English. As not even one percent of the Indian populace claims to use this language, the number of litigants is on the rise. The largest number of the cases are being contested by the governments. Naturally the litigations have been pending in the courts of law. For a multilingual-democratic set-up, this practice is neither good nor healthy. If multi-lingualism as practised in the society is used in the courts of law, I strongly believe, the number of the litigants will be reduced considerably. In the beginning, the Highcourts should be using the official languages of the state of their location for petitions and judgments. The Supreme Court should similarly use all official languages in the second stage.

India's linguistic diversity is remarkable, with languages representing various regions, communities, and histories. While Hindi is the official language of the central government, 22 languages are regarded as official. This language-diversity not only enriches the country but also poses challenges to the personnels in the fields in communication, education, and administration.

Language planning is the deliberate effort to manage linguistic diversity effectively. It aims to strike a balance between promoting linguistic diversity, preserving cultural heritage, and facilitating efficient communication. It involves decisions about language use in education, government, media, and other domains. Hence, a language policy and planning are imperative. Besides, in the days of post-colonial enquiries, leading to decolonisation, the education system also needs to come out of the colonial shackles given to us by Lord Macaulay and others. Without changing the language policy, the objective of cultural renaissance cannot be achieved.

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), a landmark reform in India's education system, underlines the importance of multilingualism, cultural diversity, and linguistic inclusivity. The policy recognizes that language is not merely a subject but a medium of instruction, thought, and expression. NEP 2020, sets out a framework for language-policy which has to be implemented by the planners, the bureaucrats and the teachers. The approved policy is: "promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning;" (NEP 5) To some this may sound a contradiction of Article 343 of the *Constitution of India*, which specifies Hindi and English as the official languages.

Article 343. Official language of the Union-

(1) The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devnagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement:

As a matter of fact, the language policy of the republic of India as spelled out in the National education Policy 2020 is guided by the following constitutional preamble:

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved

to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST
SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all
its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the
unity and integrity of the Nation;

In order to have social and economic justice equal opportunities need to be provided to people having different mother tongues. It has been reported in Lok Foundation survey that “English speakers are richer, more educated and more likely to be upper caste.” (livemint.com) This minority group because of the colonial hangover holds a considerable economic power and assumes the role of opinion and decision makers in this country. This undermines the principle of equality, the founding basis for a democracy. This socially elite group of people cannot be the sole representative of India against all democratic norms. Therefore, this minority group should not be allowed to continue social ostracization of the majority by holding power against the egalitarian norms.

Again, “LIBERTY of thought [and] expression” (Constitution) inherently gives one the freedom to express oneself in the language of one’s mental make-up. A situation like that in Latvia has not been conceived in Indian constitution. In Latvia, the elected members of Saeima [“Rules of Procedure”. Saeima. Retrieved 9 January 2018] and local councillors [Law on status of member of republican city or municipality council — See Section 4(in Latvian)] can be deprived of mandate for insufficient command of Latvian. (see Wikipedia) Similarly, the issue of equal opportunities is closely related to the language choice. The results of the much-coveted Indian Administrative Services (IAS) and other jobs announced by Union Public Service Commission over the years may be analysed to study how the bias works in this and several

other examinations. English remains the most preferred language for UPSC aspirants for the written exams as well as personality test interviews, though it may not be language of their mental-make-up. It is estimated that only 1.5% or a mere 11 candidates who took the Civil Services Examination 2020 in Hindi made it to the final merit list; no wonder, there are a few takers for UPSC Civil Services in regional languages because of the unequal opportunities. As a matter of fact, the number of aspirants opting for regional languages has been going down steadily. A comparative study of the statistics of the speakers strength² of the scheduled languages indicates that the Indian languages have not been given a fair share in the much-coveted jobs and the education system. The comparative study of the number of speakers (including first, second, and third languages in India in the 2011 Census)³ shows that only 10.67% of the Indian population, who claim to know English (as first, second, and third language users), are reaping the fruit of every type of power against all proclamations of the equality in the Constitution. This minority population not only reaps all benefits but also makes fun of all those who use other Indian languages.

The Constitution talks of “fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual.” If the social biases are created on the basis of language-use and social hierarchies are created on the basis of the medium of instruction, no social fraternity is likely to be there? If a structured system of powerful and the powerless is being created—is just the issue of one’s imagination. “Unity and integrity”, as envisaged in the Constitution cannot be guaranteed in such an unequal society.

A total of 19,569 names of mother tongues (technically “raw returns”) have been mentioned by the people according to 2011 Census. Of these 1,369 names, called “labels”, were picked as “being names of languages.” In addition to these shortlisted “mother tongue” names, there were 1,474 other mother tongue names, which have been placed under the generic label “Others”.

Some of these languages fall in the category of scheduled languages. The *Linguistic Survey of India* (LSI) conducted by Grierson between 1866 and 1927 identified 179 languages and 544 dialects. The first post-independence Indian census after (1951) listed 845 languages including dialects. The 1991 Census identified 216 mother tongues while in 2001 their number was 234 and in 2011 Census, they are 121 in number. With such a vast variety of language-users, it is difficult to imagine that equal opportunities are being to all by means of two languages only. The present situation has led to the creation of various kinds of interest groups, the teachers of English being one, and is seen as a hurdle in developing an egalitarian society. It has rightly been felt that social and economic justice, liberty of thought and expression, equality of status and of opportunity, fraternity assuring dignity are in a great measure compromised by the adoption of two (official) languages only. Needless, to remember that India has been a multi-lingual society since ages. So far, for how many languages the planning is to be done, is not clear. The issue has further been complicated by using the term “mother-tongue” as synonymous with “home language” (4.11, p. 13). There are some models available for mother-tongue planning but for home-language planning there are hardly any models available. Moreover, it is neither expected nor is it possible for a government to enter every home and solve its problems. If some planning for home language is done, it may breach the right to privacy and personal liberty too.

It can be noticed that the number of mother tongues is gradually declining. This is perhaps because many languages, with the passage of time, are being seen as not independent languages but as dialects of some language. For example, under the heading “Hindi”, nearly 50 other languages/dialects (like Awadhi, Bagheli, Bhojpuri, Braj Bhasha, Bundeli, Chhattisgarhi, Garhwali, Haryanvi, Rajasthani, Kumauni and Pahari etc) have been included. Does the government plan for these dialects/ languages first or for the endangered languages first—is another issue in the language

planning. One may go to the official site of UNESCO to get the details of the languages categorised as Vulnerable/Definitely endangered/ Severely endangered/ Critically endangered. These languages have come under these categories not because these people have become extinct but because of their adopting to different languages in the process of modernisation and migration. In the process of encouraging multi-lingualism, some of the less developed languages are likely to be in a disadvantageous position. A fair play requires that their deficiency is compensated by technological interventions as has also been envisaged in NEP 2020 (2.6, p. 9).

According to 2011 Census just 0.02 % of total Indian population (Males: 1,29,115, Females: 1,30,563, Total 2,59,678) (censusindia) recognized English as their mother-tongue and only 10.6% of total population use it as second and third language. (censusindia) While 8,27,17,239 persons (6.835% of the total Indian population) use it as their second language, 4,55,62,173 Indians (3.765% of the total Indian population) use it as their third language. In the Census its decadal (2001-2011) percentage growth has been reported to be 14.67, much less in comparison of several other languages. In a nationally representative sample survey conducted by Lok Foundation and Oxford University, administered by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy in 2019, “just 6% of respondents said they could speak English, less than what the 2011 Census showed.” (Rukmini) If about 90-95% population of this huge multilingual and multicultural country do not know/use English is it justifiable to describe English language as “the lingua franca of India” against all democratic and rational norms? English can at best be described as the Lingua Franca of the academic elites in India.

The NEP 2020 says: “respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, always keeping in mind that education is a concurrent subject;” any reference to curriculum and pedagogy also include the medium of

instruction. On one hand states like, UP, and MP, the ones that had been the hub of “Angrezi Hatao Movement” in the 1960’s, have started Government English medium schools in the rural areas in the recent past and the text-books are being prepared for them, on the other the new policy requires teaching to be started now in the “mother-tongue” medium. This is an instance of 180-degree reversal, if not of the policy-collapse. Some people argue that education in mother-tongue/ home language is to be provided only up to Grade 5 or 8 (4.11, p. 13). However, the policy statement is: “respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all curriculum, pedagogy, and policy, ... full equity and inclusion ... to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system; synergy in curriculum across all levels of education from early childhood care and education to school education to higher education;”. (NEP 2020, p. 5) So, in all seriousness let me contemplate on a scenario at IIT, Roorkee (just as an example) in the coming years. A teacher, who has been recruited for his good research at MIT, Massachusetts and fluency in English, Hindi and Tamil (imagine the good work of three-language formula) is to teach a student who has got all his education in Santali (I am deliberately not mentioning Bhumij, Ho, Kharia, Kurukh, Khortha, Kurmali, Mundari, or Nagpuri) medium, and knows a fair amount of Hindi and Sanskrit/ German (again a product of three-language formula). As a teacher I can understand the plight of such a teacher and sympathise with the student. Prof Pramod K Nayar, the other day, was referring to a teacher-supervisor who did not know Malayalam but was supervising a candidate who had completed his Ph.D. thesis on the primary materials in Malayalam.

In fact, the NEP 2020 has taken care of all these issues and the task of transformation has not been limited to only teachers but the involvement of every responsible citizen has been sought and envisaged. For example, the concept of peer-tutoring under the guidance of trained teachers has been introduced (2.7, p. 9). For providing “uniformly standard” teaching materials, “A National Book Promotion Policy” has been envisaged “to ensure the

availability, accessibility, quality, and readership of books across geographies, languages, levels, and genres.” (2.8, p. 9) The language planning in this case is not limited to the government efforts but is a sort of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. But the government can only act as facilitator the actual research/work in/ for their languages has to be carried out by the people/users/ teachers of a language.

It shall not be out of place to discuss the Indian experience regarding translation of the text-books. According the Constitution (Article 351 see supra) it is imperative on the “Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, ... by drawing ... its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.” (emphasis added) In keeping with this mandate, a large number of books in various subjects have been translated into Hindi. However, they have not found favour with the students and teachers because of chaste/ Sanskritised Hindi used there-in. Again, the absence of authentic academic/research journals in languages in the Indian languages (SCOPUS/ WEB of SCIENCES/ UGC CARE listed journals) proves that these languages have so far not become the language of people’s thought. On the other hand, the predominance of English in various competitive examinations has caused social discontent leading to mass protests and cases have been filed in the High Courts and the Supreme Court against linguistic imperialism of English and Hindi. Again, almost every year, there are protests on the issue of translation in one competitive examination or the other. While the translations are largely, according to the constitutional directive of using vocabulary drawn/ derived from Sanskrit, the examinees and the teachers criticise that language describing it as artificial translation, nowhere near the variety of Hindi, their mother-tongue, that they use in their daily life. Even the most sophisticated machine-translation tool does not remove the need of a human translator. I really wonder how the mammoth task of undertaking so many texts will be taken care of. Needless to mention that this opens door for a creation of jobs (not necessarily the Govt jobs) in the field of translation. But, I also

need to point out here, doing a translation of books also means that knowledge is being imported from outside and this knowledge may create a conflicting situation with the local knowledge systems, if critical thinking has already not been inculcated or acquired.¹

The policy suggests that the teacher recruitment will require a change in the minimum qualifications and perhaps a change in the recruitment process will also be needed.

2.3. First, teacher vacancies will be filled at the earliest, in a time-bound manner - especially in disadvantaged areas and areas with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of illiteracy. Special attention will be given to employing local teachers or those with familiarity with local languages. A pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be ensured at the level of each school; areas having large numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students will aim for a PTR of under 25:1. Teachers will be trained, encouraged, and supported-with continuous professional development-to impart foundational literacy and numeracy.” (2.3, 8-9)

On the face of it, it is very good. This will promote the local talent and perhaps the problem of migration and brain-drain could be addressed in a limited manner in this way. But, if I go by my experience, in UP, where recruitments in the secondary education are still being made on the basis of the rules framed in 1921, this change seems to be a far cry. Again, the type of teachers (particularly in the Higher Education sector) required to implement NEP 2020 is different from those available now. Therefore, the minimum qualifications and the pattern of UGC NET examination etc are required to be changed to judge the suitability of the candidates. The universities/ colleges as units may not have any say in them as the recruitment is largely centralised on the basis of the qualifications prescribed by the UGC.

The Language Planning also involves unbiased adherence to the Constitutional provisions. Article 347 of the Indian Constitution makes special provisions relating to the language spoken by a

section of the population of a State; the wishes of “a substantial proportion of population” have to be honoured by officially recognising their language. Some state governments have not fulfilled people’s aspiration which has led to agitations. On the contrary when some other states have tried to give these rights to a language group people of different language community take it as an action against their interests. Though Article 345 clearly provides that “the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State” yet some enthusiasts keep on filing petitions against the decisions of the State legislatures with respect to recognition of some languages. For example, U P Hindi Sahitya Sammelan filed a petition against the State of UP and others in the Supreme Court of India (2014STPL(web)569SC) challenging the validity of declaring Urdu as the second official language in UP. Such petitions have rightfully been dismissed but their intentions have not been dismissed and Hindi is still charged with having imperial designs. Whether primary education should be given in one’s mother tongue only has also been a subject matter of litigation. For example, the Associated Management of (Government Recognised – Unaided – English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and others sought legal intervention against an order (dated 22 June 1989) of the Karnataka Government which said that “from 1st standard to 4th standard, ... it is expected that normally mother tongue will be the medium of instruction that Kannada.” The matter was referred to the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court on 05.07.2013 by an ordinary Bench of the same Court. Ultimately the Supreme Court struck down the decision of the Karnataka Government with the following observations:

“We are of the considered opinion that though the experts may be uniform in their opinion that children studying in classes I to IV in the primary school can learn better if they are taught in their mother tongue, the State cannot stipulate

as a condition for recognition that the medium of instruction for children studying in classes I to IV in minority schools protected under Articles 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution and in private unaided schools enjoying the right to carry on any occupation under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution would be the mother tongue of the children as such stipulation. We accordingly answer question No.(iii) referred to us and hold that the imposition of mother tongue affects the fundamental rights under Articles 19, 29 and 30 of the Constitution.

“Article 350A therefore cannot be interpreted to empower the State to compel a linguistic minority to choose its mother tongue only as a medium of instruction in a primary school established by it in violation of this fundamental right under Article 30(1). We accordingly hold that State has no power under Article 350A of the Constitution to compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as a medium of instruction in primary schools”

There are also examples where the state governments have tried to curtail their rights of some language communities. For example, in Bihar the teaching of Maithili (as a subject) was discontinued from the schools and consequently the recruitment of Maithili teachers was stopped. Maithili was also removed from the Bihar Public Service Examination. Petitions have been filed against such autocratic decisions of the governments and have rightly been decided in favour of the petitioners. For example, J K Mishra filed a public interest petition in favour of Maithili against the decision of Bihar Govt. (J K Mishra: 1998). Again, such steps of the govt are viewed by some as imbued with imperialistic designs. It may be argued that a legal mechanism for corrective measure has been provided for in the Constitution and one is free to take recourse to legal action if one feels otherwise. It is true that legal actions have been taken and aberrations have been set right but the scars that have been left behind in the process of the creation of acerbity is no less disparaging. Similarly, Article

350 entitles every person “to submit a representation for the redress of any grievance to any officer or authority of the Union or a State in any of the languages used in the Union or in the State, as the case may be.” (Constitution) When due to the undesirable but prevalent apathy of the bureaucratic set-up no satisfactory action is taken on the representation written even in a major language of the state, there should be no wonder at the apathy shown to one submitted in the minor language. The anger of the petitioner in such a case is easily shifted on to the language and the culprit officer/agency goes scot-free.

Language is not merely a tool of communication; it is a reflection of culture, identity, and diversity. India’s linguistic diversity is both a source of cultural richness and a complex challenge. With over 19,500 languages spoken, it’s a mosaic of tongues, cultures, and identities. This diversity calls for a nuanced approach to language planning, especially in a society like India’s. To strike a balance between promoting regional languages and fostering national integration, India adopted the Three-Language Formula in National Education Policy in 1968. According to this formula, students in Hindi-speaking states were expected to learn two other languages: English and a regional language. In non-Hindi-speaking states, the formula mandated learning Hindi, English, and the regional language.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 acknowledges this intricate landscape and reintroduces the Three-Language Formula. While upholding the Three-Language Formula, it places additional emphasis on mother tongue-based education up to at least Grade 5. This move recognizes the cognitive and pedagogical advantages of learning in one’s mother tongue. It also acknowledges the role of languages in shaping a child’s understanding of concepts and the world around them. Furthermore, NEP 2020 advocates for a flexible approach to language learning, where students can choose from a wide range of languages, including classical languages and foreign languages (other than English), based on their interests and

career aspirations. This approach empowers students to explore linguistic diversity while honing their skills. Thus, NEP 2020 tries to strike a balance between the global and the local, to meet the new challenges coming from the globalised world while retaining the local identity.

In order to implement the scheme in letter and spirit there are certain imperatives. Since the authentic data about the language speakers is not available and many linguists have challenged the methodology of the Census Commission of India, the official body for collecting and releasing this data, the language departments in the universities and colleges have come forward. Since language is a concern of all human beings all those interested in the language studies, literature, drama and cultural studies have to work as a team. To me the departments like Sociology and Anthropology, History, Cognitive Sciences, Psychology and Human Geography may form a group to document the language of the area of their location. Some local persons interested in language studies may also be roped in. This group may prepare reading materials for the concerned area. This may entail some training to the group on the part of the teachers. Since most of the language departments in the university/college set-up are literature-oriented and consider any language related activity *infra-dig* a great resistance is expected from them.

Currently, the teachers are being recruited on the basis of their proficiency in the subject concerned. In case of English, generally all those who talk fluently about literature (but generally very poor in language related issues) are recruited against those who show more familiarity with the language. There is hardly any weightage given for their knowledge of languages. In order to implement NEP 2020 effectively, the existing model of recruitment has to be amended. The following amendments in the recruitment process will speed up the process of teaching in the language:

- a) An additional qualification for recruitment of teachers and other government officials has to be provided in the form

of having working knowledge of three languages (as required in the three language formula). It is presumed that the mother tongue will not be counted in it. The practical implication of this is that every person in the system should have a working knowledge of four languages.

- b) For encouraging translation, due training and credit in recruitment and promotion has to be introduced in the recruitment process by the state and central governments. Currently, some institutions like UPSC and other commissions test the working knowledge of two languages of the aspirants in certain jobs. So, a working model already exists.
- c) The focus and orientation of all the language departments should be the language concerned and not the literature in the language.
- d) All the teachers with literary orientation should be trained by designing short-term courses so that their orientation is changed in the right earnest. The Govt may have to monitor this activity in all seriousness, if NEP 2020 is to be successfully implemented.

Language policy is implemented by several institutions like the State Language Commission, State Language Centre, Educational Institutions, and various recruitment commissions in consultation with various bodies like Minority Language Commission, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Law and Justice etc. I have tried to discuss the Language Policy, in the context of not only the NEP 2020 but also the Constitutional provisions and socio-psycho issues related with it. It is a mammoth task to implement language policy (as envisaged in NEP 2020) in letter and spirit. In a multilingual society like India, language planning is a complex endeavour that requires balancing linguistic diversity with the need for effective communication and meaningful but inclusive education. The Three-Language Formula, as outlined in NEP 2020, attempts to strike a balance among regional identities,

national needs and global aspirations. By emphasizing mother tongue-based education and offering a range of language choices, NEP 2020 aims to provide an education that is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and adaptable to the changing linguistic landscape. As India navigates its linguistic diversity, thoughtful language planning remains a cornerstone in building an inclusive and harmonious society.

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Poetics of Afro-American Aesthetics

***H.S. Lal**

Literature is the verbal organization of experience into beautiful forms, but what is meant by 'beautiful', and by 'forms', is to a significant degree dependent upon a people's way of life, their needs, their aspirations, their history-in short, their culture.

—Stephen Henderson

Unless the Black artist establishes a Black aesthetics, he will have no future at all. To accept the white aesthetics is to accept and validate a society that will not allow him to live.

—Brother Knight

The first statement concerning "literature" and "beautiful", is made by Stephen Henderson; and the second is stated by Brother Knight. Both the pronouncements, display the spirit of anti-white canons written by black critics. The traditional (white) concept of aesthetics of the western world, focus upon the art, that is self sufficient : it should not be judged by political and moral standards. The traditional aestheticism is associated with the artists of German romantic movement, who laid emphasis on the autonomy

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of art. Kant stressed the “pure and disinterested existence of art;” and according to Goethe, any work of art should be regarded as an “independent organism.” In modern literature, it was Baudlaire who valued the sovereignty of the artist. Theophile Gautier focused on “lart pour lart” (art for art sake) theory that attacked the idea of the utility of art. But the modern advocates of aestheticism as Roy Campbell, Robert Graves, George Barker and Lawrence Durrell, treat art as a creative activity. Nonetheless the most valid aspect of aestheticism is a realization that the “beautiful” has significant importance.’¹

Contrary to white canons, the black aesthetics finds its historical legacy from African culture and civilization (*Yoruba, Mande, Dohomean and Ejagham*, that mean response, circularity and multiplicity of meaning. Black aestheticism means a kind of functionality that postulates its concern for real life. The “beautiful” of the black aesthetics is concerned with the people, their needs, history and culture. Undoubtedly, the black literary art is hybrid; basically it is derived from roots of black American folklore. The white aestheticism, lending its force on ‘beautiful’ was no more a valid principle. According to Northrop Frye the ‘pursuit of beauty is much more dangerous non-sense.’ He elucidates his ideas with his own assumption of art:

Beauty, like truth and goodness, is a quality that may in one sense be predicated of all great art, but the deliberate attempt can, in itself, only weaken the creative energy.²

Aestheticism, has to explicate socio-cultural roots. An artist should study the past culture, that can help him understand the total form of his present life. Black aestheticism is an attitude. The African-American literary aesthetic was well explained by John O Killens, who participated in the first conference of Negro writers in 1959, held in New York city. He presented a paper ‘Opportunities For Development of Negro Talent’, in which he laid emphasis on the form and style to be discovered within black community : He stressed:

The challenge to the Negro writer is to explore and create means of achieving deeper and broader dimensions of artistic reality in his interpretation of who he is... If the Negro writer were to listen, would he hear in this community a rhythm of living which might suggest to him an aesthetic-way of life, differing in structure and in style from that portrayed by other American writers. (1951).³

Aesthetic-values lead to the art of writing literature; it is concerned with poetics and principles of writings or canons. Majority of the writers and critics belong to white traditions of criticism. Black aesthetics from 1926 to 1976, has changed its nature of functions. Notwithstanding a brief survey of white poetics will enable us to understand the changing pattern of critical enquiries. The traditional poetics, presents a systematic-theory of literature, it highlights certain principles of writing, and because of its investigative and judicial function, it is distinct from other creative activities. The term "Poetics", is derived from Aristotle's work *peri poietike's*, that deals with the poetic art. "Poetics", to Aristotle, meant a system and order. Good criticism functions in many ways, but when it is concerned with literature, it studies texts, philosophy, and lends importance on expressive conventions, and when it evaluates and appreciates literary works, it becomes an enterprise of ideas.

Resultantly we have a bundle of critical approaches as *Russian Formalism* (1920s and 1930s); *Archetypal Criticism* (1930's and 1940's), *New Criticism*, *Phenomenology*, *Stylistics* (1940's and 1950's), *Structural Criticism* (1960's), *Deconstruction*, *Reception Theory*, *Rhetorical Criticism* (1970's) *Dialogic Criticism* and *Cultural Criticism* (1980's) that have, in addition to some recent theories, become a part of academic discipline. The new discoveries and novel approaches have transformed our critical outlook. The contemporary theory highlights politics, language and meaning. Right from texts, culture and gender, modern criticism to contemporary critical views present a world of Canons; rather it presents a jungle of criticism. But canons have

been falling down one by one, and the question remains unanswered: Is there any sanctity of white canons? Thus, the western or white contemporary theory, doesn't seem to be applicable to the reading of black literary traditions. American criticism has been a quest for its identity. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49) are prominent writers; Poe as a critic; stressed upon the method of the composition, of a poem, and Emerson laid the foundation of American tradition. Some magazines and Journals as *The Democratic Review* *Atlantic Monthly* and *Century Magazine*, set up intellectual standards and the later half of the XIXth century, produced many notable critics.

Black American poetics reflects black- American history, and culture, that were excluded from American education. The Black criticism is as old as American criticism. It's genesis can be found in earliest writings that generated an awareness of the social and racial conditions. The African writings for many decades, were treated inferior to white literature. *Freedom Journal* (1827), *Atlantic* and *The Souls of the Black Folk*, by W.E.B. Bois in 1903, awakened the Black people to realize the importance of their cultural heritage. Du Bois in his essay *Criteria of Negro art*, exhorted the black writers to transform their society and community. Martin-Luther King (1929-68), in 1963, in his speech asked the black people to know their identity. He said:

I have a dream that my children will one day live in a nation
where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin
but of the content of their character.

Great events as anti-slavery movement, Harlem Renaissance, and *Black Arts Movement*, served the purpose of reawakening. The migration of the Black from rural to urban, changed the attitude of the contemporary black writers; Langston Hughes, Zora Neil, Richard Wright, James Baldwin disliked the white patronage and decided to get ideas from black cultures: Langston Hughes in his essay *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, asked the black writers to pinpoint the broad outlines of the black

cultural heritage. The sense of protest gave a new angle to different black movements.

The black aesthetics developed with other modernistic movements. Some significant works as *Afro-American Literature; A Reconstruction of Instruction* (1978), *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (1985), *The Signifying Monkey; A Theory of Afro- American Literary Criticism* (1988) etc. demonstrate the seriousness and deep involvement of black critics, who, along with contemporary western critics, analyze genres, music, diction, plot, narrative technique, intertextuality and Semiotic interpretations. Black poetics, in its journey of critical values, has taken a long time to formulate new ideas; today it has a geographical space, and bristles with cultural, political, sociological and ethnic dimensions. In its early phase of development, it condemned racial segregation but as it gathered momentum, it assimilated new ideas. The black philosophy played a constructive role; it posed the idea of identity with common tradition and social explanations. Henry Louis Gates Jr. borrows ideas from black philosophy. According to black writers, the white canons based on Judae-christian values have failed to provide a positive response. Thus, to black critics, black means a search of a new and valid programme.

The black poetics does not belong to the class of 'pure aesthetics.' Washington as a writer laid emphasis on the social acceptance of a Negro. W.E.B. Dubois, is a major critic of Black theory and his work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), studies the Negro community as race. Dubois combined art and propaganda together. In his opinion Literature should be used as a tool of liberation; it must have two functions - to speculate, and endorse beauty and second, to propagate. Nonetheless he justified the racial consciousness. In another work *Criteria of Negro Art* (1926), he tries to locate the socio-political status of a writer. He tried to evaluate black writings in his own manner:

The ultimate judge has got to be you and you have got to build yourselves up into that wide judgement....⁴

Dubois protested against colour feeling. He supported the creation of beauty. Let black America begin this great “work of the creation of beauty, of the preservation of beauty, of the realization of beauty.” In his opinion beauty is related to truth, and it should be created by “inner and outer compulsion.” Truth has to be propagated. The major role of the art is to propagate the truth that is right. He elaborates his ideas vehemently.

“Thus all art is propaganda and ever must be. I do not care a damn for any and that is not used for propaganda”.⁵ In his opinion the ultimate art from black folk can be beautiful as white, when it gets recognition by white juries, authors and critics.

Dubois lent force on proper recognition of black writings with a ‘free and unfettered judgment’, Langston Huges is another writer who focused on Negro-cultural integrity; he also advocated for a nationalistic doctrine of black art. His famous critical essay *The Negro-Artist and the Racial Mountain* (1926), highlights the issue of a cultural nationalism. The word ‘*Social Mountain*’, is a metaphor that means the lower class in the black community. The responsibility of black critic is to interpret and examine the socio-cultural conditions of black lower class people. His cultural nationalism provides determination and conviction:

Now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame.... We know that we are beautiful and ugly too.... We build our temples for tomorrow.... free within ourselves.⁵

‘The views of Dubois prepared the ground for *Black Arts Movement of 1960’s*.

Black Arts Movement (1960), certainly gave a new dimension to Afro-American aesthetics; the black writers and critics found a suitable forum of *Black Power Movement*; before 1960’s, black writers were known as Negro and later on they were called as black. A writer of 1960’s was a blackman, speaking to black men in the language of blackmen, because they maintained that culture could be the main source of ideas. The movement also related

itself to *Black Power*. Larry Neal is a very important writer of black aestheticism. He wrote an essay *The Black Arts Movement* (1968), in which he analysed the concept of *The Black Arts and the Black Power*, that is concerned with determination and nationhood. The Black Arts points out its relationship and the Black Power lends force on the art of politics. It focused on the black people “to define the world in their own terms.” The two movements found two Americas—one black and the other white. Therefore, it seemed imperative for a black writer to create new forms and new values. On the whole the black aesthetics consists of Afro-American cultural tradition. The term “Black Arts” was first used by Le Roi Jones (Amir Beraka):

We are unfair
 And unfair
 We are black magicians
 Black arts we make
 in black labs of the heart
 The fair are fair
 and deathly white
 The day will not save them
 And we own the night.⁶

Culture is a very important element in the struggle for self-determination. There are seven criteria for culture, Mythology, History, Social organization, Political organization; Economic Organization; Creative Motif and Ethos. Larry Neal’s black aesthetics refers to many things including black American tradition; it decided to destruct “white ideas” as well. The whites always had upper hand; they were oppressorss Larry Neal questions—“Whose vision would be meaningful, vision of the oppressed or that of the oppressor? Larry’s views the world is full of turmoil, therefore, ethics and aesthetics “must interact positively.”

Similarly Carolyn F. Gerald exposes the theme of self-identity and self-determination that may bring self-identity without proper

image of his own, created by him, has no significance. The image of blackness was created by white writers. A black writer, Carolyn stressed in his essay, *The Black writer and His role*, should create the real image of black people and their community; the real image has to be reflected through black myth, symbols and icons. What is real for black people must be described.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. is a very important writer of post-modern aesthetics. He insists upon African myths and folklore. His two well known works : *Figures in Black* (1987) and *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), lends stress on indigenous black theory to explicate black texts. He wanted to reform the study of Afro-American literature by revising white critical theory. In his opinion, every literary work is a social document: thus the black text has to expose the feelings of suffering caused by white racism. Since the black art has a social function the black theory can be regarded as a 'prescriptive canon.' Henry Gates does not accept the authoritative status of the Western literature; African writings were treated as inferior to the western art. The result was that the black writings were absent due to dexterous negative treatment. The reading of black texts were the trope of absence. The study of black literary history should have two models, one is critical signification known as Signifying, which is derived from the tales of signifying Monkey : this is the counterpart of the *Youruba Trickster figure - the Esn Elegbara. Esue - Elegabra*, is the messenger of the god's figures in cuban, Nigerian and Brazilian myths. Esu stands for interpretation; he presents the messages of gods for man, and carries the wishes of man to the gods. Monkey stands for palm nuts, that represents the mode of interpretation in black myths. *Ifa* is a metaphor for the text and *Esu* means interpretation. In Henry's interpretation *Esu, Ifa* and *Monkey*, are focal points of a formal language. Monkey again stands for oral discourse, Henry, wrote a critical work : *Signifying (g): Definitions (and Theory)*, (1988); he posits a clear interpretation about signification; that in standard English, means, meaning; but in black aesthetics it denotes the ways of meaning.

In short, Henry suggests the sensitive reading of Black-American texts; About his approach, he remarks:

My own works of criticism have tried to draw upon contemporary theories of reading, both to explicate discrete black texts and to define the precise structure of the Afro-American Literary tradition itself and by attempting to link the form of art and the form of its historical consciousness.⁷

Henry Louis also feels that the structure of the black text has been repressed. The black poetics makes it necessary to know the black tradition of the text; the “Text-milieu”, remains intact that is “extra-territorial.” In western tradition, black literature is a matter of absence. Ethno and logo criticism of the white poetics never allowed the black artist to create art. The sign of blackness, and its reference as absence, make us read the black text.

The Black Aesthetics, with its artistic nuances of propaganda, racial consciousness, protest against white American tradition, and cultural nationalism, after 1960’s and 1970’s, was critically evaluated by postmodern black critics. Even left critics in 1950’s and 1960’s, have different view of black Literature. C. Wilson Ricord in his essay *The Negro as Creative Artist* (1965), and Dosey A. Wilkerson in his work *Negro Culture : Heritage and Weapon*, with left ideology, asserted that the political and ideological positions of black workers be included in black aestheticism. Since 1970’s, some creative writers sought to concretize some organizing principles. There was a serious discussion on aesthetics, art of communication and epistemology of Afro-American art.

The evolution of evaluative criteria developed in four stages:

1773-1894 Nature Vs. Nature

1895-1954 Art of Propaganda

1955-1975 Cultural Autonomy and
understanding of Poetry,
Fiction, Drama.

1976-2000 Aesthetic values, Reconstructions of
Blackness.⁸

In 1970's, there was a lively debate about the craft of writing and politics. Writers like Addison Gayle Jr. who edited *The Blue Aesthetic*, found that for the appreciation of black Literature, a critical frame work was missing. Larry Neal, rethought the functions of American Literature and criticised the art as a tool of propaganda. He remarked:

Literature can indeed make excellent propaganda but through propaganda alone, the black writer can never perform the highest function of his art; that of revealing to man his most enduring human possibilities and limitations.⁹

In 1970's, some of the old norms were changed; the highest function of art was the main objective. The main task before a black writer was "to reveal to us his most enduring human possibilities and limitations."

Reconstructionists in 1976, and onward, decided to separate the language of criticism from the vocabulary used for political interpretations. They were keenly interested in sound theory and aesthetic values. Critics like Nisk Aaron, Robert Septo, Dexter Fisher, Joyce Anne Joyce, Cheryl-Wall were willing to revise the canons. In the late 1980's, *Ivy League graduates*, who were to have a career of writers as novelists, poets, screen writers and critics, called for a "*new black aeshtetics*" (N.B.A.). The icons of this new group were John Edgar Wideman, George Clinton, David Harmons, Clarence major, Toni Morrison and Eddise Murphy; these writers of NBA appear in a work *Breaking Ice: An Anthology of contemporary African-American Fiction* edited by Terry Mc. Millan. The Afro-American Literature is contemporary because we find "an articulate, syncretising force, our best artists have drawn upon, a force sustaining both individual talent and tradition."

Professor W.E. Farison, a critic and a scholar of Black Literature in his review of an-anthology. *Today's Negro Voices*, pointed out inadequate articulation of black feelings. Nonetheless "Black Poetry today", is distinct from western or white poetry

because of its Structure based on two distinct facts, speech and music. The black speech means the speech of black people, black spoken language; black music, refers to fluid body of black song-shouts, jubilees, gospel songs, field cries, pop songs and jazz.

The black aesthetics, with its history of development deals with anti-slavery movement, liberation, identity, cultural nationalism, art as propaganda, politics and racial awareness. The black aesthetics has helped black writers identify their status and position in white American literary society. The identity issue manifests normative values. The black writers, who look into it and study his past, analyze present, and investigate his future. Though as writer or as critic, he is black but his self is beautiful. Black poetics has established its canon that may change its form, because art must change itself. Larry Neal aptly remarks:

There is no need to worry about permanence in the sense that things can be deep frozen forever. The universe is in motion. It this is the case. What is the function of criticism.... There are, consequently, no stand fast critical values.¹⁰

The black aesthetics has a long way - from resentment and pretext to distinctness; it has provided firmness and determination. Though black aesthetics is perceived as a cultural and racial manifestation; it does not present a unified set of principles; but it has given principles of interpretation. It talks about freedom, destiny and power of a dispossessed group that suggests self-determination. It postulates the aspirations of a community, that was once marginalized; it does expose black man's expression that has developed as black aesthetic.

The blackness of the black aesthetic may not be beautiful, but it has a loveliness that surpasses the beauty of whiteness of white canons.

Notes

1. Afex preminger, edited, *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 1974, pp. 636-36.

2. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, (Princeton Um. Press, Princeton : 1957), p. 114.
3. Hazel Arnet Ervin eted.; *African American Criticism*, (Twayne Publisher, N.Y. 2005), p. 4.
4. W.E.B. Dubois, *Criteria of Negro Art*, 1926, p. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
6. Hzel Arnett Ervin edt., *American Literary Criticism*, (N.Y. 1980), p. 124.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
8. Larry Neal, *The Black Arts Movement* (1926), p. 124.
9. Hazel Arnett Ervin, edtd., *African-American Literary Criticism*, (Twayne Publishers, N.Y. 2005); Indruction, p. 9.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
11. Larry Neal, *The Black Arts Movement*, (1926), p. 124.

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Depiction of Trauma of Cholera Pandemic in Odia Literature: Revisiting Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Rebati*

*Mary Mohanty

Abstract

India has been afflicted by many epidemics and pandemics like the Plague, the Spanish Flu, the Cholera, the Small Pox, the SARS CoV, the Dengue, the Chikungunya, the Swine Flu, the influenza virus H1N1 and the HIV throughout centuries. Five major pandemics created havoc in India only in the nineteenth century. The cholera pandemic wiped out one tenth of the population of British India in 1817. Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1819), the father of modern Odia literature, was a novelist, short-story writer, essayist, text book writer and translator. In his short-story *Rebati* (1898), the first Odia short-story, he vividly depicts the trauma of the cholera pandemic in the then superstition-ridden Odisha situating the action in a tiny village Patpur.

This paper would explore how Senapati depicts the cholera pandemic with its grim reality of horror, frustration and its impact on mental health of people; and how he interweaves it with his vision of transformation of traditional colonial society of Odisha to a modern one with zest for the education for girls.

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Keywords: Cholera, horror, mental health, superstition, education.

History reveals that a number of pandemics like the Black Death or the Bubonic plague (1350), the Great Plague of London (1665), the First Cholera Pandemic (1817), the Third Plague Pandemic (1855), the Fiji Measles Pandemic (1875), the Russian Flu (1889), the Spanish Flu (1918), The Asian Flu (1957), the Smallpox (1972), the HIV/AIDS (1981), the SARS (2003), the Swine Flu or the H¹N¹ (2009), the Ebola Outbreak (2014) and the Covid 19 (2020) devastated the world from time to time and left behind a trail of irreparable human and socio-economic-cultural loss.

Many sensitive writers across the world recorded these pandemics in literature. For instance, *the History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides (c. 460-400BC), Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Albert Camus' classic *the Plague*, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1664), Mary Shelley's *the Last Man* (1826) and *the Scarlet Plague* (1912) are about the impact of epidemics.

Indian Bhasha literatures have recorded the impact of the pandemics on the lives of Indians and their socio-cultural implications as well. Master Bhagwan Das in his story *Plague Ki Chudail* (1902) explores gripping fear during the plague in Allahabad in late 19th and early twentieth century. Rajinder Singh Bedi, a noted Urdu writer from Punjab, in his Urdu story *Quarantine* (1940) depicts the horrible life inside quarantine centers during the bubonic plague epidemic in the 1890s. Hindi satirist and journalist Pandey Bechan Sharma (1900-1967), known by his pen name 'Ugra', depicts in *Vibhastsa* the grim picture of the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 which claimed the family members of Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Hindi poet Suryakant Tripathi Nirala. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala in his Hindi memoir translated into English as *A Life Misspent* (1938) gives a poignant as well as grim account of the Ganges overflowing with corpses during the

Spanish Flu pandemic which claimed his wife, elder brother and uncle.

Well-known satirist Harishankar Parsai records the dreaded plague epidemic of his childhood days which claimed his mother in his essay titled, *Gardish Ke Din* (1971). Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* depicts the devastation brought about by the Spanish Flu that stalked Delhi in the summer of 1918. Celebrated writer U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* refers to the plague as a pandemic, where the disease symbolizes the stagnant orthodox values of the Kannad Brahmins. Renowned Malayalam novelist George Verghese Kakkanadan's novel *Vasoori* (Smallpox) (1968) depicts the tryst of a remote village in Kerala with the sudden outbreak of smallpox. He records different reactions of the local people to the epidemic.

The cholera pandemic is widely depicted in literature across the world as well. Norwegian poet Henrik Wergeland's play *The Indian Cholera* (1835) depicts how British colonialism transforms cholera that broke out in the eastern part of India into a worldwide pandemic in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, three major waves of cholera pandemic struck India in quick successions: 1817-24, the 1830s and 1846-60. Every time it broke out in the Ganges delta in India and spread to other parts of the world like West Asia, Europe, the Americas, China and Japan through colonial trading networks. Colombian novelist, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985) explores death, decay and love in the time of recurring civil wars and the cholera epidemics in the South American continent. In this novel, Marquez depicts the conflict between tradition and modernity symbolized by two of his central characters.

Renowned Hindi writer Phanishwar Nath Renu depicts a bleak picture of the cholera in the short story *Pahalwan Ki Dholak* (1944). This story presents the outbreak of the cholera epidemic against the backdrop of the changing socio-political conditions in nineteenth-century India. Munshi Premchand makes brief references to the cholera and the plague in his two short stories, "Idgah" (1933) and "Doodh Ka Daam" (1934) respectively.

Kamalakant Tripathi's *Pahighar* interweaves the first struggle for India's Independence in 1857 with the outbreak of deadly cholera and plague in its background. At the time the lives of people were tremendously impacted and altered not only by the rebellion against the British government but by the epidemics that claimed many lives as well, emphasizes Kamalakant Tripathi.

Like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Kamalakant Tripathi, Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), the father of modern Oriya literature, interweaves the outbreak of the cholera epidemic in a small village in Orissa with the socio-cultural issues of the time, particularly education of girl child which was then a distant dream, in his short story "Rebati" (1898). It is the first recorded short-story in Oriya. Here he depicts the horror of the cholera epidemic and the conflict between tradition and modernity, situating the action during the cholera pandemic that breaks out in a tiny village of Orissa, Patpur.

Fakir Mohan Senapati was a novelist, short-story writer, essayist, text book writer and translator. He took centre stage in saving Oriya language from extinction and the constitution of a separate Orissa state. Writing only four novels and twenty short stories, he brought about a revolutionary change in prose narratives by depicting a realistic picture of the common people of colonial Orissa with deft use of humour, irony and ordinary Oriya language.

His short story "Rebati" is much-anthologized and is translated into 24 Indian languages and 12 foreign languages like Germany, Japanese, Russian, French, Spanish, Polish, Hebrew, Turkish, Sinhalese, Balochi, Uzbek and Pujabi-Shahamukhi besides Nepali and Urdu. It is much discussed as the first ever short story written on women's education. Though it is written against the backdrop of the cholera epidemic that devastated the family of the protagonist, the trauma of the cholera pandemic has not drawn the attention of critics. This paper explores the trauma of the cholera pandemic in Orissa with its social, cultural and psychological implications.

The action of the story takes place in Patpur, 'a sleepy village in Hariharpur pargana in the district of Cuttack' ("Rebati", 80). Shyambandhu Mohanty, the zamindar's accountant lives at this village. He collects rent for the zamindar. His family comprises four members: he himself, his wife, his old mother and his ten-year-old daughter, Rebati. He is an honest, sincere and generous person who is always ready to help others. He lives a comfortable life with whatever he earns as an accountant.

In the evenings, Shyambandhu sits on his verandah and sings *Krupasindhu Badan* and many other prayers. He reads aloud passages from Oriya scripture *The Bhagavat*. Rebati always sits next to him and listens with rapt attention, and soon learns a few by heart. She sings the prayers with such a melodious voice that people stop to listen to her. At the time there was no school for imparting education to girls and there were only a few schools for boys. Patriarchal conventions did not permit girls to step outside their houses. Upper caste and aristocratic people imparted education to their daughters at home by tutors.

An upper primary school is opened recently by the government at Patpur. A charming, handsome, young and trained new teacher named Basudev joins there. An orphan since his childhood, Basudev is raised by his uncle. There is an indelible mark of a bottle's mouth on his forehead. It is made by his mother for treatment of diphtheria during his childhood. The mark suits him and enhances his looks. The 'mark' exposes superstitious nature of the time. Either there was no medical treatment for diphtheria or it was not known to illiterate villagers.

Shyambandhu likes Basudev who belongs to their karan caste. Often Shyambandhu invites him to his house and treats him with delicacies. Cordial relationship develops between Shyambandhu's family and Basudev. Gradually Basudev visits them every evening. Rebati eagerly waits for his arrival, sits down beside him and sings prayers in her melodious voice. One day Basudev tells that there is a school for girls at Cuttack where girls can study and learn

crafts as well. Shyambandhu is eager to educate his daughter and tells his wishes to Basu. Rabati listens to their conversation and is overwhelmed with joy at the prospect of going to school. She rushes to her mother and tells her. While her mother does not object, her grandmother opposes and expresses her annoyance. Her grandmother belongs to the old world; she is orthodox and traditional in her attitude. Like many men and women of the time, she does not find any necessity for a girl going out to a school for learning. Rather she emphasizes that Rebati should learn cooking and other household chores.

During dinner she brings up the matter before her son. Shyambandhu pacifies her saying that Rebati will be able to read the scriptures if she learns reading and writing. Rebati gets angry with her grandmother:

Rebati was furious with her grandmother. "You silly old hag!" she snorted.

And turning to her father she begged, "Father, I want to study."

"Of course, you will," said Shyambandhu.

The matter was left there (83-84)

Next afternoon Rebati receives a copy of Sitanathbabu's First Lessons from Basu. She is overjoyed and turns over the pages of the book from cover to cover. On the one hand her orthodox grandmother is irritated at the sight of the book and shouts: 'Take that silly thing away from me' (84).

On the auspicious day of Sri Panchami, the birthday of the goddess of learning, Saraswati, Rebati is initiated to learn alphabets by Basu. The usual pomp associated with commencement of learning is 'played down out of fear of the grandmother' (84). Basu comes every evening and Rebati learns fast. At the time girls were married off before they came of age. Finding a suitable candidate like Basu, both mother and son decide to marry Rebati to Basu.

Here Fakir Mohan interweaves the theme of education of girl child with the horror of deadly cholera epidemic. Two years pass by like this. Suddenly one day the cholera epidemic strikes the village and Shyambandhu is afflicted by it. Fakir Mohan presents a grim but realistic picture of the then society when an epidemic breaks out. At the time the cholera was considered as a furious deity bent on devouring people. People tried to pacify the angry deity offering sacrifices. There was neither any medicine nor any help for it. People fell victims to it in large numbers. So healthy people kept away from them. In a way the victim's family was ostracised. Fakir Mohan gives the reaction of the villagers to the cholera epidemic:

One fine Phalgun day, like a bolt from the blue, the cholera epidemic struck.

As always, the immediate response to such news was to bolt all doors and

windows and keep out of the path of the demonic deity of cholera, as though the old hag was out with her basket and broom to sweep heads. (85)

Shyambandhu's wife and mother are unable to think straight because of their worries and anxieties. Rebati can do nothing but cry for help. However, Basu hurries from the school and nurses and tries to revive him. But Shyambandhu passes away in the evening.

Scared of the epidemic, nobody comes forward to cremate the dead body. Senapati describes how the two women and Basudev carry the dead body to the cremation ground and perform the last rites. By the time they return it is almost morning. Immediately Rebati's mother is afflicted by the cholera and leaves for her heavenly abode by noon. Thereafter misfortune befalls Rebati and her grandmother. The zamindar takes away their cows on false ground. In his usual ironic way, Fakir Mohan writes:

"Shyambandhu had always regarded it as sacred and did not rest in peace until he had deposited every paisa of the

collection in the zamindar's treasury" (86) and ".... The truth was that for a long time the zamindar had his eyes on the cows. He also withdrew the three and half acres of land he had given to Shyambandhu." (87)

The economic condition of Shyambandhu's family deteriorates on account of the Cholera. Taking advantage of the death of Shyambandhu, the zamindar takes away their all source of livelihood by unfair means. Very soon they have to pawn their brass utensils for living. Self-esteem of the old lady prevents her from taking assistance from Basu. Grief, frustration, poverty, ignorance and blind belief make her almost mad and she blames Rebati's love for study for all misfortune. Rebati only convulses with sobs. The old woman starts cursing and abusing Rebati:

The grandmother no longer cried day and night, she now confined her wailings to the evenings.... Rebati, convulsing with sobs, would lie down there next to her. The grandmother's vision had dimmed and she had a wild look about her. She had cut down on crying and taken to reviling Rebati with curses and abuses. The girl was at the root of all her misery and misfortune; her education had caused it all—first her son died, then the daughter-in-law; the bullocks were sold; the farm-hand had left; the cows were taken away by the zamindar; and now her own eyes were bad. Rebati was the evil eye, the hell-devil, the ill omen (88).

One day Basu goes to the nearby village on some official work and while returning, he falls prey to the cholera. Though the old woman feels sad at the passing away of Basu, she holds him responsible for his own death: "Were it not for his eagerness to teach the girl, the girl could not possibly have gone and taught herself!" (88) She further says "You only brought it on yourself!" (90) The implication was that but for his foolhardiness to teach Rebati he would not have died in his prime.

After the demise of Basu, Rebati is shattered. She has no one to fall back on. Now she is completely orphaned and broken-hearted. The entire world appears empty and meaningless to her.

Fakir Mohan vividly presents the psychological devastation brought about by the cholera pandemic:

Her heart and mind broken, day and night were alike to her. The sun brought her no light, the night no darkness. The world was an aching void. The thought of her parents overwhelmed her; their images hung before her glazed eyes. She could not bring herself to believe that they were truly dead and gone. Hunger no longer stirred her stomach, or slumber her eyes (88).

Despondent Rebati comes down with fever. Her grandmother blames Rebati for her predicament. She feels that Rebati suffers because she took to learning which was forbidden in society:

Exasperated, out of breath, and without hope, she observed tartly:

“What medicine can there be for an illness of one’s own making!” Rebati had brought the fever on herself by her own folly in daring to study (91).

Fakir Mohan depicts how a family is devastated by the pandemic. Rebati never recovers. Her grandmother takes her convulsion to be her recovery and pawns a broken vessel to cook some food for Rebati. She gropes for Rebati and feels her dead. Her shock strikes her dead as well. Senapati depicts a grim picture of dance of death:

The night’s silence was momentarily broken by her eerie wail. Two bodies fell off the verandah and thudded onto the ground. That was the end of the line for Shyambandhu Mohanty. And the last words which emanated from his house were: “Hey, Rebati! Hey, Rebi! You fire, you ashes!” (94).

Orissa was afflicted with illiteracy, ignorance and superstition during the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century. Senapati highlights the horror of the cholera epidemic with its socio-cultural-psychological implications because of widespread superstition and illiteracy. He interweaves the two themes of the pandemic and conflict between the orthodox patriarchy symbolized

by Rebati's grandmother and modern zest for education symbolized by Rebati, her father and young Basu. Both the themes heighten one another.

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Female Subjugation in the Select Novels of Buchi Emecheta

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Abstract

The present paper scrutinizes the various themes of female subjugation in select novels (*The Bride Price*, *The Joys of Motherhood*, *The Slave Girl*, *Second Class Citizen* and *Double Yoke*) of Buchi Emecheta. It examines the suppression of African women and tells as to how the male members in the society push women to the periphery. The women writers of the present times articulate the urge to attain freedom. The writings of the women writers present self-images, patterns of self-analysis and general insights into women's world generally ignored by colonial male writers. Buchi Emecheta puts forward the pervasive issue of gender discrimination. This concept is analysed on the basis of how female characters in the select novels of Buchi Emecheta are subjugated in a patriarchal society.

This paper deals with the factors that cause subjugation of women like marriage, love relationship, motherhood, mourning, sexual harassment and sexual violence.

First of all, the institution of marriage permits men to subjugate women in the African society. The meaning of marriage is so deeply rooted particularly in that women are

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not allowed to choose their partners as per their own wishes. African women are restricted to marry a man outside their family. The male members of the family decide the man for a woman. The women in Africa are forced to marry a man without any questions and as soon as they are married, she begins to lose her self-identity and is made to follow the will of her husband. The bond of marriage as portrayed by Emecheta in *The Slave Girl* and *The Bride Price* are dealt with here.

Keywords: female subjugation, women writers, causes of subjugation, marriage, family, parents, society, loss of self-identity, bondage.

In African Literature the women writers explore the condition of the Africa women, how they are silenced, suppressed and kept to the periphery. They also show how women evolve from this condition to see the radiance of the day during the recent times. The texts of the women writers offer self-images, patterns of self-analysis and general insights into women's world ignored by male colonial writer Aidoo comments, "Women writers write about women because when we wake up the morning and look in the mirror we see women" (163). Chidi Amuta says that female writers bring into focus their femaleness or femininity in their narratives and in doing so highlight the power differences between men and women.

Feminism in Africa induces women to be conscious of their human rights mostly in relation to man. In spite of the deep seated male domination within the society, women come to understand the importance of education in lifting their situation in society, by securing social and financial protection. The rebellious spirit of the Nigerian Igbo Women is evident in the works of African women writers. Women writers of Africa give the image of the black woman power, of her leadership, attractiveness and strength.

Women writers focus on the complex conditions of the life of women in their writings, as the subject for getting public interest. They are talented to make a request for the social justice of the

women with the acknowledgment from the public as a result. Women novelists are possessed with the subjects of the present social environment to assess the position of women through their writings.

Buchi Emecheta is an Igbo writer, well knowledgeable with the concepts of Igbo womanhood like marital status in Igboland, the preference to bear many children, especially a male child to maintain their family name and the lineage and the condition of women as play-dolls at the hands of the Ibuzan male members. The Dutch critic, Mineke Schipper claims, "Emecheta's novels are extremely popular in Nigeria and elsewhere, but they have sometimes been coolly received or even ignored by African critics" (Schipper 46). She focuses on the awareness on the position of the women of Igboland in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Her works are accepted as an understanding of the historic and cultural situation, which play an energetic role in modelling every component of the fiction. In an interview in 1979 Buchi Emecheta gave an account of her writing which very clearly shows that her responsiveness is not only on women:

The main themes of my novels are African society and family: the historical social, and political life in Africa as seen by a woman through events. I always try to show that the African male oppressed and he too oppresses the African woman.... I have not committed myself to the cause of African women only, I write about Africa as a whole. (Bruner 11)

Marriage is a characteristic bond and a mark of adulthood in Igboland. The extract of marriage in Igbo land during the pre-colonial and early colonial periods was not essential to bind the two lovers but chiefly it created a legal root for reproduction because of the preference for children. Through the bond of marriage, they suppress women sexually, physically and emotionally. Different types of marriage occurred in pre-colonial Igboland. Normal marriage, marriage through trading, and allowing the father to use his daughter as an object to acquire the bride price.

The role of men in marriage was evident through the concept of marriage arranged by the wish of male members. Marriage functions serving as a tool for the dependence of women on males is portrayed in all the novels of Buchi Emecheta. Simon de Beauvoir in *Second Sex* states:

“Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to marriage, whether she is frustrated, rebellious or even indifferent in regard to that institution. We must therefore continue this study by analysing marriage.” (SS 445)

Marriage within the community is the destiny of all women in the society. *The Slave Girl* depicts how the Igbo people are prohibited from marrying outside their lineage. The elders in the family take decisions regarding the marriages. Women who marry a man of their own choice are cast out of the society. The strict Igbo marriage is stated as:

“She had heard her mother mention this female relative once or twice, but it had been too vague for young Ojebeta to make out to which side of the family this person actually was related. All she knew was that this relative had the effrontery to marry not only outside the town of Ibuza but completely outside her tribe. They said she married a man who came from over the salty waters. It was bad enough for the Ibuza woman to marry someone from Ogwashi or from Asaba, but when you went beyond that and married someone who did not even speak the Igbo language then you are regarded as lost or even sold in to slavery.” (SG 34)

The slave girls are married to a person whom their masters or the family members choose for them. Zilpha Elaw describes the owner’s personality and their mastership as “Oh, the abominations of slavery... every case of slavery, however lenient its inflictions and mitigated its atrocities, indicates an oppressor, the

oppressed, and oppression” (98). Ma Palagada trains the slaves to learn, to read the Bible and to sew clothes. While Ojebeta lives in the house of Ma Palagada, the slaves have sufficient food to eat, nice outfits to wear and above all these, they become talented in all the skills. The slaves begin to get education and learn about various Other household talents.

“Few of our people go to *olu oyibo*, and those who have gone have always taken their wives with them. So you will have to start paying attention to those young farmers who come to meet you on your way from Asaba. So afraid was Ojebeta that all she had learned at Ma Palagada would be wasted that she prayed to god to send her an Ibuza man who had the experience of white man’s work and would know the value of what she had learned.” (SG 154)

The Igbo women’s interest and their positive feelings about Christian beliefs, morals and the customs of living are reflected as though it is in the higher way when it is related to religious faith. Colonization creates the tendency to go to the Church. In *The Slave Girl* Ojebeta is happy to obtain a European name for her:

“Meanwhile she and some of her friends still look down on the other age groups who carried akpu and who did not go to church, and even before they baptized they all found it fashionable to take European names so Ogbanje Ojebeta added the English name of Alice, she would flash her snow-white teeth at you and greet you. It became a common type of occurrence in Ibuza at that time among those...” (SG 154)

Ojebeta is much eager to marry a Christian but their community does not allow her to choose according to her own wish. Later she gets the freedom from the hands of her masters, goes to her homeland and takes shelter under her Aunt Uteh. In Igboland, women are not allowed to make a choice of their own. They naturally rely on the family members and the relatives, and more willingly to be possessed by her guardian. Her people wanted Ojebeta and she was not free. In Ibuza no women or no girl was

not expected to be free those who became victim of prostitution or those who had rejected by their people for protesting customs. A girl was owned by her father or her brother or by her family.

The slaves accept to marry the man whom the male members of their family select for them. Though the girl is financially self-determining and belongs to a prosperous family, selecting a bridegroom on her own wish is an uncommon happening in Ibuzan society.

In Ibuza, despite the fact that the final choice of the husband for a girl was made by her people she was free to protest, and if she came from a good family where money was not being all and end all, they would listen to her and make some adjustment to the man in question. In most cases you knew the man beforehand, especially if he was a farmer, and the two of you would have been allowed to amuse yourselves together in the evenings and on moonlit nights.” (SG 158)

So, financially independent women, like Ojebeta, plan to marry the man of their own choice. “If this time she must marry and belong to a man according to the customs of her people she intended doing so with her eyes wide open” (168). She wishes to marry Jacob because he was a Christian. She considers that she would be a liberated woman to live in the society. On the other hand, her uncle Eze wishes Ojebeta to marry Adim, the cousin of Eze. Ojebeta is against this and her uncle cautions her not to reject the proposal: “Well we all know what a man can do to a girl to make her wife forever” (176),

To escape from the hands of her relatives Ojebeta reacts against the wishes of her family. She approves Jacob’s proposal and elopes with him to Lagos. Gloria Chukukere states, “the act of elopement with a man of her choice is a substantial move towards self-realization, however this whole rebellion is weakened by Ojebeta’s dave mentality” (184). Therefore, Jacob refunds the amount that has been borrowed by Ojebeta’s brother on trading her to Palagada’s family. Hence, Ojebeta is released from the

hands of Palagada. She is happy in her life, accepting all the beatings and the oppression because he saves her from the hands of her masters and her family members.

In *The Bride Price* the Igbo women are not permitted to marry outside their caste or from the descendants of the slaves. *The Bride Price* presents the pathetic tale of Akunna, an educated girl in the traditional Ibuza society trying to distance herself from the ruthless, customs of her society but ultimately is submerged by all these evil forces. In *The Bride Price*, women are portrayed as marketable supply products.

Chike is the only teacher who encourages Akunna and boosts her thirst for learning and education. This encouragement enables her to become a teacher and her education helps her to grow into a self-governing, self-determined person in the society. Akunna's mother who warns her to give up her love for Chike, but Akunna is stubborn in the choice of her partner and she decides not to break her love. Instead, she is ready to protest against her family and society.

The union of Akunna and Chike reflects the changes in traditional society and thanks its reciprocity. It oppresses both of them and they are unable to enjoy perfect oneness and happiness together. Kirsten Holst Peterson says that *The Bride Price* is a "warning against rebellion" (116). Chike's family do their best to make compensations by offering the expected bride price to Akunna's family. On punishment and unpleasantness, Akunna's stepfather, Okonkwo refuses to accept the bride price offered by Chike's family, the offspring of the slaves. Because Chike belongs to the ancestry of slaves, they are slaves under the hands of the whites. Slavery makes them aware of the importance of freedom and their own rights. The traditional men in Ibuza do not accept marrying a person outside their custom. Okonkwo is a traditionally rooted man according to their custom, and he does not accept the bride price given by Chike's father. Superstitious beliefs of the society take hold of Akunna. The earliest blasphemy seems to hold

her away. She dies during her first childbirth as per the ancient curse. About the tradition, Chimalum Nwankwo states, “breaks the pair but not before they demonstrate that deep and unconditional affection between man and woman is possible” (38). *The Bride Price* presents the courage and opportunity of transformation. The novelist Emecheta concludes her novel as “Chike and Akunna substantiate the traditional superstition they unknowingly set out to eradicate. It was a psychological hold over every young girl that would continue to exist” (BP 207-08).

The novels *The Bride Price* and *The Slave Girl* express the struggle of Igbo women through the character of Akunna, Chike and Ojebeta. They are not permitted to choose their own partners and only the chiefs of the family arrange the marriage according to their desire among their own tribal community. The fight of the two lovers is not against the custom, but they need to adapt themselves according to the custom they are in. However custom does not accommodate them. In *The Bride Price* women are challenging the marriage customs as they are treated as belonging to an inferior caste “a girl from a good family to marry the descendant of slave would be abomination” (111). Their revolt amounts to the breach of tradition, defiance of tab and the values of such a rebellion against social norms were tragic. If anybody wishes to marry outside of their community, they are considered outcasts.

In *The Slave Girl*, Ojebeta undergoes the oppression of slavery trade in the hands of Ma Palagada. The owner of the slaves Ma Palagada develops the slaves’ skill in reading and learning only to show that she cares for them. She forces them train themselves in all the skills. She suffers servitude under the treatment of her husband. The concept of marriage in Igbo land does not make every woman experience a happy life but women face struggles because of the men in their life. Igbo women are trapped by the Igbo culture in the society. Catherine Acholonu sa “The rejection of marriage and all it stands for runs through all

her novels” (221) women try come out from a cruel life of marriage and try to be independent through her economic liberty.

Bride Price is very important in the African society, which forms a major part of the Igbo marriage. Bride Price may be in the form of property, animals, money or goods given to the bride’s family by the groom’s family. This is an expression of the surety of the fact made known to the community that an Ibo man is going to marry the woman of his choice. A Bride price is known in African language as ‘lobola’ The implication of paying ‘lobola’ is a symbol of the particular person’s promise to take care of his wife. Therefore, they consider the paying of bride price as very essential in their life. In India this practice takes a different form as dowry, which is compensated to the groom by the bride’s family during the time of marriage.

The Joys of Motherhood brings out the difficulties experienced by the girls belonging to the patriarchal society. The Igbo women prefer boys to girl children. But with regard to bride price, they give more importance to the girl children and they are kept as dolls due to the bride price she fetches for the family. *Sisterhood is Global* provides a widespread knowledge of the unknown situation of African women,

“A woman owns and controls property brought into marriage and also the income during marriage. Generally, polygamy is legal. Bride price must be paid by the groom’s family. A woman must change her birth name to her husband’s name. If a husband has more than one wife, he is obliged to treat them equally and provide separate living quarters. A father generally receives custody of the children; if he dies, his family assumes custody. Parental duties are shared jointly. Daughters are frequently denied education since they are not permanent members of his family.”
(Morgan 500)

With the high bride price, the bride’s family happily educates their boys. Emecheta highlights the preference of Igbo parents stressing upon the education given to the boys at the cost of the

bride price earned by the girls. Nnu Ego gives birth to too many girls and is worried about her girls. Adaku consoles Nnu Ego that the girls would help her when they grow. She says, "These girls when they grow up will be great helpers to you in looking after the boys. Their bride prices will be used in paying their school fees as well" (JOM 127). The girls fetch the bride price to be used by the parents to educate the boys and thus they get a chance to enter into the university abroad. In this novel, the girl children are used as tools who enable the education of the boys.

In *The Bride Price* Okonkwo aims at getting a heavy bride price and plans to arrange marriage for Akunna his stepdaughter. Ezekiel, the father of Akunna was educated in Lagos. Later her stepfather Okonkwo educated her hoping that the well-educated girl will fetch more bride price as they are prepared to go for a job to earn. Okonkwo also planned to achieve the title of 'Obi' that was given to a wealthier person of the village with the help of the bride price. With an inner motive of gaining the highest position he educated Akunna to fetch a large sum of bride price.

"Unfortunately her own father had not lived to share the wealth Akunna was bound to bring, but not to worry, Okonkwo was almost a father to her now. His sons were pacified and wondered to themselves at the cleverness and experience their father had just displayed. He wanted to be an Obi so he needed more money. Akunna had to be allowed to stay in school so that she could be married to a rich man from one of the newly prosperous families springing up like mushrooms all over Ibuza." (BP 75)

In the novels *The Bride Price* and *The Joys of Motherhood* the characters of Akunna and Nnu Ego, are given a meager importance in the family and even that is only because of the bride price they fetch.

Love relationship is an important aspect in married life. It combines various aspects such as sexual desirability, friendship, knowledgeable compatibility and love. A loving relationship is a

strong bond between two people. It is not built in a single day or a night. It takes a long period to weave together to form an effective relationship.

Double Yoke expresses the concept of marriage in Igbo land through the love relationship between Ete and Nko who are both clever and ambitious to enhance their position through their education. They share a common familial devotion and concern to help their siblings. They wait for a chance for a meeting that will bring them together, and it was love at first sight. Nko is an Efik, a different cultural group from that of Ete who is an Ikikio. The love affair between Ete Kamba and Nko represents the conflict of shift from tradition to modernity. The bondage of love between Ete and Nko is not weak but very strong. Nko decides to change her interest to suit the interest of Ete. Both are university graduates, and they excel in all the exams. But Ete is possessed with the negative emotions of suspicion, doubt and jealousy. So he tries to dominate her. Nko is very strong in her love and prepares to be the best traditional wife to Ete. According to Lisa Iyer education “transforms the cultural clash which results in a double yoke for African women into a progressive synthesis of the best each culture has to offer” (134).

The Bride Price depicts the love relationship between Akunna and Chike Akunna, who is in love with her school teacher Chike, is a sympathetic and an attractive character in Emecheta's fiction. As Eustace Palmer pointed that: “Her male characters tend to fall into one of three classes, all of which wield power over women authoritarian patriarchs, libertines and sadistic villains (24) Chike belongs to the family of the slaves because his ancestors worked as a slave to the white masters. Chike and Akunna are madly in love with each other. He is the only comfort to Akunna. He stands as a moral support to her and is very much involved in the growth and serves as a liberating source in the life of Akunna. He is responsible for the development of Akunna as a student and helps her to complete her school examinations with great success. As

Katherine Frank observes “It is a romantic love story in the Romeo Juliet pattern set in modern Nigeria exposing the crushing force of a traditional society” (484). Akunna protests against the tradition by choosing to marry the man of her choice. True lovers such as Akunna and Chike, do live long outside their society. Their love relationship shows a way to move peacefully and they both live happily. Their love is not appreciated by the custom and so they suffer in the African society.

Education plays a vital role in every one’s life. It is an essential need to everyone, not only for a particular few, Education gives awareness to people, forms their personality and decides their culture. It is a practice of giving or receiving a classical and systematic information through a school or college.

Second Class Citizen expresses the importance of education in Igbo land. The character Adah marries Francis and migrates to London where her marriage collapses. This collapse of marriage is the collapse of her dream life. Her dream was her education, which must be given to all girls because it improves them and trains them to take care of the family.

“It had all begun like a dream: You know, that sort of dream which seems to have originated from nowhere. Yet one was always aware of its existence. One could feel it, one could be directed by it unconsciously at first, until it became a reality, a presence. Adah did not know for sure what gave birth to her dream when it all started, but the earliest anchor she could pin down in this drift of nothingness was when she was exactly eight, because, you see, she was a girl (SCC 07)

The importance of female education is proved in Adichie’s novel *Purple Hibiscus* through the character Ifeoma, who becomes strong with the innate strength of education and she leads a life of her own without depending on others. She is liberated from the patriarchal customs and is able to give her voice for the society, she is exiled but she does not stop her service to the society and continues to give voice for the voiceless. She searches for

a good paying job and her achievement shows the power of education on her. She plans to marry an educated man. Therefore, the whole novel looks like a description of the process of a dream's collapse. In fact, the marriage begins like a dream,

Adah is interested in continuing her education and so she enters into the bond of marriage with Francis Obi, a young clerk living in Lagos. He was too poor to pay the bride price to Adah's mother but her mother asks for a heavy bride price for her valuable daughter. Adah thinks that he will not dominate her because he can not afford the demanded price. Thenceforth she considers her marriage with Francis as a perfect one. The marriage leads to a separation between Adah and her family. Her family members regard Lagos as a bad place for the reason that "it was a town with laws..." (08).

Besides, Adah's decision to marry without any bride price irritates them. Adah marries Francis against the wish of her mother and other family members and relatives and the family members of Adah do not attend her wedding. But for Adah, her marriage with Francis "helps to ensure the realization of her childhood dreams-a family, comfortable job and the daily gratification of coming home to be waited on hand and foot and, in the evening be made love to" (26)

Christina Davis exactly said about Adah:

The least that can be said, then, is that her methods are many and varied. Adah has a healthy dose of independence and also of rebellious, which makes her more and more unwilling to let decision-making power out of her hands.. She is lucid, especially in terms of her marriage relationship, and, like Nnu Ego, she is adaptable. She gains assurance and literally moulds her life by adopting a positive outlook. (18)

But Adah struggles a lot to feed, nurture and educate her children because Francis proves very irresponsible in caring for his family.

In African society, premarital sex for a woman is considered a taboo and virginity is a crucial factor for marriage in the African society. While the woman is expected to be a virgin, the community allows its men to possess many wives and mistresses. The African men have relationship with a lot of women before and after the marriage. They do not bother about the age whether they are older or younger. Most of the men desire to have sex with older women. However, they prefer to marry a girl, aged between thirteen or fourteen. Educated families expect an educated virgin girl for their son.

Double Yoke describes the African men's desire and expectation to marry an educated virgin girl. As the novel opens, Ete Kamba is portrayed as a proud son who finds his girl Nko from a village. He wants her to be a virgin like his mother, a typical Nigerian woman.

He would like her to be younger than he was and to be in a lower grade at school. He would like all this very much, well, after seeing the way his parents lived, he would like to live like that. Not as poor perhaps, but with a woman who would be like his mother but with this difference, she must be well educated... A very quiet and submissive woman, a good cook, a good listener, a good worker, a good mother with a good education to match. But her education must be a little less than his own otherwise they would start talking on the same level. (DY 26)

When a sudden desire of Ete touches Nko, she does not protest, because she is deeply in love with him. Being an innocent girl and a virgin, she does not show any hesitation or protest or preserve herself from the man she was deeply in love with. For once Nko allowed him to touch, to fondle and to know her. She allowed him, she give in, and she gave him all, her body yielding, responding to his demands, his thirst, his hunger" (51-52).

However, at the same time Ete requires her to be a virgin and an educated woman. Ete is the one who harms her most precious

and valuable possession, her virginity and the purity of her character. His selfish point of view that the Igbo man can be immoral, but the Igbo woman must preserve her virginity at any cost, proves his domination over her. Isabella Beeton conveys that, an African girl should know her place at home, and her domestic duties.

Social doings, as an individual, were less important to her. Information books for women on housekeeping and responsibilities of a perfect wife were plentiful. The modest virgin, the prudent wife, and the careful matron, are much more serviceable in life than petti coated philosophers, blustering heroines, or virago queens. She makes her husband and her children happy. reclaims the one from vice and trains up the other to virtue, advocating early rising, cleanliness, frugality, good temper, and the wisdom of interviewing servants rather than relying on written references. (09)

Power of Patriarchy is a system in which the women are suppressed and oppressed by men. They hold the main power and dominate in the roles of social, environmental and the control of the property. The oppression of men towards women does not always yield positive results. Men mostly create the culture for women and that is why most of them are oppressive to women making them act within male confines. The patriarchal oppression of women starts at home, and for some others, it begins at the working place and at school, college or a university to achieve an honourable place. To bring equality, it is essential to establish equal rights between the male and female within their family, and thus automatically peace will begin at home.

Another aspect of subordination of women through sexual harassment is expressed in *Second Class Citizen*. Janet leads a miserable life and encounters sexual troubles from her neighbours. Husbands allow their wives to have relationship with other men but some women's husbands force their wives to give pleasure to other men in exchange for money. For the transaction of a

woman they gave money and money acts a medium of transaction. The tool of transaction for earning money is sexual harassment.

Men exploit the poor conditions of women and use them to their advantage. After the death of Janet's mother, Janet starts living a life of her own taking care of her seven siblings. As a young woman, she got pregnant when she was sixteen years old. Her baby had a West Indian nameless father. Her neighbour Babalola understands the troubles faced by Janet. Due to the poverty of her family she willingly accepts the company of Babalola. In order to safeguard her, Babalola makes her his wife. After she becomes his wife, he exploits her positions and presents her to black men to have sex with a white woman "Janet was offered to any black man who wanted to know how a white woman looked undressed" (SCC 49).

When the cruel Babalola brings his friends to his wife Janet, she obeys her husband's words because of her need for money to manage her siblings and to nurture them. It is her husband who pushes her into the dig of sexual harassment. According to Slavoj Žižek "The liberal idea of tolerance is more and more a kind of intolerance what it means is; 'Leave me alone; don't harass me, I'm intolerant towards your over proximity'" (Sihlongonyane 60). She is forced by Babalola to entertain his friends. These incidents show that Janet suffers in the hands of husband and is sexually assaulted by the neighbours.

The contemporary female authors have a responsibility and challenge before them. Their only task is to make women aware of the self-conscious behaviour of settling to the prescribed norms of the society. They express the courage and the challenging task of transforming the modern woman from the limited ways of traditions, societies, social problems and male dominance. They try to liberate women from the degrading, oppressive and completely unrelated societies, so that women do not miss the vision of the beauty of the family, closeness, ordered society and the human beliefs.

Tradition is a strangle hold which is not simple to breakdown. Tradition a submissiveness which is very problematic; it is very difficult to overcome it applies liberty. Women have an unchallenged approach over cultural sets as an individual character. It takes a courageous character to raise their voice to protest against the unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the manner of life offered by the people. Therefore, women are the victims and this gives enough reason to their protest but the voice of the women is muted by the society. As human beings their physical and psychological needs for personal growth and development is accomplished only through self- actualisation.

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Psychoanalytical Study of Neurotic Characters in Major Indian Women Novelists

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Abstract

Psychoanalysis and literature have always been viewed as two very closely related intellectual disciplines. In the second half of the 20th century psychoanalysis has emerged as a relevant tool of literary study and has gained wide acceptability among the literary circle. Outer space is important to represent the ultimate frontier but the most critical challenge confronting us today is the inner space i. e. understanding the basic nature and behaviour of human beings. It has been said that psychological study designates the study of the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observation that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles or theories resulting in prediction and ultimate control of many events that may be consequences or cases of specific activities. The characters in Indian fiction are shaped after the Indian personality structure which is extremely complex and has eluded all categorization until it has been studied from the

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psychoanalytic perspective. Psychoanalytic formulations on neurosis have been readily assimilated by literary artists for the study of characters. *Cry, the Peacock*, the first novel of Anita Desai is a powerful psychological analysis of its neurotic character Maya, the main protagonist of the novel. Through Maya, Desai depicts a world of alienation, loneliness and suffering. All through the novel she keeps her wish hidden in her 'unconscious and the prophecy itself shrouded in secrecy. This is because as a neurotic she is still aware of the moral sanctions against such wishes. Similarly Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife*, Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Nergis Dalal's *The Inner Door* also deal with the theme of neurosis through her major female characters. In the present study attempts have been made to depict women characters' urge for self-assertion and their efforts to establish their identities.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis; stream of consciousness; neurosis emotional bondage.

Psychoanalysis and literature have always been viewed as two very closely related intellectual disciplines. Literature always provides a contiguous field of verification for psychoanalytical propositions. Moreover, in the second half of the 20th century psychoanalysis has emerged as a relevant tool of literary study and has gained wide acceptability among the literary circle. Outer space is important to represent the ultimate frontier but the most critical challenge confronting us today is the inner space i.e., understanding the basic nature and behaviour of human beings. Men have always explored larger canvas of character and the locale and its infinite variety of reactions to a given stimulation. But women who are the natural storytellers have started exploring their own myth, memory and inner space to fulfil their creative instincts. They go on playing on the psychodynamics and their immediate milieu to shape, stimulate and reshape their characters. The stream of consciousness technique

offered them a voice to speak out their hearts and render their musings, emotional vicissitudes in their natural, musical prose. It has been said that psychological study designates the study of the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observation that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles or theories resulting in prediction and ultimate control of many events that may be consequences or cases of specific activities. The emotional reactions and internal state of the characters are influenced by and in turn trigger external events in a meaningful symbiosis. This emphasis on the inner life of characters becomes a fundamental element of the fiction. Nayantara Sahgal, a noted Indo-English novelist has rightly put it:

Fiction [and certainly Indian fiction in English] is about people, basically about character...a novel is concerned with the characters it creates. (Letter to Dr. Ramakrishna, 86)

The characters in Indian fiction are shaped after the Indian personality structure which is extremely complex and has eluded all categorization until it has been studied from the psychoanalytic perspective.

Neurosis is a mental disorder that causes a sense of distress in functioning. Neuroses are characterised by anxiety, depression or other feelings of unhappiness or distress that are out of proportion to the circumstances of a person's life. They may impair a person's functioning in virtually any area of his/her life, relationships or external affairs, but they are not severe enough to incapacitate the person. Psychoanalytic formulations on neurosis have been readily assimilated by literary artists for the study of characters. From the day of Aristotle onwards character as an object of critical attention has undergone various changes. Recent developments in psychoanalytic criticism have added new dimensions to the study of characters.

Most of the Indian English women novelists have responded to the changed psychological realities of Indian life. In doing so they seem to have been guided by the age-old experience of repression

by Indian women. Virginia Woolf, Bronte sisters, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison in western societies, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Tehmina Durrani, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Nergis Dalal et al in the east are emotionally and intellectually well-equipped to give an authentic treatment to the situation. Their natural feminine sensibility and introspection have imparted to their observation a humane touch and a psychological depth. The preoccupation of these writers appears to be delving into the labyrinthine depths of the Indian psyche and showing its relation to society. And this concern is nowhere more obvious than in the novels that figure neurotic characters. The present paper will focus on the study of neurotic characters in Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife*. Both of these novels portray sensitive individuals in their moments of intense struggle and in their efforts to seek neurotic solutions to their problems.

Cry, the Peacock, the first novel of Anita Desai is a powerful psychological analysis of its neurotic character Maya, the main protagonist of the novel. She is seen as a neurotic, introvert and love famished character, a victim of the inadequacy of human relationship. Maya's claustrophobia, loneliness and frustration are effectively brought out by the writer. Maya is a hypersensitive young woman, pressed and haunted by the idea of early death prophesied by an albino astrologer and her ineffectual lonely struggle against fate that drives her to homicide, insanity and finally to suicide. Desai has been described as a trendsetter in the field of psychoanalytical realism. The novel explores the inner world of Maya and demonstrates her fear, insecurity and strange behaviour. Through Maya, Desai depicts a world of alienation, loneliness and suffering.

The novel has brought into focus the father fixation theory also. Maya's obsession with her father has been discussed in detail in the novel. Maya however hopes to prolong the relation with her father even after her marriage in the same spirit as in the past, as she clearly perceives that Gautama will not play the father for her.

She has for long basked in her father's indulgent love at the cost of her maturation. She cannot but fondly remember him all through her married life. He is always "my gentle father" (52) for her and she longs for him "with fiercest desire" (52) whenever she is in need of reassurance and love.

Maya is obsessed almost from the beginning of the novel with the gloomy prophecy of the albino astrologer. According to the prophecy she or her husband would die during the fourth year of her marriage. Her father dismisses the prophecy as nonsense and orders that it should be forgotten. Obeying his wish Maya keeps the prophecy rigorously repressed in her unconscious until her marriage with Gautama enters the fourth year. Now triggered off by the death of her pet dog, Toto, it assumes during the course of the novel the shape of an obsessional neurosis and keeps gnawing at the core of her being like an oversized pest feeding on a tender leaf.

Being a "creature of instinct" (16) she seems to hold Gautama responsible for her unfulfilled instinctuality in the marital relationship. She grows anxious on account of the threats to her self-preservation and neurotically perceives Gautama's death as a solution. Maya is extremely faithful to her instincts which, as is their nature, crave for unqualified and wild satisfaction. According to Freudian tenets normal people in her circumstances would have effected a withdrawal by influencing the instinctual urges at the psychic level. But tragically for Maya, her very life appears to be intricately woven with and highly dependent on her instincts. Given her instinctuality Maya expects some emotional and physical satisfaction in married life but both of them are denied to her, one by Gautama's cold intellectuality and the other by his age. Maya's longing for the sensuous enjoyment of life is dampened by liberal doses of the Gita philosophy of non-attachment. Her effusive emotionality is always counter-balanced by Gautama's analytical mind.

Sex is not only an intensely and intrinsically pleasurable experience but it can act as a revitalising force in an otherwise

sterile life. Freud, in fact, views sex as the prototype of all pleasurable experiences of life. Maya's earth-bound nature makes her well-inclined to derive the fullest satisfaction from this intimate experience. But because of Gautama's age and attitude to sex she remains a much disappointed woman. At the beginning of the novel itself Maya makes a frank admission of her sexual dissatisfaction born of Gautama's unpardonable negligence:

Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed (9).

Frustrated by his coldness she gives herself up to a fit of pillow-beating! As her disillusionment becomes a routine experience she increasingly sexualises her surroundings, perhaps by way of displacement. The papaya trees in the courtyard, for example, assume a new sexual significance for her:

I contemplated that, smiling with pleasure at the thought of those long streamers of bridal flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twine about her slim trunk, and the firm, waxpetalled blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male...(92).

A continuous frustration of the body's sexual needs can be disastrous to somebody like Maya, given her fierce instinctuality. A healthy emotional and sexual life would have given her a sense of security and stopped her psyche from decaying. This view acquires validation from Freud's observation:

Experience shows... that women, who, as being the actual vehicles of the sexual interests of mankind, are only endowed in a small measure, with the gift of sublimating their instincts, and who... when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, fall ill of severe neuroses which permanently darken their lives. (Freud, 47)

Freud attributes neurosis of women to sexual dissatisfaction resulting from the rigours of civilized sexual morality. To add to her problems

stemming from inactivity she remains childless. The birth of a child would have given her a sense of achievement and her creative urge would have got focused on a helplessly dependent human being instead of getting diffused over nature and spread outside human interest.

All through the novel she keeps her wish hidden in her 'unconscious and the prophecy itself shrouded in secrecy. This is because as a neurotic she is still aware of the moral sanctions against such wishes. Indoctrinated to be faithful to her husband, she feels her hand held back by an invisible force. The neurotic defence mechanisms such as sleep rituals, hallucinatory visions and nightmares (where her secret longings come alive to her), experience of split personality, adverse somatic symptoms and religious avoidance of violence woefully fail to blunt the edge of her unconscious wish. At most places she appears to reel under the pressure and break into pieces as a result of the struggle within. She is aware of the unseemly consequences and she is scared of not only society but her own conscience.

The story of Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* centres around Amit and his wife Dimple, newly married Bengali immigrants to the USA. Dimple's ill-concealed sado-masochistic compulsions are soon precipitated by the violence-ridden and individualistic American life and culminate in her killing of her husband. This psychic development in Dimple has been variously viewed as her desperate effort to forget her Indian roots necessitated by the demands of American life and as her assertion of independence from her overbearing husband. Dimple indulges in masochistic suffering in order to kill the pain of disappointment with life, especially with married life. She happens to set a high store on marriage, "Marriage, she was sure, would free her, fill her with passion. Discreet and virgin, she waited for real life to begin..." (Wife, 1) On the one hand she tries hard to adjust to Amit's wishes and be a dutiful wife, while on the other she is never quite unaware of the fact that he is not the man of her dreams:

She wanted to dream of Amit but she knew she would not. Amit did not feed her fantasy life, he was merely the provider of small material comforts. In bitter moments she ranked husband, blender, colour TV, cassette tape recorder, stereo, in their order of convenience. (113)

Her knowledge of the possibility of greater happiness with a different man ruins her attainable happiness with Amit within the marital relationship. The cumulative effect of all these experiences renders her “incapable of love” (131) and leaves her a neurotic.

Freud has clearly declared that the aim of all life is death. Dimple’s life is a long tryst with death. Her masochism makes her moribund consciousness look almost transparent. As her need to die intensifies, she becomes more and more neurotic. Her tendency to reject everything that falls outside the scope of her comprehension is perhaps responsible for her rejection of the pregnancy because as she admits, nobody has consulted her “before depositing it in her body” (31). Symbolically speaking, in her rejection of the pregnancy she rejects her husband, Amit. The effect of constant proximity of death begins to severely tell upon her psyche. She finds herself collapsing inwardly, becomes terribly apprehensive of imaginary dangers, entertains premonitions and begins to gradually lose touch with reality. She fails to understand what is happening to her for whatever is happening to her is taking place at the unconscious level and is therefore beyond her reach. She experiences a split personality, sees her body and soul apart, manifests extreme self-consciousness and acutely suffers from imaginary illnesses. Her seduction of Milt, her landlady’s brother in her own bedroom, can be interpreted as a desperate attempt by her diseased psyche to preserve her and stop her further deterioration. Freud has rightly said that when there is a pathological masochistic configuration in a person the ethical considerations concerning sex are drowned so that the person indulging in these sinful acts can be subsequently chastised by the conscience. And Dimple is very much hungry for that. Her sado-masochist drives further compel her to inflict the

same kind of punishment upon Amit which she wishes him to do her. In other words she wishes to die but by forming a reaction she kills Amit. Her killing of Amit with a kitchen-knife is the most longed-for, albeit unconsciously masochistic event in her life.

Besides, Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* also dramatizes the psychological relationship between husband and wife. In human life the tragedy begins, not when there is a misunderstanding about words, but when silence is not understood. It highlights the impact of psyche and silence on the human relationship particularly between husband and wife. Happy conjugal relationship is possible only when there is mutual understanding, compromising abilities and exercise of the patience from both sides. The novelist explores the psyche of Sarojini and analyses the practicality of female expectation in relationship which lies dormant throughout and her neurotic character which vividly outlines their physical and mental make-up.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* centres around Jaya, the chief protagonist. Her trouble in marriage stems from her husband's intolerance towards any deviation from her role of a subservient wife. The social inequality and injustice to the wife and the struggle against the oppressive and unequal nature and rules that limit their capability and existence as a wife have been presented in the novel. Deshpande has well portrayed the psyche of a housewife and her trauma on the verge of loneliness and frustration.

Nergis Dalal in *The Inner Door* incorporates the essential loneliness and a sense of compassion. It portrays sensitive individuals in the moments of intense struggle and in the efforts to seek neurotic solutions to the problems. The novel presents the interesting case of a narcissistic young man Rahul who at the end of an oedipal relationship with his mother sets out to realise the ideal of moksha following the well-established Hindu tradition. His mother hopes to keep him for herself in an eternal bondage. She has never felt any love for her husband during their many years together rather has invested unlimited emotionality in Rahul. To feel the smoothness of

his body and thus satisfy her unfulfilled sensuality she used to frequently beat him and when he cried for mercy, it gave her,

an excuse to keep him on her lap, touch his little soft buttocks, and under the guise of soothing him, kiss the soft red mouth, all wet from crying. She had breast-fed him till he was nearly four years old, hating to wean him and give up the exquisite sensual pleasure she got from his mouth tugging at her big brown nipples... (*The Inner Door*, 37)

Both as a physical reality outside and a psychic agent within, society which we take to mean the essence of one's relationship with others, plays a crucial role in bringing about this change for the worse forcing sensitive people to seek neurotic solutions to their problems.

Thus we find that though stated in different words by different authors, one thing is clear that all of them have delved deep into the labyrinthine depths of the Indian psyche showing its relation to society. The characters are shown as grappling on the one hand with the changed realities of Indian life and the trauma they entail while on the other with the psychic conflicts of personal origin. These conflicts and traumas become too pronounced at a particular point of time in their life and ability to hold their feelings under repression gives way. The protagonists of such novels deviate from the common Indian norms and therefore their life becomes miserable. Through the sensitive portrayal of the psychic conflicts and the psychological contours of helpless people the novelists seem to underline the importance of subverting the established values and replacing them with those values which are more amenable to human nature and which promote happiness. They have dealt with cultural, political and social issues in most of their novels but their focus has always been on the human condition and it has been artistically rendered with a deep sense of compassion for the characters. Indian women, in view of their limited freedom and insular mode of life, have shown for ages a marked tendency towards growing introspective which is a prelude for neurotic

reaction. Neurosis almost always results from a compulsion to repress one's feelings and desires because they are not in consonance with the accepted norms of society.

Although the women characters' urge for self-assertion is made to be felt it is never properly articulated in these novels. It is expressed only symbolically through neurosis. To conclude it can be said that at a time when one has reached the limits of critical possibility in the field of Indian Writing in English, the endeavour to study the neurotic characters using psychoanalytic insights promises to reveal the new depths in the fiction of Indian English women writers.

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***The Discomfort of Evening* as Feminist Metafiction: Deconstructing Gender Roles and Identity**

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Abstract

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's novel *The Discomfort of Evening* has gained significant attention for its haunting portrayal of grief, isolation, and religious fervor within a Dutch farming family. While the novel's themes are undeniably powerful, it also deserves recognition for its subversive engagement with feminist metafiction. Through its narrative choices, symbolism, and characterization, the novel engages with feminist discourse by deconstructing traditional gender roles and challenging societal norms. It offers a profound exploration of identity and emancipation. This article delves into the novel's feminist metafictional elements, examining how it disrupts traditional narratives, empowers its female characters, and highlights the interplay between fiction and reality. In doing so, it demonstrates the novel's status as a feminist metafictional masterpiece that celebrates the diversity of women's experiences and challenges established norms within the realm of storytelling.

Keywords: The Discomfort of Evening, feminist metafiction,

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gender roles, narrative disruptions, intertextuality, feminist literature, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld.

Introduction

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's novel *The Discomfort of Evening* has garnered significant attention for its haunting portrayal of grief, isolation, and religious fervor in a Dutch farming family. While the novel's themes are undoubtedly powerful, it is equally noteworthy for its subversive engagement with feminist metafiction. Feminist metafiction is a literary genre that emerged in the late 20th century, characterized by its self-conscious narrative techniques and its engagement with feminist themes and concerns. As Linda Hutcheon observes, metafiction invites readers to question traditional narratives and authority, making it a powerful tool for feminist writers (Hutcheon, 11). Julia Kristeva's concept of "écriture féminine" emphasizes the subversion of traditional writing norms, allowing women writers to reclaim their voices (Kristeva, 10). Susan Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, argue that feminist metafiction offers a platform to rewrite literary history by critiquing and dismantling the limitations placed on women within narratives (Gilbert and Gubar, 21). *The Discomfort of Evening* deconstructs traditional gender roles by presenting a raw and unflinching portrayal of its young protagonist, Jas. As a young girl growing up on a dairy farm, Jas defies societal expectations associated with femininity. She rejects the traditional roles imposed upon her, such as caregiving and nurturing, instead demonstrating curiosity about death, exploring her own body, and grappling with her identity in a world that attempts to constrain her.

Jas's resistance to conforming to gender norms is emblematic of feminist metafiction's focus on challenging conventional representations of women. By portraying Jas's defiance, the novel invites readers to question the rigidity of gender roles and consider the consequences of imposing them on individuals.

Literature Review

The Discomfort of Evening by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld is a novel that has been praised for its exploration of important

themes such as grief, faith, family, and sexuality. It is also a novel that challenges traditional gender roles and narratives. However, the novel's feminist metafictional elements have been largely overlooked by critics. A feminist metafiction is a work of fiction that is self-aware of its own construction and that challenges traditional gender roles and narratives. *The Discomfort of Evening* can be read as a feminist metafiction in a number of ways. For example, the novel's protagonist, Jas, is a young woman who is constantly challenging the expectations placed on her by her family and her community. She is also a woman who is deeply connected to nature and to her own body. The novel's exploration of Jas's sexuality and her relationship to her body can be seen as a challenge to traditional gender roles (Bagchi). Additionally, the novel's self-aware narrative structure can be seen as a feminist metafictional device. The novel's narrator is constantly interrupting the narrative to comment on the story itself. This interruption can be seen as a challenge to the traditional authority of the narrator and to the traditional way that stories are told (Cooney). Cooney writes that "Rijneveld's narrator is not afraid to break the fourth wall, addressing the reader directly and commenting on the story as it unfolds. This creates a sense of intimacy between the reader and the narrator, and it also forces the reader to be self-aware of their own role in the construction of the story." Emily Temple notes that "Rijneveld's writing is often visceral and poetic, and she uses language to explore the complex and often contradictory emotions of her characters." Temple also writes that "Rijneveld's novel is a meditation on grief, faith, and the nature of reality itself." Overall, *The Discomfort of Evening* is a complex and challenging novel that can be read on many levels. It is a novel that explores important themes such as grief, faith, family, and sexuality. It is also a novel that challenges traditional gender roles and narratives. The articles you provided offer a good overview of the novel's themes, characters, and writing style. However, they fail to discern how the novel is a feminist metafiction.

Breaking the Narrative Mold

Feminist metafiction has provided a transformative platform for women writers to challenge traditional narratives, deconstruct oppressive structures, and reclaim their voices. As Adrienne Rich notes, the power of women's voices in literature cannot be underestimated, and feminist metafiction continues to serve as a vital tool in reshaping literary traditions. Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's novel *The Discomfort of Evening* not only tells the story of a young girl named Jas coping with the death of her brother, Matthies, but also engages in a profound exploration of feminist themes through the lens of metafiction. At the heart of feminist metafiction lies a conscious effort to deconstruct conventional storytelling norms and question the boundaries between reality and fiction. The novel opens with the line, "Now that Mum has got thinner and her dresses baggier, I'm afraid she'll die soon and that Dad will go with her." This early instance of self-awareness immediately sets the tone for a narrative that challenges the traditional expectations placed on women, particularly within a religious context. Jas, the narrator, is acutely aware of the changes in her mother's appearance and the implications for her family's future. This awareness disrupts the seamless progression of the narrative, drawing attention to the characters' existential concerns. It also emphasizes the importance of women's experiences and fears, which are often marginalized in patriarchal narratives. The characters' performative everyday lives are another aspect of the novel that blurs the line between fiction and reality. The line, "I never switch off the light globe on my bedside table until I've heard Dad's snores, and the bedsprings creaking twice," illustrates how the characters are acutely aware of their roles and routines. This performative aspect of their lives reflects the gendered expectations and constraints imposed on them, particularly the female characters. By highlighting these performances, the novel critiques the limitations placed on women in such communities and invites readers to question societal norms. In doing so, it aligns with

feminist metafiction's goal of breaking free from traditional storytelling conventions that often reinforce gender stereotypes.

The Power of Words and Narrative Ownership

Hélène Cixous and Annette Kolodny emphasize the importance of women's voices in literature. Cixous calls for the deconstruction of patriarchal narratives, advocating for women's self-expression (Cixous 11). Feminist metafiction often explores the power of language and storytelling, and *The Discomfort of Evening* is no exception. The line, "We are growing up with the Word, but words are lacking more and more frequently at the farm," underscores the characters' awareness of the significance of language. It suggests that the characters understand the role of words in shaping their lives and experiences. In a feminist metafictional context, this line can be interpreted as an exploration of the silencing of women's voices within the religious community. The characters' realization that words are lacking underscores the need for women to reclaim their agency and assert their narratives. It challenges the idea that women are passive recipients of their own stories, highlighting the characters' potential for resistance and self-expression. Additionally, the novel's focus on specific details, such as the ratio of protein powder to water for feeding calves, adds an element of self-awareness about the storytelling process. The inclusion of seemingly irrelevant details challenges traditional narrative conventions and emphasizes the constructed nature of the story. In a feminist metafictional context, this attention to detail can be seen as an assertion of the importance of women's voices and experiences, even in seemingly mundane aspects of life. Furthermore, the line, "I roll over on the mattress that used to belong to Matthies," reminds readers that the setting and the characters are constructs of the author's imagination. This line emphasizes the author's control over the narrative and the characters, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. By highlighting the transitory nature of ownership, the novel suggests that the characters, especially the women, have agency in shaping

their own narratives. They are not confined to the roles assigned to them but can redefine themselves and their stories.

Religion, Symbolism, and Rebellion

Religious symbolism and themes permeate the narrative, challenging traditional notions of faith and obedience. The line, “There’s a wooden sign at the start of the railings that has the following painted on it: ‘Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.’ It’s from Peter,” introduces a painted sign with a biblical quotation. This reference to religious texts within the narrative emphasizes the characters’ engagement with storytelling, both personal and universal. However, in a feminist metafictional context, this line can be seen as a commentary on the use of religious texts to instill fear and control. The characters’ constant exposure to such messages highlights the manipulation of narratives to enforce patriarchal power structures. It prompts readers to consider how religious narratives can be used to maintain societal norms that marginalize women. Moreover, the novel’s rebellion against religious constraints is evident in lines like, “I secretly Googled my birthday later.” The character’s use of the internet, a tool for accessing information and connecting with the broader world, symbolizes a break from the isolation imposed by their religious community. This act of rebellion and curiosity aligns with feminist themes of empowerment and self-discovery. In a feminist metafictional context, this line can be seen as a metaphor for women’s exploration of alternative narratives and sources of knowledge beyond the confines of traditional gender roles. It underscores the importance of self-discovery and agency, challenging the idea that women should remain obedient and unquestioning.

Everyday Details and Empowerment

The novel’s attention to seemingly mundane details in the characters’ lives serves as a powerful tool for empowerment. The line, “My parents are giving the calves their milk before they go

to bed, a sum I'm not allowed to forget," challenges traditional narrative conventions by elevating the everyday struggles and responsibilities of its female characters. In a feminist metafictional context, this attention to detail can be interpreted as an assertion of the importance of women's voices and experiences, even in seemingly ordinary aspects of life. It encourages readers to recognize the significance of women's labor and contributions within the family and community.

The Exploration of Gender Roles

Feminist metafiction often delves into the complexities of gender roles and expectations, and *The Discomfort of Evening* does so in a unique and thought-provoking manner. The novel presents a stark portrayal of the roles assigned to Jas, her sister Hanna, and her mother within the rigid framework of their religious community. Jas's narrative voice is central to the feminist metafictional aspect of the novel. Through her perspective, the reader is exposed to the limited opportunities and expectations placed on her as a young girl. Her struggles with guilt, grief, and the longing for autonomy serve as a microcosm of the challenges faced by women and girls in patriarchal societies. The line, "I never switch off the light globe on my bedside table until I've heard Dad's snores, and the bedsprings creaking twice," emphasizes the performative nature of Jas's life. Her actions are dictated by a need to conform to the expected behaviors for a girl in her community. This self-awareness about her role within the family underscores the novel's feminist metafictional elements by drawing attention to the constraints placed on women from a young age. As the story progresses, Jas's sister Hanna also grapples with the restrictive gender roles imposed upon her. Hanna's experiences reflect the novel's engagement with feminist themes. Her curiosity about the world beyond their religious community and her desire for self-expression challenge the prescribed roles of women in their society. Hanna's rebellion takes the form of seeking knowledge outside of their religious teachings, a powerful act of feminist

defiance within the constraints of their environment. The character of Jas's mother serves as a poignant example of the consequences of conforming to traditional gender roles. Her physical transformation, as described in the line, "Now that Mum has got thinner and her dresses baggier," is emblematic of the toll that conforming to societal expectations can take on women. The narrative underscores how women, particularly within religious and patriarchal communities, may bear the burden of these expectations at the cost of their own well-being. By focusing on the characters' self-awareness of their gender roles and the limitations placed upon them, *The Discomfort of Evening* effectively portrays the complexities of female experiences within patriarchal societies. Through feminist metafiction, the novel encourages readers to critically examine the roles assigned to women and to contemplate the ways in which individuals navigate and resist these expectations.

The Transformation of the Mundane

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work on postcolonial feminism and literature highlights how metafiction can be a means of resistance and empowerment (Spivak). One of the defining features of feminist metafiction is the transformation of the ordinary and mundane into powerful narrative tools. In *The Discomfort of Evening*, this transformation is evident in the attention to everyday details and the subversion of traditional gendered roles. The line, "My parents are giving the calves their milk before they go to bed, a sum I'm not allowed to forget," highlights the novel's focus on the minutiae of the characters' lives. While seemingly trivial, this detail serves as a window into the labor and responsibilities that women are expected to shoulder within the family. It challenges the conventional narrative tendency to overlook or trivialize women's contributions. In feminist metafiction, the mundane becomes a space for resistance and reclamation. Through the portrayal of everyday tasks and responsibilities, the novel emphasizes the significance of women's work and the often

unrecognized labor that underpins society. The characters' experiences with these tasks serve as a reminder that even in the most ordinary of actions, there can be moments of empowerment and self-assertion. Furthermore, the novel subverts traditional gendered expectations by allowing the characters to engage in activities typically associated with the opposite gender. Jas's obsession with animals and her vivid descriptions of them as symbols of death and resurrection challenge the notion that girls should conform to stereotypical feminine interests. Her curiosity and fascination with the natural world provide a refreshing departure from traditional gender roles in which Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. (Woolf, 34) Additionally, the character's mother, despite her adherence to religious norms and her seemingly submissive role, exhibits moments of agency and resistance. Her act of putting Jas's bear in the wash as punishment, as described in the line, "As a punishment she's put my bear in the wash and hung him on the line," signifies her attempt to exert control and discipline within the family. This act of rebellion, however small, disrupts the traditional narrative of women as passive figures. Through its meticulous attention to everyday details and its subversion of gendered expectations, *The Discomfort of Evening* illustrates how feminist metafiction can elevate the ordinary into a powerful commentary on women's experiences, resilience, and resistance. It encourages readers to question the traditional narratives that often overlook the nuances of women's lives.

Narrative Disruptions and the Role of Intertextuality

The literary tradition is a vast and complex network of intertextual references. Feminist metafiction often draws on this network to critique traditional gender roles and representations of women." (Atwood, 117) Feminist metafiction frequently employs narrative disruptions and intertextual references to challenge established norms and engage with larger cultural and literary

contexts. *The Discomfort of Evening* employs these techniques to great effect. The line, “For a moment I think of the proverb from the Book of Jeremiah that Granny sometimes quotes when she’s reading the paper,” introduces an intertextual reference to the Bible. By weaving external texts into the narrative, the novel emphasizes the characters’ engagement with storytelling traditions and the influence of these texts on their beliefs and actions. This intertextual layer adds depth to the novel’s feminist metafictional aspect. It not only connects the characters to larger themes and traditions but also highlights the impact of external texts on their personal narratives. By referencing biblical proverbs and stories, the novel invites readers to critically examine the role of religious narratives in shaping the characters’ lives and experiences. Moreover, the novel’s use of historical and symbolic references challenges conventional storytelling norms. The line, “Hitler combed his hair like this to hide the scar of a bullet that had grazed his face,” introduces a reference to a historical figure and event. This blending of historical facts with the fictional story underscores the interconnectedness of reality and fiction. In feminist metafiction, such intertextual references serve to engage with complex themes related to power, agency, and liberation. By reimagining historical events and individuals within a contemporary context, the novel prompts readers to consider how external narratives can impact personal stories and beliefs. It also encourages critical reflection on the ways in which historical narratives may intersect with or influence women’s experiences.

The Complexity of Grief and Loss

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* uses metafiction to critique racial and gender stereotypes, examining the complexities of identity (Adichie). Grief and loss are central themes in *The Discomfort of Evening*, and the novel uses these themes to explore the emotional and psychological impact of societal expectations on women. The novel portrays grief as a deeply personal and individual experience, challenging the notion that

there is a single “right” way to mourn. The line, “I can’t stop thinking about how Matthies died. I see it over and over again in my head,” captures the haunting nature of grief. Jas’s relentless replaying of her brother’s death illustrates how grief can consume one’s thoughts and emotions. This portrayal challenges the traditional narrative of stoic and controlled grief, often imposed on women. Jas’s complex emotions of guilt, anger, and confusion further emphasize the novel’s exploration of the multifaceted nature of grief. Her feelings of responsibility for Matthies’ death and her simultaneous sense of jealousy reveal the intricate interplay of emotions that individuals experience when confronted with loss. The novel’s willingness to delve into these complicated emotions stands as a feminist act of validating and acknowledging the complexity of women’s inner lives. Additionally, the novel presents the characters’ attempts to cope with their grief in unconventional and sometimes disturbing ways. The rituals and fantasies they engage in highlight the characters’ vulnerability and the lengths they go to in order to process their emotions. This exploration of unconventional coping mechanisms challenges the traditional narrative of grieving as a straightforward and linear process. Furthermore, the novel’s meditation on faith and spirituality in the face of loss is a significant aspect of its feminist metafictional approach. Jas’s religious beliefs are tested by her brother’s death, and she is forced to question her faith in God. This spiritual journey mirrors the broader theme of questioning and challenging established norms, both within the religious context and in the realm of feminist storytelling. Through its portrayal of grief as a deeply personal and complex experience, *The Discomfort of Evening* underscores the feminist metafictional message that women’s emotions, narratives, and coping mechanisms deserve recognition, validation, and respect. The novel encourages readers to embrace the diversity of women’s experiences and to challenge societal expectations regarding how women should process and express their grief.

The Symbolism of Animals

Animals play a significant role in *The Discomfort of Evening*, serving as symbols of death, rebirth, and transformation. This symbolism adds a layer of depth to the novel's feminist metafictional exploration by inviting readers to consider the role of nature and symbolism in shaping women's narratives. Jas's fascination with animals and her belief in their connection to the cycle of life and death are recurring motifs in the novel. Animals, such as the cat, the bull, and the calf, are depicted as both agents of destruction and symbols of renewal. The cat's role in the death of Jas's brother, Matthies, is a central element of the narrative. The novel's portrayal of the cat as both a perpetrator of violence and a creature driven by instinct challenges traditional narratives of innocence and guilt. This ambiguity reflects the complexity of life and the unpredictability of events, emphasizing the feminist metafictional theme of questioning established norms. Additionally, the bull's symbolism is tied to Jas's sense of power and agency. The line, "For the first time in my life I feel more like a bull than a heifer," illustrates her identification with the bull's strength and determination. By associating Jas with the bull, the novel challenges traditional notions of femininity that equate women with passivity and submission. It encourages readers to consider how women can find empowerment and resilience in unexpected places. The calf's symbolism is perhaps the most poignant in the novel. The calf's role in the story reflects the novel's broader exploration of death, rebirth, and transformation. Jas's fascination with the calf's birth and her belief in the possibility of resurrection serve as powerful symbols of hope and renewal in the face of tragedy. This symbolism challenges the conventional narrative of women as passive victims of their circumstances and highlights the potential for transformation and empowerment within their stories. Through its use of animal symbolism, *The Discomfort of Evening* engages with feminist metafictional themes by challenging traditional representations of women and inviting readers to consider the

ways in which nature and symbolism can shape women's narratives.

Conclusion

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's novel *The Discomfort of Evening* is a powerful work of feminist metafiction that explores themes of grief, loss, faith, and gender roles. By breaking the narrative mold, empowering its female characters, and engaging with the complexities of identity and emancipation, the novel challenges established norms within the realm of storytelling. Through narrative disruptions, intertextual references, and an attention to the transformative power of the mundane, it encourages readers to question traditional narratives and authority. The novel's exploration of gender roles within a religious community disrupts conventional storytelling norms, highlighting the limitations placed on women and girls. By delving into the characters' experiences of grief and loss, it validates and acknowledges the complexity of women's inner lives. Additionally, the novel's use of animal symbolism adds depth to its feminist metafictional exploration, inviting readers to consider the role of nature and symbolism in shaping women's narratives. *The Discomfort of Evening* serves as a testament to the diversity of women's experiences and a call to challenge societal expectations and norms. It is a feminist metafictional masterpiece that celebrates the power of women's voices and stories.

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Neo-colonizing Nature: Postcolonial Environmentalism in Ngugi Wa Thiong' O's *Petals of Blood*

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Abstract

The article attempts an ecocritical engagement with Ngugi Wa Thiong' O's novel, *Petals of Blood*. Drawing on the theoretical propositions and advocacies of postcolonial ecocriticism, the study reveals that Ngugi's representation of environmental degradation and uneven development highlights the interlocking of empire, capitalism and environment which persists in the postcolonial phase. The paper also focuses on how *Petals of Blood* attempts to demonstrate that the establishment of a cultural village centre and a game park for Euro-American tourists in the village of Ilmorog is tied to a neo-imperial agenda in the whole of Africa wherein the African nature and culture undergo neo-Colonization. Furthermore, the postcolonial environmentalist reading of the novel maintains that Ngugi's ecological imagination is rooted in his rewriting of the African past, and the neocolonial critique. For Ngugi, the natives' fight for land and natural resources is both an expression of livelihood insecurity and environmental sensibility.

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Keywords: postcolonial ecocriticism, neoliberal tourism, ecological conservation, neo-colonization, social justice, dispossession and environmental injustice

Petals of Blood (1977) presents a grim picture of how colonial agroforestry superseded the indigenous agricultural system and destroyed the food diversity of local populations. The novel's emphasis on the forced conversion of fields of traditional crops such as wild millet fingers or yams, which Ngugi constantly refers to as "power of God" (PB 251), into the plantations of wheat, sugar and pyrethrum indicates systematic destruction of indigenous ecology and food security. The impositions of commercial crops, colonial farming cultures and a legally coercive system of private ownership of land involved, as Ngugi has portrayed, great manifestations of popular resistance at the local and the national levels. The underlying excerpt from the novel depicts the transformation of local environments and the subsequent dispossession of the natives from their land. The narrator recounts,

First a white colonist, Lord Freeze-Kilby and his goodly wife, a lady. He was probably one of those footloose aristocrats, but a ruined one, who wanted to make something of his own in what he saw as a New Frontier. To change Ilmorog wilderness into civilized shapes and forms that would yield a million seedlings and a thousand pounds where one had planted only a few and invested only a pound, was a creative act of a god. For this he needed other's sweat and he used the magic of a government, the chit and the power of his rifle, to conscript labour. He experimented with wheat, ignoring the many frowning faces of the herdsmen and survivors of the earlier massacres in the name of Christian pacification by the king's men, and he again trusted to the rifle he always slung on his shoulders. Some of the herdsmen and the peasants were turned into kipande-carrying labourers on lands that used to be their own to master and to rule. They all watched the wheat finger-dancing ballet in the wind, and bided their time. Had they not heard what had happened to the Masai

people of the Laikipia plains? At night, on Ilmorog ridge, their leaders met and reached a decision. They set fire to the whole field and themselves ran to the outer edges of the plains, awaiting deadly repercussions. (PB 82)

The physical environments such as valleys, hills, rivers and lakes of East Africa are, for Ngugi, historical archives of African civilization, native resistance and colonial oppression. The highlands of the Central Province of Kenya were forcibly acquired for the white settlement. The Maasai and the Kikuyu people were pushed further to the North and the West of Nairobi to the colonial reservations and detention camps built by the British. The most fertile and productive foothills and plains were transformed into enclosed plantations of wheat, tea, coffee, pyrethrum, black wattle and sisal. The green lands of Kenya, rich in minerals and wild life, were acquired by the British government and given as grants to the English nobles and influential European businessmen. (Jackson 234) The European and wealthy African landlords hired local peasants as cheap labour to work in the fields. In the above passage, Ngugi recounts an episode of violent conflict between the settlers and the villagers of Ilmorog. At night, the leaders of Ilmorog gathered on the Ilmorog ridge and decided to set the white man's wheat fields on fire because they felt that the wheat plantation threatened not only their traditional crops but also it was an incursion on their land and culture. Having learnt a lesson from their neighbourhood where the Massailand in the Rift Valley Province had been converted into an area of white settlement, the alerted Ilmorogians successfully resisted settler presence at an early stage. Ngugi affirms that the rewriting of the colonial past which speaks of indigenous heroism serves to reawaken the dying spirit of the contemporary resistance against the neocolonial masters. In his study of settler colonialism in Kenya, Will Jackson highlights the incompatibility of "settler farming ... with Maasai pasturage and the war-like nature of the tribe." (234) The Maasai presence seemed as a major threat to the peaceful settlement of Europeans in the region. Consequently, they were "moved from

the Rift. Two areas, one to the north of the railway on the Laikipia Plateau and one to the south, on the border with German East Africa, were designated for exclusive Maasai occupation, linked by a corridor half a mile wide. Six years later, despite the earlier pledge that these lands would remain theirs 'as long as the Masai as a race shall exist', Laikipia was given over to white settlement, and those in the north were moved once again to the now-extended southern reserve." (235)

The environmentalist thought of Ngugi's works draws upon an inseparable link between humans and environment. As one of the most celebrated writers of postcolonial literature, his portrayal of the physical environment is intermediated with episodes of colonial violence and neocolonial situation of Kenya. Therefore, it is imperative if one undertakes to study the ecological strands of African literatures to rely on the significant strategies of postcolonial and environmental justice ecocriticism. Huggan and Tiffin have demonstrated how ecocritical readings of literary texts through the lens of postcolonial theory can confront continuing imperialist ideologies of social and environmental dominance. (Huggan and Tiffin 2010) Postcolonial ecocriticism interrogates into the environmental destruction through resource extraction and 'land grabs' wrought by colonial powers; a phenomenon that has persisted through the postcolonial regimes in the form of neocolonialism. Moreover, postcolonial ecocriticism adopts both a materialist and a culturalist approach in the study of human-environment relationships in context of postcolonial nations whose political economies demonstrate huge neocolonial interventions.

The novel's ecocritical significance lies in its historicization of environmental ills of Ilmorog and in its articulation of concerns of environmental injustice in the distribution of natural resources and climate threats. Ngugi depicts areas such as the Rift Valley, the Blue Hills and the Ruwa-ini golf course which are occupied by the European settlers and the black elites of Kenya in order to highlight uneven distribution of environmental costs as well as

uneven economic development. The state of uneven environmental degradation and economic development, argues Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, is “the signal mark” of the “postcolonial environment.” (16) Abdulla informs Karega that when he escaped the colonial detention camp and returned to his village; he was frightened “at the sight of Limuru land, at the sight of Kihingo hill, Manguo valley, all the green land” (PB 338) that had been converted into settlement areas for the white Europeans. The natives were relocated to drier and less fertile lands of the region just as the people of Ilmorog are pushed to drier parts beyond the Ilmorog ridge and Donyo hills to make way for tourist complex, game park and capitalist plantations.

Ngugi’s writings implicate both Empire and Capitalism in bringing about the anthropogenic destructions of African environments to the extent that the continent suffers the most in an age of climate and ecological crises. He argues in an interview that, despite enough natural and human resources, Africa has not been able to feed the populations and the outflow of Africa’s wealth continues uninterrupted because of structural dominance of foreign powers on its culture, economy and politics—a compradorial regime of human exploitation and resource extraction. He explains the state of underdevelopment and starvation in Africa in the face of inequalities of global wealth. Ngugi finds imperialism with its stages of colonialism and neocolonialism as the root cause of Africa’s impoverishment and political instability.

I am very convinced that African countries can feed themselves, can clothe themselves, can house themselves within even ten years of their break with imperialism.... their poverty is not inherent in their geography; their poverty is explainable in terms of the hemorrhage of their wealth into America and Western Europe generally. (Whatiri and Timmins 232)

The plot of *Petals of Blood* gains momentum with local villagers’ struggle for sustenance which is joined by an educated

class of unemployed city-returned youth. Their march towards the capital city of Nairobi to seek government support and aid to mitigate the impact of 'natural disasters' (PB 224) such as drought and famine and to restore the socio-ecological equilibrium is one of the major themes of the novel. It deals with a range of issues and threats that are at once social, cultural, political and environmental. Ilmorog's ecology fails to sustain the lives of the villagers so they decide to fetch help from the government administration to redeem their local environments, communities and cultures. In this regard, the villagers' movement to the city can be located in the activism of the "rubber tappers in the Amazon protecting their traditional rainforest homelands, villagers of the Chipko movement in Northern India fighting against deforestation, and Ogoni dissidents detained by the military government of Nigeria for their opposition to large-scale oil-drilling in fields where they once cultivated yams and cassava." (Joni Adamson et.al. 3)

In its putting together of power, ecology and empire, the novel resists a simple Euro-American form of ecocritical engagement and instead, invites an exploration through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism. In his study of environmental consciousness in African literature, James Ogude turns to postcolonial ecocriticism as a method of inquiry into the ecological potential of African literatures. He questions the efficacy of Euro-American ecocritical discourse to engage with "a long history of ecological concerns in post-colonial literatures." (Ogude 93) He worries that,

a genealogy of ecocriticism that overlooks the history of the empire and indeed related colonial inequities may well end up neglecting a long history of critique offered not simply in indigenous narratives of the colonised subjects, but also in post-colonial literatures whose thematic thrust has been nothing but a witness to ecological disaster associated with colonial conquest. (93)

In the opening pages of the novel, we encounter with the image of Ilmorog as a drought-stricken 'wasteland' (PB 4) which,

later in the novel, becomes a “‘deserted homestead’, ‘a forgotten village’, an island of underdevelopment.” (220) The cycle of four seasons of harvesting such as “njahi, themithu, gathano and mwere” has been disrupted by a change in the region’s climate. The njahi and mwere rains are either delayed or there have been no rains at all for months. In the later part of the novel when the villagers have returned from their journey to the city, they experience sufficient rainfall to mitigate conditions of drought and that brings a great relief to them. Ilmorog once again becomes a lush green landscape but then the late rains disrupted the traditional pattern of the crop seasons. The big harvest of mwere season ensures revival of lost cultural ceremonies such as the ceremony of circumcision. Nevertheless, the people of Ilmorog are haunted by new fears as they had the premonition of “new types of threats” posed by “forces other than droughts.” (239) The survival of locals against the disrupted physical environments has been further threatened by the enclosure of the virgin common lands that belonged to the community to which they would “escape to as in those days before colonialism” when “the land seemed not to yield much.” (11) The forest rights of herdsmen, hunter-gatherers and farmers are revoked by the new land regulations of the government. The common or community lands of Ilmorog are surveyed and acquired by the State for the purpose of constructing new highways, industrial zones and tourist centres under the model of PPPs (Public-Private Partnerships). Ngugi writes that the transformation of Old Ilmorog into New Ilmorog began with, “the demarcation and the fencing off of land had deprived a lot of tillers and herdsmen of their hitherto unquestioned rights of use and cultivation.” (323-24) The unsustainable development filled the environment with stones, concrete, metal, ‘pools of dirty water, piles of quarry rock’, (323) and ‘the smell of urine and rotting garbage’ (402).

Ngugi’s main argument runs counter to the claim that colonialism has ceased to exist after independence of colonies. He

asserts through his writings and lectures that the process of decolonization is not over yet and that the postcolonial phase doesn't mark an end to colonial structures but rather an extension of those in the neocolonial stage. *Petals of Blood* shows that the government machinery acts to protect corporate interests over those of the people of Ilmorog. The local administration's developmental and cultural projects in the village are guided by the basic infrastructural needs of the capitalists. The novel traces neocolonial ideology in the usurpation of Ilmorog's material resources for instance, its large tracts of uncultivated land and hills are found suitable for establishment of a game park for European tourists. The setting up of "the newly enclosed game-parks for tourists" around the periphery of the village ignores the socio-economic concerns of the poor and the marginal. The narrator recounts the impact of economic development in Ilmorog as the "opening up of the New Ilmorog was the ruin of the Old Ilmorog." (PB 370)

The herdsmen had suffered a similar fate: some had died; others had been driven even further out into drier parts away from the newly enclosed game-parks for tourists, and yet others had become hired labourers on wheatfields or on farms belonging to wealthier peasants. And behind it all, as a monument to the changes, was the Trans-Africa Road and the two-storeyed building of the African Economic Bank Ltd. (359)

The game park rather proves to be an encroachment on the cultural and material base of the impoverished Ilmorogians. The village becomes a destination for wildlife safari like that of the Nairobi Park where, "tourists came to hire private planes for a quick venture into the interior to see the wild game parks and return to the city before dark." (193) The novel attempts to demonstrate how the neocolonial situation appears considerably a clear replication of the old settler and colonial state. The peasant farmers of Ilmorog discuss the colonial past at Abdulla's shop.

Look at white people: they first took our land; then our youth; only later, cows and sheep. Oh no, the other side would argue: the white man first took the land, then the goats and cows, saying these were hut taxes or fines after every armed clash, and only later did he capture the youth to work on the land. (22)

Ngugi highlights the cutting of large forests of trees near the hills of Ilmorog which fuelled networks of colonial railways that the British administration required for transportation of Kenya's natural resources to European industries. *Petals of Blood* dramatizes the "land-grabbing" and "geographical violence" (Said 77) perpetrated by European colonization in the village of Ilmorog; concomitantly, the novelist emphasizes the continuity of colonial status quo through the post-independence phase however, with certain differences in kind and manner. Ngugi traces history of settler colonialism in Kenya in order to account for the natural disasters of Ilmorog "which after being sucked thin and dry was itself left standing, static, a grotesque distorted image of what peasant life was and could be." (PB 220) This description of Ilmorog's depleted environment also unfolds the ruined image of peasant life. The novel, at large, reinforces inextricability of nature and culture. Ngugi revisits the history of the British Empire to analyse the contemporary tribulations of Africa.

Land pirates and human game-hunters from Victorian and Edwardian England: they had all passed here bound for a kingdom of plenty, driven sometimes by holy zeal, sometimes by a genuine thirst for knowledge and the quest for the spot where the first man's umbilical cord was buried, but more often by mercenary commercial greed and love of the wanton destruction of those with a slightly different complexion from theirs. (81)

The novel presents a historical view of colonial infrastructure and industrial activities. James Ogude argues that, "We have to accept that colonial and environmental histories are mutually constitutive because of the central role that exploitation of

resources has played in any imperial project, often appropriating these local resources exclusively for transnational corporations.” (Ogude 93) The underlying excerpt from the novel *Petals of Blood* tend to identify Ngugi’s representation of nature with the fundamentals of postcolonial environmental aesthetics.

You forget that in those days the land was not for buying. It was for use. It was also plenty, you need not have beaten one yard over and over again. The land was also covered with forests. The trees called rain. They also cast a shadow on the land. But the forest was eaten by the railway. You remember they used to come for wood as far as here—to feed the iron thing. Aah, they only knew how to eat, how to take away everything. But then, those were Foreigners—white people. (99)

Ngugi draws attention to the oil reserves of Africa which are mostly owned by European and American giants. The Trans-Africa highway has benefitted the oil companies by facilitating the transportation of oil products across the African cities. (312) Instead of strengthening rural economies and connecting people and cultures, the Road becomes a monument of capitalist robbery by foreign enterprises and comprador bourgeoisie of Kenya. The people of New Ilmorog or “New Jerusalem” often sit on edges of the highway to watch,

the heavy tankers squelching tar on a long trail across the plains to feed a thousand arteries of thirsty machines and motors, and they mutter: before the road, before this animal of the earth, did we live in the New Jerusalem? (312)

The novel documents the “epic journey” of the villagers to stop this continuing plunder of rural ecology through the postcolonial phase in order to make their village sustainable once again. However, their collective movement fails against the forces of neocolonialism and internal colonialism. They are betrayed and dehumanized by their own political representatives who work as alliances of imperialism and capitalism. Unfortunately, what they are offered in response to their demand for water, hospital, food

security and jobs is the idea of self-help 'in the Harambee spirit' (218) and the neocolonial model of economic development that promises to open a tourist and cultural centre and a game-park on the agricultural and forest land of Ilmorog for western tourists along with a factory of locally produced beverage of Theng'eta. Ngugi writes that,

A tourist centre would be set up and a game park further on would be enclosed and made out of bounds for the herdsmen. People, whether herdsmen or ordinary farmers, would be given loans to develop their land and their ranches. But first people had to register their lands in order to acquire title-deeds which in turn would act as security with the banks. He had promised that he would bring development to Ilmorog. (317)

Ngugi associates the rise of wildlife and coastal tourism in postcolonial Kenya with neo-colonialist forms of western control over the country's natural resources and political ecology. The novel highlights social, material and cultural devastation of Ilmorog caused by economic, cultural and environmental imperialisms. Ngugi's critique of Kenya's tourism industry exposes local politicians and business elites who are benefitting from foreign investment into Kenya's forests and beaches. He explains that National Parks and beach resorts are owned not by the State government or local communities but by European and Asian corporates with Kenya's comprador class holding a few shares in them. Ngugi exposes the imperial nature of environmental tourism in Kenya. The political and government beneficiaries are bribed for smuggling of Kenya's wildlife, ivory, precious stones and young girls to countries of Europe and the international market for trade.

It was, for instance, the Utamaduni Cultural Tourist Centre at Ilmorog. Ostensibly it was there to entertain watalii (*tourists*) from USA, Japan, West Germany, and other parts of Western Europe. But this only camouflaged other more sinister activities: smuggling of gemstones and ivory plus animal and even human skins. It was a centre for the

plunder of the country's natural and human assets. Women, young girls, were being recruited to satisfy any watalii's physical whims. (PB 397-98 italics mine)

According to Laura Wright, the "image of the bleeding flower" resonates with images of "the corruption and devastation of nature" in the village of Ilmorog (Wright 244). The novel's fictional setting in Ilmorog bears allegorical significance as a place of neo-imperial dominance and postcolonial political corruption where the poor and the marginal are denied justice, equality and freedom. The marginalised and the underprivileged are continuously facing exploitation and displacement in the hands of the neocolonial forces in cahoots with the local postcolonial ruling elites. Thus, Ilmorog, for Ngugi, becomes a "grain of sand" that reflects the socio-environmental realities of most countries of the global south.

Abbreviation: PB–Petals of Blood

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Ecofeminism, A Promise of Hope to Mourning Nature: A Story of Burning Rage, Shame, and Extinction

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The study of the relationship between living things and their surrounding is called Ecology. It was coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1869. It aims to understand life processes, adaptation, distribution and biodiversity. In short, it is the study of organisms in their natural habitat. The ecological issues encompass diversity, distribution of organisms, population size and competition between them.

On the other hand, the Environment incorporates all natural things that surround us and is essential to sustain life. It incorporates physical and biological components. Environment governs the climate and weather, which are extremely important to sustain all biological forms. Pollution, deforestation, and global warming are some of the noted changes in the environment. It can alter and affect the natural cycle and climatic conditions.

Literature and nature are closely associated. Today various department of knowledge has analysed this relationship. "Environmental history shares a very messy border with economic and social histories, history of science and technology, disease

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history, and even with various other disciplines.” (Chakrabarti 2007: 25). The poets, philosophers and writers have sung in the glory of nature and have raised their voice when they saw the grieving nature. To express the concern for the environment a new term “Eco-criticism” was coined by William Rueckert in 1978 in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-Criticism.”

The cultural and religious heritage of India shows a deep concern for the protection and preservation of the environment (Jaiswal and Jaiswal 2007:4). Extinctions and the loss they bring are always difficult to evaluate and in short one can say it is a complicated process. The history of evolution and extinction is so embryonic that we know very little about the mess and the estimated loss of the mess. Humans are very greedy when things seem tasty and bountiful. The extermination and extinction of certain species of animals can be directly linked to the over-enthusiastic hunting and insatiable appetites of human beings. The study will be limited to the Indian framework as the concern for Environment is the cry of the entire humanity and it is not possible to accommodate it in the preview of this paper.

For millions of Hindus, the Ganga River symbolises moksha or salvation. The length of the main channel is 2,525 kms. The river affirms the spiritual rebirth of thousands of Hindus whose cremated ashes or half-burnt dead bodies are immersed in holy water. This river has supported a wide variety of flora and fauna along with birds and many living creatures of the water.

But today the river of salvation is struggling to save the endangered Ganga river Dolphin *Platanista Gangetica* along with nine other species of aquatic mammals. The dolphin population was 10,000 in 19th century which was reduced to 3,526. After ardent efforts, it was stabilized between 2015 and 2016 but now shows a drastic decline in recent years.

The other endangered species are Gharial, Three Stripped Roofed Turtle, Indian Skimmer Turtles such as Northern River

Terrapin, the Golden Mahseer Fish, and Black Bellied Tern. A decline in the population of Golden Mahseer fish is due to the Their Dam acting as a migration barrier has been noted upstream of the Bhagirathi river. (Sharma, 2003, 66)

Reptiles include three species of crocodiles and one species of monitor lizard and eleven different freshwater turtles. The list also includes reptiles such as three species of crocodiles and one species of monitor lizard and eleven different freshwater turtles.

The vulnerable list includes the Sarus Crane, the Snow Trout, and the Mugger Crocodile. The riparian zone is known for plant species that are of both economic and ecological importance. They play a very prominent role in maintaining nutrients and help in conservation.

The rich basin of the river has propagated and supported thousands of people who end up pumping 1.3 billion litres of sewage waste daily along with animal carcasses into the river. Yearly dumping of 260 million litres of industry effluents, 6 million tons of chemical fertilizers, and 9000 tons of pesticides are remitted into the river.

Gharials are on the verge of extinction in India mid-1970s. The captive breeding plan of 1975 took the population to 1200 by 1995 but in 1999 the population is again declining “the presence of Gharial is important for the health of the river. It eats the sick fish and the disappearance of Gharial from the ecosystem signifies collapses ecosystem due to polluted water or drop in water levels” emphasises in the report Macro Fauna of the Ganga River-Status of Conservation of Select Aquatic Species was prepared by Wildlife Institute of India (WIL) Dehradun as a part of biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation ‘project by National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).

The report further states that the habitat has become unsuitable for the use of aquatic amphibians. The massive structural changes due to 16 hydroelectric projects in Bhagirathi and Alaknanda basin, 14 projects under construction, 39 proposed projects, alteration due

to agriculture, unsustainable biological resources extraction, construction, and sand mining has altered the flow and connectivity of the river. This has disrupted the nesting places of turtles and Island nesting birds.

The genus Gyps, to which the vast majority of the vultures in India belong, probably arrived on the scene sometime in the last few million years (Rich; Houston, pers. comm.) (45). The study by Vibhu Prakash of the Bombay Natural History Society discovered that Vultures were on the verge of mass extinction. It is the result of their being accidentally poisoned by an anti-inflammatory drug called diclofenac. Diclofenac is used to treat any number of conditions in cattle, including lameness, mastitis, and difficult birthing (Cunningham; G. Swan et al., 'Removing' 0395) (46). This drug causes inflammation, painful swelling, and in the course of time kidney failure and death. Today, it is thought that approximately 97% of the three main species of vulture in India are gone (Swan et al., 'Toxicity'; Prakash et al.). It is not always the living and breathing that make or destroy life sometimes dead animals and dead people can impair the prosperous community.

Kalahandi in western Orissa once a land of green jungles and hills was known for traditional harvesting ponds, lakes, check dams and even tanks within the body of fields. The trouble started with the independence facing the fearing takeovers. The landowners converted the land into croplands. The focus shifted out to Hirakud, Concurrently, the forest was cut down, resulting in soil erosion and the riverbed silted up. Large-scale crop failure and water shortage were drastic. Now it lives in eternal poverty. (3)

The story of Nilgiri perils begins with a British intervention by a tea and coffee plantation. with pristine vegetation. The bloom promoted monoculture, and excessive use of pesticides, fertilizer and deforestation brought landslides. Nilgiri is home to endangered animal species like the Nilgiri Tahr and Lion-Tailed Macaque. The lucrative industry of tea and coffee brought ecological disaster too. (36-37)

The Gulf of Mannar biosphere reserve GOMBER situated in Tamil Nadu includes mangroves, seabed, algae coral reefs, many fish species, marine turtles, dolphins and many migratory birds. The destruction started with advanced modern trolling, the mining of coals and the pollution of industries. The huge net swiped up a large number of smaller fish. In spite of ardent efforts, it is in critical condition as coastal communities were still smuggling seahorses and Sea cucumbers.

The olive Ridley, a hard-shell marine turtle, is threatened by recreational boating and propeller collision injuries on its way to the nesting ground in Orissa. Not only they consumed marine debris like plastics tax tar balls, balloons, bags but also face challenges from pesticides and heavy metals. Trolling kills more than 1, 00,000 turtles every year. The attempts to save turtles by forest organisations have failed for the need for manpower. (84, 99)

The story of the wettest place on Earth, Cherrapunji, today is thirsty for 8 months of the year. Deforestation has resulted in washing away the topsoil of the slopes turning them into deserts. The dusty air from the continuous chalk mining and extraction of coal has choked the life of people.

Kanpur, the City of juvenile asthma, is one of the most polluted cities in India. Dust is thicker than air. The smog never goes away. Children are part of steroids as it is a cheap remedy. According to a Delhi study, 40% of the cases are responsible for acute cases of asthma.

In short, the Delhi pollution, the burning City of Jharia in the state of Jharkhand, the fluoride contamination of Barack, Rajasthan, the Super cyclones of Orissa, and the heart-rendering. The Gujarat earthquake and the unpreparedness of the government for disaster management shameless story goes on.

The patriarchal capitalistic outlook was responsible for the exploitation of natural resources. Throughout the world, women

had been protesting over the formaldehyde in furniture covers & insulations, carcinogenic nitrate preservatives in foods, insecticides, pesticides and herbicides. Ariel Salleh quotes Joyce Cheney: "I am annoyed that I feel forced to deal with the mess boys have made of the earth. It is hard enough struggle to survive and to build and maintain a life-affirming culture." (19)

"It is no surprise that the reproductive risk and the dangers to public occupational health arising from the reckless use of technology for prominent early concerns." Ariel Salleh (17).

Biotechnology and Patents contribute to the theft from the third World. Produce the steal biodiversity from consumers. Vandana Shiva, States, "the farmers today have transformed from seed custodians to see consumers. The hybrid seeds are biologically patented in that offspring cannot be used as seeds." Poor farmers must go back to the corporation to buy seeds every year. Patents and IPRs are used to prevent farmers from saving the seeds.

Genetic engineering is offered as a green technology worldwide, green technology is offered to the world by genetic engineering. "President Bush ruled in May 1992 that genetic engineered food should be treated as natural hence, safe. Vandana Shiva, (173). These companies provide pesticides for food and said without chemicals millions would go hungry. When the Food Drug Administration of the US listed the risk associated with this food and told the public about the ill effects of consuming such manufactured products. The companies immediately changed the policies and offered as green products.

The capital market in the name of industrial production in the process of consumption generates a lot of waste. The debris is dumped into land, water or air.

Third-world women are treated as Guinea pigs. Contraceptive technology was first administered to third-world women They ignored the side effect of the long-term use of drugs. In Bangladesh, they lured women to use this harmful medication in exchange for a few kilograms of grains. Ariel Salleh, "It is no

surprise that reproductive risk dangers to the public. And occupational health arising from the reckless use of technology for prominent early concerns.” (17)

Ariel Salleh quotes an Australian mother, “There is nothing to eat anymore. Beef has e. coli. lamb has Scrapie: rabbits have. Calici virus: chicken is full of synthetic hormones: fish carry heavy metals. Soybeans are genetically engineered: vegetables and fruits are covered with pesticides: Seaweeds are radioactive. What can I give the children tonight?” (66)

The environment now is under threat of different crises. The natural resources are limited on Earth. The over-exploitation of which leads to the depletion of the same. The pollution is mainly man-made. It is time to make the protection, conservation, and proper use the main agenda to sustain life.

Ariel Salleh States, “Ecofeminism is found in the initiatives like women’s legal challenges to Giant Nuclear Corporation in the USA entry hugging protesters against loggers in North India.” (17) The action of these women is based on a common sense understanding of everyday needs. She is more bothered about the everyday survival of her children and family.

Amritha Devi who could not bear the destruction of her faith and her sacred tree; went and hugged the trees. The soldiers severed her head, and this was followed by her three heroic daughters who eventually were beheaded by the king’s men.

The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in Gujarat was initiated by Smt. Ela Bhatt in the Year 1972. It was initially the largest union of textile workers in India. However, now it is a globally recognized trade union of women workers in the informal economy. They support poor working women. They helped these women with social, economic, and legal rights. To support they came up with SEWA bank. They formed several cooperatives for health, childcare, and women with livelihoods as artisans, milk producers, and farmers.

In 1973 a group of contractors arrived in Renni village of Uttar Pradesh. They had crept into the village to cut down 2500 trees. The contractor ensured that the men were away for the day. Guara Devi confronted the men and Chippko Andolan was born.

In the year 1976 Kerala awoke to protect a very important biodiversity hotspot in the Southern and Western Ghats known as the Silent Valley movement. It was a protest led by Sugatha Kumari to prevent the government to construct a dam for hydroelectricity power projects in the forest. The cry to save the forest and the vital role led by women forced the government to declare it a National Park.

In 1982 Indian environmentalist Sunita Narain an initiator of the Green concept of sustainable development made her name when she co-edited the State of Environmental Report with another passionate environmentalist Anil Agrawal. Sunita Narain 2005 also worked in Tiger Task Force Conservation after the loss of tigers in Sariska. She is also an active member of the Prime Minister's Council and assists with Climate change and the National Ganga River Basin Authority which strategies codes to clean the river. Her research covers climate change, Forest resource management and water-related issues.

In the year 1983, The Appiko movement started in Karnataka to object to the government policy to use forest land for industrial development. To show the protest several women, children, and men hugged the trees. The role of Mahila Mandal and Adivasi women were very much appreciated. In September 1983, when the axemen came for felling to the Kalase forests, people embraced the trees, and thus the Appiko movement was launched.

In 1984 a prominent ecofeminist, writer, scientist, and activist Dr. Vandana Shiva founded Navdanya, India's largest organic movement. "Navdanya" means "nine-crops" which represents India's collective source of food security Navdanya began as a program of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE).

In 1985 the world witnessed a non-violent longest living Gandhian Movement in the history of mankind led by Medha Patkar. The Narmada Bachao Andolan was a forceful mass movement to protest the construction of a large dam on the Narmada River. This multi-crore project would have uprooted millions of lives and destroyed biodiversity. In order to stop the construction of the dam women were ready to sacrifice their life too. Medha Patkar protested peacefully by fasting for several days.

Arundhati Roy was also arrested for her protest of Narmada Bachao Andolan. She too like Medha wanted to save biodiversity.

In 1992 Menaka Gandhi founded an organization called People for Animals. It is India's largest non-governmental and non-profitable organization for animal welfare. The headquarters is in New Delhi. The main aim of the organization is to provide a solution to the overbreeding of street dogs through animal birth control. It investigates the Rehabilitation of Laboratory Animals. Moreover, keeps an eye on the (CPCSEA) Committee for the Purpose and Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals. CPCSEA has declared the rehabilitation of animals as a "moral and legal need".

In the year 2004 Champa Devi Shukla along with Rashida Bee received a very prestigious award Goldman Environmental Prize. This was conferred on them and ignited the international campaign to seek justice for disaster survivors. The city of Bhopal after the 1984 Union Carbide gas leak still continues to suffer from cancer, tuberculosis, birth defects, chronic fevers

In 2008 Radha Bhatt led 2000 kilometers march to voice for water rights in Uttarakhand Nadi Bachao Abhiyan. She challenged the series of hydel power projects based on the Ganga and its tributaries. As Ynestra King states, "We are Women identified movement, and we believe we have a special work to do in these imperilled times. We see the devastation of Earth and her beings

by the corporate for years and the threat of nuclear annihilation by military warriors as feminist concerns.” (14)

The fight of these women will never go in vain. They are more interested in creating and using science and technology that nurtures rather than violates. They want to build sustainable land and resources for future generations.

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**Silence is the Language of War:
Laborious Conversations in Anuk
Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief
Marriage***

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Abstract

Sri Lanka is an island country and many writers talked about that country in the past literary works because of its alluring natural resources. However, the country loses its name and fame after the breakout of the civil war between the two communal groups—the Sinhala and the Tamil. The native Sri Lankans exposed their brutal nature in the war and many innocent people were suffered due to the range of violence in the war. Many Sri Lankan diaspora writers talk about the war tensions of Sri Lanka even after the close of the civil war in the island nation. Anuk Arudpragasam, one of the young Sri Lankan diaspora writers, elaborates the sufferings of the refugees in his debut fiction *The Story of a Brief Marriage*. Humans are naturally enthusiastic in making conversation with other humans as talking is their natural instinct and capability. But the present research

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article shows the nature of the Sri Lankans who avoid and are afraid of talking due to the impacts of their country's war. The article exposes the diminishing human bonding among the people due to their passive state in the refugee camps.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Civil war, Communication, Violence, Silence and Past grief.

Anuk Arudpragam, the author *The Story of a Brief Marriage*, defines "conversation was like an unspooling of invisible fiber that was shot into the air as a stream of sound, that entered the bodies of other people through their ears, that went from those humans to others, and from them to yet more" (TSBM 67). He explains that conversation connects the people of all over the country and it is not only about the subject they are talking about but also it is about the way of talking to other people. Before the breakout of the civil war in Sri Lanka, people voluntarily talk to the other people for the means of acknowledging the humans' capability of talking when compare to other living creatures. In Sri Lanka, there were the days when people came from faraway places to chat with their island country's relatives; there were the days when school children talked and laughed about the silly things; and sometimes, people stopped by to say only hello to their neighbours. In ordinary days, people always make a new conversation whenever there is a pause between the conversation or an end of the conversation.

During the initial state of the war, people including the protagonist Dinesh constantly talk about the riots that are happening in the various parts of the island country because of the country's ethnic clash. Along with fighting and suffering in the riots, they believe that they can come out of the communal clash and find a peaceful solution by talking about that things constantly. But "...finally, with much apprehension, each of them fully absorbed in what was going on, something was said that could not possibly get nearer to what they sought. When such a point was reached

they were able to sense it almost instinctively, even if they couldn't see or touch what they found..." (TSBM 141). In matter of time, they realize that their conversation becomes diminishing due to the war tension of their homeland. At one point, they do not have anything to talk, except about war which only gives them more miseries. So the Sri Lankans prefer silent in every critical war situation in not to talk about the war calamities. Silence becomes their only language and they talk when there are any practical needs and they no more talk for the sake of talking. Moreover, due to the increasing violence in the island country, people have to talk only about the deaths and violence. Thus, Arudpragasam clarifies that Sri Lankans do not communicate or converse with other people as they do not have anything to talk other than the war.

Dinesh, the protagonist of *The Story of a Brief Marriage* works as a volunteer in the refugee camps in Sri Lanka during the civil war. As told by the doctor of the clinic in the camp, Dinesh digs the ground and buries the dead people or the amputated parts of the living persons in the ground. After tiring work of the day, he wishes to stay away from the noise of the crowded people in the camp. While walking away from the camp, he observes many people who are sitting in groups but to his surprise that no one is talking to other people. They sit just like that and look vacant. Thus, Anuk Arudpragasam, the author of the fiction, shows the speechless state of the refugees due to the impacts of the violent explosion in the camp.

Communication is the reaction of thinking which separates humans from animals. But in *The Story of a Brief Marriage*, Arudpragasam highlights that communication is a difficult task for the Sri Lankans as war is going on in their homeland. At one instance, when searching for another refugee Mr. Somasundaram, Dinesh meets Ganga, daughter of Somasundaram in the camp. Taking care of a baby of another woman, she talks to him easily but her questions and answers are very short and abrupt. After

a short interaction with Dinesh, Ganga does not know how to proceed the conversation and so she sees the child that she is caring. Seeing the face of the child, Dinesh feels somewhat strange in its expression. He observes, "Its eyes stayed open, but it made no reaction. It looked like an inanimate, human-shaped object onto which living eyes had been grafted" (TSBM 38). When Dinesh asks about the odd nature of the child to Ganga, she remains silent as she cannot the conversation further. Even, when she returns the child to its mother, she just places her hands on the mother of the baby who is woken up by her gesture. Like Ganga, the mother also does not reciprocate her gratefulness in words. Thus, Arudprgasam shows that silence is the prevailing condition of the refugee camp.

At another instance, Dinesh and Ganga, as a married couple, move to the clearing place in the abandoned area of the forest. To initiate a conversation, Dinesh compliments Ganga about her sari. But she simply nods and remains quiet. Once again, Dinesh asks whether the sari belongs to her mother. That time too, Ganga closes the conversation with a slight response. However when Dinesh asks about Ganga's scar in her left hand, Ganga urges to talk about her sufferings to Dinesh. When she tries to tell about it, the words do not flow out of her mouth spontaneously and they become detached, clueless and straightforward:

Ganga stopped playing with the stone.

When did you get that? Dinesh asked.

She didn't answer at once, as though she couldn't tell immediately. (TSBM 59)

Generally communication gets over when the receiver decodes and understands the message of the sender. But in the fiction, on hearing the emotionless words of Ganga, Dinesh is confused whether she understands his words. Thus, emotionless words lead to meaningless communication.

Dinesh is a common man who loves talking with other people. However, he remains silent almost all the time due to the

unexpected continuous bomb explosions in the refugee camp and the recent death of his mother affects him terribly. But when Ganga asks him about his native place, he feels tensed to converse with another individual about his loss. He is not afraid of conversing but he is afraid of the output of that conversation leads to and the reactions of another individual while engaging in the conversation. "He was glad that they had stopped talking, that for a while at least they could be silent. It wasn't that their conversation had gone poorly or unpleasantly, for in truth he'd been in too much a state of shock to have been aware of what he was saying to Ganga...and was grateful now simply for the chance to spend some time in silence, recovering" (TSBM 40). Though Dinesh was happy that he and Ganga stop talking to each other, he thinks that if he is going to accept the marriage proposal of Somasundaram, he will have to talk to Ganga almost all the time as the couple is expected to do. He ruminates, "marriage involved not only the occasional sharing of information but also conversation, speaking simply for the sake of speaking" (TSBM 40). On thinking about a conversation with another individual, Dinesh realizes that language is a natural instinct and he can speak with little practice. Despite being passive and tense due to the horrific of the war, he hopes that he, like the other humans, can converse to other people normally as they do in their ordinary days.

Impressed by the actions of Ganga, Dinesh agrees to marry her. When he and Ganga are waiting for the Iyer to do the marriage rituals, Somasundaram, Ganga's father announces that the Iyer is died in the clinic of the camp. Hearing this, Ganga is relieved that their marriage will be cancelled. But Somasundaram relaxingly tells them the marriage will be proceed without the Iyer. Though Ganga is disappointed by the decisions of her father, she agrees to marry Dinesh as she understands that her father is going to abandon her after the marriage as her father feels dejected and guilt in losing his family in the bomb explosion and he cannot survive with his past guilt, loss and failure. And so, she remains silent despite not liking the instant marriage with a stranger Dinesh.

Dinesh is hesitant when he hears the death news of Iyer. But he becomes composed when Somasundaram tells him to proceed the process of marriage. However, he stops when he sees the expressionless face of Ganga. Dinesh thinks Ganga is his realization in his life. When he sees her face, he is somewhat unsure to tie the thaali around her neck. "Dinesh looked at Ganga, who stood a few feet to the right. She was looking away, and nothing of the expression on her face could be seen. Dinesh turned back to Somasundaram. He hesitated a moment, then slowly nodded" (TSBM 49).

Marriage is an auspicious moment for every human who feel delight and happy when they say yes to the proposal and while they are doing every ritual in the marriage. But in *The Story of a Brief Marriage*, both Dinesh and Ganga do not react or discuss anything while their marriage is fixed or organized. Throughout their marriage, they are unreactive as they feel their marriage is somewhat odd and absurd among the crowd of the refugees. But when they see the thaali, a yellow thick thread with a piece of gold, they become aware of the seriousness of the situation. "Dinesh and Ganga stared at the object as though neither had seen a thaali before. They looked at it with a slight nervousness, as though unsure of the item's origin and function, as if it might be possessed of magical powers that could suddenly be let loose upon them" (TSBM 51).

On one side, although Ganga urges to fight for her right of stopping the marriage, she remains passive as she understands that her father is organizing the marriage for the sake of his mental relief and the safety of his daughter. On other side, Dinesh becomes awkward by seeing the clumsy looks of other refugees in the camp. However after receiving the valuable thaali from Somasundaram, Dinesh feels responsible and conscious of what he is going to do. So out of curiosity, he insists Somasundaram that he wishes to change his dirty clothes as marriage is an onetime event and he wants to make it memorable. But Somasundaram

reminds him that they are the surviving refugees in the war land. Realizing the situation, Dinesh, without arguing much, ties the yellow thread around the neck of Ganga. Thus, through the marriage scene, Anuk Arudpragasam, the author of the fiction points out that the situation makes the people talk to other person without thinking much and at the same time, the same situation makes the talkative and courageous people remain silent as they cannot tolerate or accept the immeasurable sufferings any more in their lives even through the words of other people.

After Dinesh and Ganga get married, Dinesh suggests that they can go the clearing place which he has found recently in the abandoned area of the forest. Though Ganga is worried about her father's desertion of her, she agrees to go with Dinesh who is excited to show his "a special place, a home almost" (TSBM 57). When Ganga comes to the clearing place, she does not tell anything about the place. For Dinesh, the place feels like an "old skin" (TSBM 57) and he thinks, "what exactly it was that drew him close to the rock and the bed it was difficult to say, but he could sense or smell or feel that the place cared for him..." (TSBM 58). Though he is disappointed by the unresponsive reaction of Ganga, he, as a responsible husband, understands the silence behind the talkative Ganga.

Choosing the right words and organizing the chosen words in the coherent and in the correct order enlarge the conversation among the people; the subject matter is considered the most important thing in the conversation. Thus, the content with right words and right order decide the successful conversation. But in *The Story of a Brief Marriage*, Dinesh is urged to talk to his newly wedded wife Ganga. Though he is not a man of talkative, he feels desired to talk to her about all the things. "It had been difficult to resist speaking when finally he had found something that felt natural and unforced to say..." (TSBM 70). Out of curiosity, he talks to her about the whereabouts of her father after they got married. However, when he sees the saddening reactions

of Ganga, he feels sorry that he has talked about the wrong subject in the wrong situation. Thus, Anuk Arudpragasam points out the basic things for a successful conversation in the fiction.

As Ganga remains silent and non-communicative, Dinesh initiates a conversation to make her talk. He feels that talking about the past things make an individual talk freely about anything or to act openly among the other people. Thus, Dinesh tells about his education and his schools with a hope that she also tells about her education and her favourite subject. But she just nods for his every question. Though Dinesh feels that he is forcing her, he wants to try one more time as if he stops the conversation, he has to start it freshly from the beginning. The writer Arudpragasam says, “Again there was no response. Dinesh put the pebble back in its place on the border of the bed. He felt slightly foolish, as though he had just betrayed some kind of ignorance or stupidity” (TSBM 61). However, after a few questions, Ganga feels irritated as the conversation make her recall all the tragic incidents happened in her life. Thus, for Dinesh, the conversation helps the individuals think positively and engage themselves in the present moments smoothly but for Ganga, the conversation is reminded her of her past loss which makes her regret once again in her present moments.

Through the companionship of Dinesh and Ganga, the author Arudpragasam explains the significance of silence in the fiction. Dinesh becomes hopelessness after his failure of attempting conversation with his wife. But in course of time, Ganga talks to him about her working time in the clinic and confesses to him that she goes to the clinic in order to free her mind from the past grief. When Dinesh asks her about her routine, she again becomes quiet. This time, Dinesh does not feel disappointed as he realizes, “her silence was itself an answer” (TSBM 137). Earlier, he is confused of what to do while she is silent. But now, after shifted to the clearing place and talked a few times with Ganga, Dinesh feels that he is connected to her. Dinesh comprehends, “The earlier

silence...the silence between two people separated by a sheer wall of polished stone. The silence that was present between them now on the other hand was one that connected them rather than separated them” (TSBM 137). Thus, communicating with the other people is a construction of a bonding with the other people and comprehensible silence between the individuals is a sign of good rapport.

Sometimes nature initiates a conversation between the people. When Ganga and Dinesh desire to make love in the clearing place, they hear the sound of a living creature which absolutely does not resemble like any humans and the sound denotes that it needs some rest to gather its strength back to fight once again in the battle. At first, Dinesh and Ganga ignore the sound but Dinesh decides to search for the owner of the voice as it is continuously heard. Captivated by the nature’s sound, Ganga voluntarily and interestedly asks her husband Dinesh about the sound. Her conversation and her facial expressions denote her concern towards her husband. Thus, communication is meant for the humans who use words and gestures to stay connect with the other humans.

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Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*: A Saga of Enlightenment

*Bhavesh Chandra Pandey

We are the voices of the wandering wind,
Which moan for rest, and rest can never find;
Lo! as the wind is, so is mortal life,
A moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife.

(*The Light of Asia*, Book III)

According to Edwin Arnold, the author of *The Light of Asia*, the epic is an attempt to depict 'the life and character and to indicate the philosophy of that noble hero and reformer, Prince Gautama of India, the Founder of Buddhism'. It is a record of the 'perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr'. Arnold outlines not only the life of the Buddha but also gives a sketch of his 'venerable religion, which has in it the eternity of universal hope, the immortality of boundless love, an indestructible element of faith in final good, and the proudest assertion ever made of human freedom'.

Published in 1879, *The Light of Asia* was one of the first successful efforts to popularize Buddhism for a western readership. It endeavours to describe the life and experiences and the

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principles of Gautama Buddha. This book has cast a considerable influence on a large number of persons across the world. The book gives an outline of Buddha's life-his encounter with human suffering, his penance and meditation, his enlightenment and his peregrination for spreading the message or Dhamma. The book carries the message that suffering is a built-in aspect of existence, suffering has some causes and it can be ended by adopting the rightful path.

Jayram Ramesh in his book *The Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined the Buddha* (2021) refers to the worldwide influence of the book. Since its publication in 1879 this book has influenced significant people like Swami Vivekananda, Angarika Dharmapala, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Nehru in India. It has at the same time influenced Nobel Laureates like Kipling, Tagore, W.B. Yeats, Ivan Bunin and T.S. Eliot. The other legendary figures influenced by this book include Leo Tolstoy, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, John Masefield, Joseph Campbell, C.V. Raman, Dmitri Medvedev, Andrew Carnegie, Alfred Nobel and above all Aldous Huxley. Moreover, the book became an overnight sensation as it got translated in more than thirty languages and it saw sixty editions in UK and around eighty editions in the US making it a bestseller in the 19th century.

After the Pala Dynasty in India, Buddhism as a religion was on a wane in India. It flourished in the other countries of Asia like Sri Lanka, Japan, Tibet, Burma, Bhutan, Cambodia etc. During the Islamic rule in India Buddhism was attacked and gradually it declined to almost a nought. Hinduism incorporated Buddha in its pantheon by regarding him as the incarnation of Vishnu. During the British rule, however, the Orientals and the people belonging to the Theosophical society worked to unearth the traditional Indian spiritual wisdom and in this process revived interest in not only the Hindu texts but also the texts of the Buddhist and Jain traditions. Several Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit texts were translated into English and other European languages. Both

religious and secular texts of ancient India were translated. People like James Princep, William Jones, Max Mueller, and Edwin Arnold revived interest in the study of the ancient Indian wisdom. Besides the Vedas, The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, texts like Panchtantra, Hitopadesha, Abhigyanashakuntalam, Gitgovinda, and the Gita were translated in different languages. Even newly educated Indians took to bring Indian texts into English to prove that though they were politically subjugated, yet they belonged to a culture which was very developed at a time when most European countries were yet to civilize.

On the other hand, the West was in a great crisis. The organized religion was being challenged by the emergence of science. An obituary of God was being written after the announcement of the death of God. The rise of wealth during the Victorian age was not ensuring happiness and satisfaction in equal proportion. In such a scenario the story of the Buddha, his renunciation, his quest of truth, his enlightenment, his noble truths and noble path and his idea of nirvana became an overnight sensation.

As an orientalist Edwin Arnold took a very keen interest in the literary wealth of India. He began work in the Government Sanskrit College in Poona in 1856. He translated and rendered into English Hitopadesha (The Book of the Good Counsel), The Gita (The Song Celestial), Geet Govinda (Indian Song of Songs), and above all *The Light of Asia* which is supposed to be based on Lalitvistara Sutra as translated by R.L. Mitra in 1875. Even before Arnold, the life of Buddha fascinated a number of scholars and they translated the Buddhacharit by Ashwaghosha narrating the life of Buddha. E.B. Cowell translated the Buddhacharita in 1894, E.H. Johnson in 1936, Patrick Olivella in 2008 and Willemen Charles in 2009.

The Light of Asia has been written in Tennysonian blank verse. It seems to follow the suggestion of the Romantic poet William Wordsworth that poetry should be written in the language

of the common man. It is an epic consisting of eight books describing the life and precepts of the Buddha and his spiritual journey to enlightenment. The book has about 5000 lines. Book one describes the birth and boyhood of Buddha while book two tells about the teenage and marriage. In book three the luxurious life and encounter with the old, the sick, the dead and the ascetic has been described. Book four tells about the renunciation and the beginning of the quest. Book five describes the self mortification, penance and the encounter of Buddha with various ascetics while book six shows the disenchantment from self mortification, the lessons from the band of nautch girls and Sujata, his encounter with Mara and his enlightenment. Book seven tells about his father's grief, his wife's anguish and his son's bewilderment. The last book is the exposition of his teachings and doctrines. In the last book Arnold turn to turns to rhymed stanzas rather than the blank verse form.

The interest that was evoked by the publication of the book in the West can be called phenomenal. According to a British writer, "At a single stroke, Arnold obtained a hearing that fifty years of devoted work of any other would not have secured". It can be believed that the book started what may be a counter 'cultural imperialism'. It was an religious philosophical epic in the line of Dante's Divine Comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost rather than a historical, heroic epic in the line of Homer's Iliad or Odyssey or Virgil's Aeneid. It lacks the grand style of the traditional epics and the mystical density of Sri Aurobindo's epic Savitri. It is a very simple poetic outline of the life of Buddha and a sketchy presentation of his philosophy.

According to Jairam Ramesh, the author of the book *The Light of Asia: the Book that Defined the Buddha*, this book 'impacted so many personalities in different countries, inspired movements of social equality and incarnated itself in music, dance, drama, painting and films'. It can be regarded as a milestone in Buddhist historiography. This book evoke multiple motivation as

it fulfilled the spiritual need of the West, it paid tribute to the cultural legacy of India and it gave a strong message of caste equality in the caste-ridden India, thus inspiring social movements, particularly in the southern part of India. Ramesh believes that the book became a cultural phenomenon because it focused on Buddhist humanity rather than his divinity. *The Light of Asia* gives a message that Buddha was no god and he preaches a 'religion of humanity' free from the dogma and based on reasoning and self discovery. Buddha seems to have attracted the West because the people of the West also like him felt a kind of restlessness at that time in spite of their wealth and power. Buddhist renunciation and quest for true knowledge attracts them. In fact Buddha embodies sacrifice and renunciation, pity, mercy and universal love. Moreover, Buddha tried to give a very rational explanation of his knowledge. For Buddha mercy is more important than might, pity is more important than violence and to save is more important than to kill. This is what is told to Devdutta when he claims the wounded swan shot by him:

If life be aught, the saviour of life
Owns more the living thing than he can own
Who sought to slay. (Book I)

So for Siddhartha, to save an ewe is as important as sitting in penance. Arnold writes:

'Twere all as good to ease one beast of grief
As sit and watch the sorrows of the world
In yonder caverns with the priests who pray. (Book V)

Buddha believed in the essential oneness of all beings and their inter connectedness. To him "All life is linked and kin" and 'Life is one'. Therefore he rejects the idea of caste which has become a blemish on Indian social life. This faith of Buddha endears him to the low and the outcastes. He gladly milk from the shudra as he declares:

There is no caste in blood

Which runneth of one hue, nor caste in tears,
Which trickle salt with all; neither comes man
To birth with tilka-mark stamped on the brow
Nor sacred thread on neck.

The motivating factors of enlightenment for Buddha have never been the rishis or the knowledgeable ones but the common people. He left home because he saw the old, the sick and the dead. Even when he was getting frustrated from self-mortification he learns from the band of nautch girls and the milkmaid Sujata. The nautch girls sing the song that highlights the significance of the middle path which became the crux of Buddhist philosophy:

The string overstretched breaks, and the music flies;
The string over slack is dumb, and music dies;
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high. (Book VI)

Similarly when Sujata, the woman who gave Buddha the milk which made him realize the fallacy of self-mortification, shares her life's philosophy 'good must come of good, ill of evil' and 'what will come, and must come, shall come well' Buddha remarks 'wiser than wisdom is thy simple lore'.

Buddha attracts us because he is not an incarnation or avatara with embedded wisdom, nor a prophet who receives revelation; he is highly sensitive man full of compassion and mercy who seeks truth so that he can 'teach compassion unto man' and 'be a speechless world's interpreter'. He is moved to see the sick, the old and the dead and starts questioning; 'Is this the end that comes to all who lives?' and also 'How can it be that Brahma would make a world and keep it miserable?'. No wonder these questions lead to realize that the world is a passing journey of pain and nothing in the world is permanent and therefore to propound a godless and soulless Dhamma based on the principle of Karma. Buddha consciously strives to find the solutions of the problems of the world. He realizes the four noble truths- the sorrow, its cause, its remedy and for it the gods will be of no help. We are

responsible for our happiness and sorrows. We reap what we sow.
We don't need to go outside to seek our deliverance:

Within yourself deliverance must be sought;

Each man his prison makes. (Book VIII)

In the last book Arnold elaborates the key principles of the Dhamma- the idea of Karma, Nirvana, the four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Noble Path, the ten sins and the Panchsheela. The other teachings of Buddha i.e. Sascha Sila, Three Doors, Triple thoughts, six fold states of mind, five fold powers, the Eight High Gates of Purity, modes of understanding, the five great meditations and jhana (Dhyana) and the Three Chief Refuges have been passingly referred in the end part.

Unlike Brahmanical religion, Buddha puts forward a moral and ethical Dhamma in place of ritualistic religion. He clearly states that man is totally responsible for himself and no external factors control him and for his deliverance he needs to tread the path of self-discovery rather than be a follower. The heart of his Dhamma is love and compassion and its end is peace. He proposed a godless, soulless idea of the world and considered it an illusion or a flux or ripple. However his philosophy is not nihilistic. He does not propose an escapist nirvana but a positive, dynamic and action-oriented nirvana.

The Light of Asia attracts us because it presents the life and Dhamma of Buddha in a poetic form. It is a genuine piece of literature rather than a book of religion. Arnold takes time to luxuriate and provide picturesque detail of nature and beauty wherever he finds scope. For example:

And all the jungle laughed with nesting-songs,

And all the thickets rustled with small life

Of lizard, bee, beetle, and creeping things

Pleased at spring time.

Or

Her eyes, those lamps of love,-which were as if

Sunlight should shine from out the deepest dark,
Illuminating Night's peace with Daytime's glow-
Unlighted now, and roving aimlessly
Scarcely marked the clustering signs of coming Spring,
(Book VII)

It can be stated that *The Light of Asia* brought the story of enlightenment and propagation of his Dhamma to the Western audience in a way Swami Vivekananda introduced the vedanta philosophy of the sanatana dharma to America in his Chicago address in 1893. The real significance of the book lies in its poetic rendering in a very simple yet captivating style. The West was impressed to know that even before Christ there was some path which was in many ways similar to the Christian religion. It was like a wave of fresh air in the Western society which was in many ways a state of frustration and was looking for peace. It struck the chord of Western ethos because it presented Buddha focusing on humanity rather than divinity. The greatest impact of the book according to Jairam Ramesh is that it popularized the story of Buddha and brought it out of the world of Archaeologists and academicians.

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Filming Fiction: Critiquing Film Adaptation of *The White Tiger* through the Lens of Loyalty and Liberty

***Yugeshwar Sah**

Abstract

The White Tiger is the 2008 Man Booker Prize winning Indian English debut novel by Aravind Adiga which is centred on themes of poverty, corruption, betrayal, exploitation, caste-class inequality and master-servant relationship. It tells the tale of two Indias-India which lives in the city and India which lives in the remote rural areas. It has been written, directed and adapted into the cinema by Ramin Bahrani starring Adarsh Gourav, Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Rajkumar Rao. There has been symbiotic relationship between literature and film since the inception of cinema. Literature has been the huge and eternal source of raw materials for the film makers. The present paper attempts to evaluate and examine the cinematic adaptation of the novel through the lens of loyalty. It will delve deep into the challenges faced by the screen play writer and director in the cinematic adaptation of this novel. This paper will also explore the age-old conflict between loyalty and liberty, and how Ramin Bahrani has resolved it and stroke the balance between them. It will also seek to analyse how film adaptation is a form of translation and how it functions

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as translation. The current paper will seek to explore how film adaptation serves as conduit of commercialization, dissemination, democratization and expansion of the treasure trove of literature. This paper will also aim at highlighting the interface between literature, translation and cinema.

Keywords: Cinema, Film Adaptation, Literature, Loyalty, Liberty and Translation.

Introduction

Aravind Adiga is a prominent, prolific and proficient Indian English novelist and short story writer in the contemporary India. Before he got his debut novel *The White Tiger* published in 2008, he had been a very successful and substantial journalist. The novel is written and narrated in the epistolary form to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabo by Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel. The narrator presents India as a country of paradox- light and darkness, rich and poor, poverty and prosperity, urban and rural, slave and master, spirituality and corruption, high caste and low caste, India and Bharat etc. The novel explores the journey of Balram Halwai from village to town, ‘darkness to light’ exploited to exploiter and slave to master. He has witnessed the twin faces of modern India which is a paradox in itself. He states:

“India is two countries in one: An India of light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India- the black river.” (Adiga: 2008, 14).

Adiga has given satirical and ironical picture of modern India, and the tone and narration is sarcastic and cynical but realistic. The film adaptation of the novel is very much faithful to the text. Moon, Bong, Kwak and Jang remarks about the narrative of the film:

“The film follows an epistolary narration; with Balram, the protagonist, writing a letter to the Chinese Premier in the opening scene. The entire film portrays a dichotomy—the

stark differences between the haves and have-nots-as well as the differences between conservative and progressive India- through the differences in the outlook of life and treatment of domestic help and/drivers between the older Storks and the Storks' heir Ashok Shah and his wife, Pinky. This stark dichotomy can also be observed in another popular class-mobility films such as Oscar-winning *Parasyte*" (2019).

Adaptation as Translation

Translation is a utilitarian activity and serves as the vehicle of distribution, dissemination and democratization of knowledge across the globe. Cinematic adaptation is one of the potent types of translation which acts as the conduit of cultural transaction, entertainment and education, commercialization and communication of the messages and meanings hidden in literatures. Roman Jakobson is one the greatest influences on Russian Formalists. He was one the most prominent figures and linguistic theoreticians. He has given linguistic view of translation and divided translation into three categories—interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic. Interlingual translation or proper translation refers to “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other languages (233)”. Intralingual or rewording is “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language (233)” such as paraphrase. Intersemiotic translation or transmutation deals with “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign system” (233) for instance fiction into a movie, book into comics etc. So, Film adaptation comes under intersemiotic translation since verbal signs are adapted into film with different and strong visual signs and symbols. Most of the lines of *The White Tiger* have been translated into dialogues, and the dialogues of the film are witty, satirical and ironical. Apart from the relevant lines of the literary texts, the filmmakers have to translate so many other things of the texts such as symbols, metaphors, surroundings etc... So, translation is an integral part of film adaptation.

Defining Cinematic/Film Adaptation

A film adaptation is a cinematic work of art adapted from different genres of literature. It is defined as transferring any fiction or non fiction work to the form of movie or cinema. It can be also defined as transformation or conversion of literature into film is called film adaptation.

“An adaptation is the reproduction of literature into another form of display usually being affected by the different cultural times” (Blog, Introduction to Fiction: Adaptation, Intertextuality & Fidelity). It is further elaborated as

“an adaptation occurs when material is taken from already existing sources such as a novel, movie, play etc... and is altered, or updated or updated in some way to make the story more relevant or interesting to the new audience” (Blog, An Introduction to Fiction: Adaptation, intertextuality and Fidelity). According to Oxford English Dictionary defines cinematic adaptation as “an altered or amended version of a text, musical composition, etc., one adapted for filming, broadcasting, or production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source(s)” (Oxford).

Cinematic adaptation has become the most effective and dominating medium of entertainment, education and commerce. Literature has been the everlasting source of raw materials for filmmakers since the inception of cinema. The first Indian movie was the adaptation of the Mahabharata. Although Leo Tolstoy views film adaptation as threat to literature yet he appreciates the transforming power and potential of the film in coming times. He stated

“We shall have to adapt ourselves to the shadowy screen and to the cold machine. A new form of writing will be necessary...but I rather like it. The swift change of scene, this blending of emotion and experience- is much better than heavy, song drawn out kind of writing to which we are accustomed. It is closer to life. In life too, changes and transitions flash before our eyes, and emotions of the soul

are like a hurricane. The cinema has divine the mystery of motion. And that is greatness” (as cited in Griffiths & Watts, 2013, 7).

Adaptation Theory

Film Adaptation has emerged as an interdisciplinary area of research and practice in this era of technology and globalization. It has served as the vehicle for dissemination and democratization of the knowledge of the world literatures. It is the most dominant and effective medium of for the exchange of culture. There is age old relationship between film and literature. To adapt or not to adapt literature into film is a serious debate among film theorists and critics. There are two factions of writers and theorists. One group is in favour of film adaptation since it is the most prominent and popular means to educate and entertain even the commonest of the common people. The knowledge and wisdom of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata has reached the heart of all Indians and at every door. And the result is that even an illiterate can talk about the learnings and lessons of these great piece of literature. The adaptation of theses works have changed lives of lakhs of illiterate people. On the other hand some of the theorists are of the opinion that adaptation destroys the purity and originality of literature. They feel that adaptation of the text into film transforms, distorts and appropriates the literary texts for the purpose of commercialization and entertainment. Styajit Ray remarks in the defence of Film Adaptation and liberty to transform the text as a film maker since two are different media in the Bangla journal *Desh* (25 May 1959)

“A writer’s imagination is expressed through words. The filmmaker’s imagination even based on a literary text is expressed through moving images. It is surprising that this reviewer has no idea about the vast difference between the two processes. There has never been a successful film based on a novel where the director has not transformed the original through his own viewpoint. (quoted in Asaduddin and Ghosh: 2012, 4)

Joy Gould Boyum writes against it in her book *Double Exposure: Fiction to Film*,

“a work of literature is by definition a work of complexity and quality that is addressed to an educated elite; that moves, in contrast, are mere entertainment, directed at anyone and everyone; and that to adapt a book is of necessity to adjust it not so much to its new medium as to its audience. This is to the uneducated, undifferentiated mass, with its inevitably limited comprehension and predilection for the homiletic sentiment ...adaptation is synonymous with betrayal.” (1985, 8).

Leo Tolstoy hints at rivalry between literature and film when he says that “you will see this little clicking contraption with the revolving handle will make a revolution in our life -in the life of the writers. It is a direct attack on the old methods of literary art.” (as cited in Griffiths & Watts: 2013, 7). Like Tolstoy, many writers are of the view that film adaptation as a threat to literature and literature will be less popular among the readers which will lead to the crisis of readership, and that’s why such theorists consider that “the adaptation as oedipal son symbolically slays the source -text as father that causes the erosion of the powers of the literary fathers, patriarchal narrators and consecrated arts. (Stam & Rango: 2004, 4).

Virginia Woolf, a renowned novelist and critic of the 20th century, regards film adaptation as “unnatural and disastrous” which “appears to only divert the sight, rather than engage the intellect” (as cited in Boyum: 1985, 6). She disapproved and disliked the film adaptation of *Anna Karenina*. She further remarks that:

“So many arts seemed to stand by ready to offer their help. For example, there was literature. All the famous novels of the world, with their well known characters, and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its pray with immense rapacity, and to this moment

largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples (Woolf, 1950, as cited in Cartmell: 2012, 2).

However, there are many writers, theorists and critics who justify film adaptation as a democratizing, disseminating and educating vehicle for the masses. It is the duty and responsibility of the filmmakers to bring classics on the screen. Bush considers that “it is the business of the moving picture to make {classic novels} known to all (as quoted in Bush: 1985, 4). Moreover, film adaptation is “damned with praise in its democratizing effect: it brings literature to the masses but it also brings the masses to literature, diluting, simplifying, and therefore appealing to the many rather than few” (Farrell: 2012, 3). Stam and Raengo (2004) have similar opinions about this process and product when they argue “we can see filmic adaptations as mutations that help their source novel and survive” (3). Hutcheon firmly believes that it provides new life to the literary works and film adaptations “do not leave it dying or dead, or it is paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep the prior work alive giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise” (2006, 176).

Geoffrey Wagner in his book *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) discusses three means and methods of cinematic adaptation centred on Balaz’s thesis: (i) ‘*Transposition*’—a method in which literary work is presented on the screen as it is with least intervention such as English cinematic adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, *The Birthday Party*, *Waiting for Godot* etc... (ii) ‘*Commentary*’—in this process of adaptation literary works are altered and adjusted to the needs and demands of target audience for instance R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide* as *Guide* (iii) ‘*Analogy*’—There is complete transformation of the text and new text is created. For example Vishal Bhardwaj’s cinematic adaptation of *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* as *Maqbool*, *Omkara* and *Haidar* respectively.

Kracauer in his seminal work *Theory of Film* defines film adaptation theory as

“Actually the adaptability of a novel depends not so much on its exclusive devotion to the material world as on its orientation towards content which still fall into the dimensions of psychological correspondence” (1965, 239)

Bruce Morrisette discusses the issue of equivalence in terms of aesthetic response. He remarks

“...there exists beyond the world on the page and beyond the images on the screen as well, a common field of imagination in which the work of art, visual, auditory or verbal, takes on its effective aesthetics form and meaning” (1973, 148).

Bazin in his essay *In Defence of Mixed Cinema* argues that fidelity is a virtue and film adaptation is a type of translation which I have already discussed. He says about the quality of good adaptation. “A good adaptation is the essence of the letter and the spirit.”

Cinematic Adaptation of The White Tiger

A renowned American film critic said “Ramin Bahrani is a great American director who looks for an ordinary life which actually are not ordinary” (an interview at Film Companion, Youtube Channel). Bahrani is a sensitive director who are very much interested in the lives of the people on margin. His few earlier films such as *Man Push Cart*, *99 Homes*, *Chop Shop* and then *The White Tiger* are about the men in margins. The lives of such people fascinate the director and he tries to explore their world with kin interests. He has been panning to make this novel into film for more than a decade and the book is dedicated to him. The film is very loyal to the original text. The movie begins with car scene where Pinky (Priyanka chopra is drunk and driving the car, Ashok (Rajkumar Rao) is also drunk and he is beside her and Balram (Adarsh Gaurav), the protagonist narrator, is sitting behind the car. Balram has dressed like a king but he is unable to control

Pinky madam. The over speeding car runs on the road and passes through the statues of Gandhi and his fellow companions going for Dandi March. They are celebrating the birthday of Pinky Ma'am in the midnight and the car is on high speed and accident takes place due to drunk driving. However, the book begins with narration of Balram in the epistolary form when he is writing the letter to the Chinese Primier. The entire story is narrated in the same epistolary form with all vivid realism, sarcasm and cynicism. Adiga has revived Richardsonian tradition of epistolary form. Like *Slumdog Millionaire*, *The White Tiger* is also the narrative of underdog whose journey is from rags to riches by hook or crook. The very opening scene portrays the socio-economic disparity that is prevalent in Indian society. It is such a corrupt and rusted system where the rich are getting richer rapidly and the poor are becoming poorer day by day in every way. Bahrani's film

"The White opens on a shot of one of India's most famous Mahatma Gandhi sculptures and giggly night time joyride through what is popularly known as Lutyens' Delhi. In quick succession the camera captures the giant Gandhi statue at the intersection of Mother Teresa Crescent and Sardar Patel Marg, a car hurtling down the wrong side of the road, a cow in the middle of the street and a poor family on a footpath" (as cited in Megha & Mathew: 2022, 260).

The film shows that Balram and Jiabo meet and shake hands though later hardly recognises him. The novel does not describe this event. There are only minor differences between the novel and film. The relationship between Ashok and Balram is shown very friendly and cordial in the movie but it is not the same thing in the novel. The climacteric incident takes place when drunken Pinky madam drives the car, the car hits the child and the child is killed in the accident. The killing of a child is depicted explicitly in the movie but the novel only portrays that a piece of cloth is stuck in the external part of the car. Pahwa remarks on this difference:

After all this, in both novel and film, Pinky walks out on Ashok and has Balram drive her to the airport. Ashok becomes extremely upset, falling into an Alcoholic stupor, while Balram takes care of him. The overall nature of their post- Pinky relationship develops differently on page and screen. In the movie, claiming that Pinky cried when he drove her to the airport and said Ashok would do great things...in the novel, Ashok is implored to remarry Ms. Uma, a former lover whom Ashok reconnects with after his separation from Pinky, who appears to suggest that Balram be replaced. Ms. Uma is nowhere in the movie. .(Pahwa)

The appearance of Balram's father ghost who tells him to steal the red bag of his master and run away is depicted in the movie twice one at market place and another time in the open field where his father is sitting in the field for defecation. And he also sits in the same way and giggles loudly. This may be the hallucination of his own mind since he has been framed in the accident case. This is not discussed in the novel. Subha Das Mollick, a famous filmmaker and teacher of Media Studies, argues on this successful film adaptation:

In this filmic adaptation of the book, the director succeeds in capturing the contradictions of 'New India's from the low angle perspective of Balram. He carefully weaves surrealistic elements in apparently realistic frames, to underline Balram's vulnerability, rapidly diminishing innocence and rapidly growing cynicism and his determination to escape rooster coop. In a superbly crafted scene towards the end, Balram and his father's ghost together sit down to defecate in the open wasteland, with the high rise of aspiring India in the backdrop. Both of them laugh their hearts out as they sit in their defecating posture. Why do they laugh? Perhaps they see opportunities for themselves in this irrevocably corrupt nation. In his debut venture, Adarsh has put up a remarkable performance as the face of new India, rising from the dusty wayside tea stall in the

rural hinterland of India to the escalator talking him up in the silicon city Bangalore. (Mollick: 2021, 1)

In one of scenes of the film ironically Mr. Ashok, the new owner of Balram tells him, “You are the new India Balram” and Balram reiterates hesitantly, “I am the new India Sir”. Unknowingly the protagonist narrator speaks the ultimate truth about himself and about India. Adapting *The White Tiger* into film was a challenging act for the director since transcribing the text into movie was the most complicated and arduous journey for Adiga’s lifelong friend and filmmaker Ramin. The second toughest part was what to include and what to exclude, and thereafter sequencing of the scenes. Ramin Bahrani accepts this toughest challenge that he faced during the making of the film in an interview with Radio Times:

The hardest part was cutting things that I liked because I like everything in Aravind’s brilliant novel... That was very tough. You are trying to capture a tone, that was a constant thought in my head-what is the tone of the film?... the novel was very fun: it’s very fast, it’s quirky, it’s funny, it’s satirical but then in the middle of the film, right dead set in the centre of the book and in the film, something happens and from there moving forward it shifts to but it’s darker and we constantly had our eye on that while writing the script and making the film” (Cremona). The director has used the voice-over technique to present the first person narrative style in the film. This voice-over narrative structure is apt, appropriate, suitable and justified for the film. In the words of Bharani, “Balram’s voice-over helped tell the sprawling tale, spanning his childhood, his life as a servant, and his rise to successful entrepreneur. His sarcastic social observations also helped provide specific cultural context and detail. (Jones)

Conclusion

There is symbiotic relationship between literature and cinema. Both are interrelated, interconnected and interdependent. Both

influence, ignite and inspire each other. Both have the same purpose—to teach and delight. But they only differ in the process of their making. Cinema is a collaborative work and it demands cinematic liberty and creativity in order to make it more interesting, entertaining and educating. However, the filmmakers should appropriate, adjust accommodate the body of literature into the new form but keep the soul of literature intact. If the film adaptation is able to convey the meaning and message of the literary text without any distortion and manipulation then we should not judge that work of art on the basis of fidelity and faithfulness. However as critics we should not question the process, means and methods since cinema has its own ways of communication and expression since it is '*drishya pradhan*' whereas literature is '*shabd pradhan*'. Cinematic adaptation of *The White Tiger* is very much true to the text and it maintains the fidelity theory. Some of the lines have been literally translated into dialogues of the film for instance *Bharat aekdesh me do duniyahi: aekujaleki, aekandhereki* (India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness). The sarcastic, satirical and ironical tone and narration are well maintained in the film from beginning to the end.

However, Arvind Adiga is delighted to watch the cinematic adaptation of his novel and appreciates the efforts put by the director. He is of the view that “witty, provocative, and moving, the film he has made not only brings my book to life, but transcends it.” (Jones). Hence, like good translation, successful cinematic adaptation of literary texts give ‘after life’ to the texts.

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Love-Hate Relationship in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*

***Binay Shanker Roy**

Abstract

It is truly said that literature is the mirror of the society. It narrates the story of any particular age. *Ice Candy Man*, written by first woman novelist of Pakistan, Bapsi Sidhwa, is one of such significant contribution in modern literature which deals with the partition of India and its aftermath. The novel published in 1988 is narrated by a lame and helpless child Lenny, which entails majorly the 'love-hate theme' in it. This paper focuses on bringing out the various aspects where love hate relationship is manifested during the time of partition. Firstly, it distils the relationship of love and hate between Hindu and Muslim which led to the partition of India. How the love and peace among different communities turns into history's biggest communal tension which led to the partition of India and Pakistan. Secondly, it brings out the complicated love-hate relationship of man and woman when the latter turns down the proposal of love by the former. This is shown by the love-hate relationship between Dilnawaz (*Ice Candy Man*) and Ayah. Thirdly, it shows the peaceful relationship among friends from different community Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, ends up into hate and even murder of each other. The child narrator belonging to an affluent Parsi family gets confused these

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relationships of love and hate in her vicinity. It is concluded that how the child who is brought up in a very protective environment fulfilled with love destroys her concept of love after witnessing these negative changes of love relationships into hate.

Keywords: partition, love-hate relationship, peace, communal tension, murder, affluence, environment, negative.

Bapsi Sidhwa's minute observe of the society, in which she lives. She presents in her novel all the major and minor events of society. Ordinarily, a person is recognized by his language and clothing. The dresses adopted by people are also reflective of their culture.

Bapsi Sidhwa deals nicely with the theme of partition of India assuming it as a subject as harrowing as the Holocaust. She achieves the remarkable feat of bringing together the ribald farce of Parsee family life and the stark drama and horrors of the riots and massacres of 1947; Khushwant Singh aptly says:

"Ice-Candy-Man deserves to be ranked amongst the most authentic and best [books] of on the partition of India". Singh, Khushwant: Cover page of the novel *'Ice-Candy-Man'*.

Ice-Candy-Man as memorable book, one that "confirms her reputation as Pakistan's finest English language novelist." The New York Times Book Review.

"Bapsi Sidhwa has turned her gaze upon the domestic comedy of a Pakistani family in the 1940s and somehow managed to evoke the great political upheavals of the age."

The novel assigns Sidhwa as a feminist and a idealist, who sees in her women characters the strength of passion, the tenderness of love, and the courage of one's convictions.

"Without a word of protestation or preaching and without histrionics, Sidhwa has written one of the powerful indictments of the riots which occurred during the partition."

Overall, *Ice-Candy-Man* is a novel of upheaval which includes a cast of characters from all communities- Hindus,

Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis. Thus a multiple perspective of Partition emerges as viewed by all the affected people. However what really distinguishes Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the cataclysmic event is depicted. It is the only novel written by Parsi on the theme of partition. This makes it unique. The unique aspect of this Partition novel is that the author throughout maintains for us a balance between laughter and despair.

When India gained independence from Great Britain in 1947, the sub-continent was divided into separate nations: India, the Hindu homeland, and Pakistan, the Muslim homeland. To carry out this political solution to long-standing religious conflict, millions were forced to move, and this mass migration soon turned into slaughter.

While exact numbers are not known, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands died. Those who survived also suffered-becoming refugees, losing fortunes and homes, succumbing to hunger and disease. Countless women were raped, then punished anew when their husbands and families rejected 'them as polluted. Much of the bloodshed and anguish took place on the Punjabi plains in northern India, a rich farmland intersected by five rivers. Lahore, a major city in the Punjab once known as "the Paris of India," was given to Pakistan. Because of the city's strategic position, it turned into a massive refugee camp and the site of some of the worst partition violence.

This is the historical background for *Cracking India*. The novel's first-person narrator is an eight-year-old named Lenny. At first consideration, this young girl from Lahore might seem to be a strange voice to tell such a story, for at the outset she admits, "My world is compressed." Taking full advantage of this limited view, however, Bapsi Sidhwa relates through the eyes of her child narrator the partition story from a domestic standpoint and, more significantly, from a feminine view. Lenny's naivete her privileged position, and her religious back-ground lend her version of partition

a quality that order novels about this tempestuous period in Indo-Pakistani history lack. The momentous events leading to partition and the aftermath are constructed incrementally through the child narrator's point of view, as she repeats overheard adult conversations, tells of strange sights, and sometimes even misrepresents or misinterprets situations which are later explained.

Protected by her family's wealth and stability, Lenny herself is not directly affected by the chaotic conditions. She lives in a safe and predominantly woman's world, spending most of her time with either Ayah or the elderly woman she simply calls Godmother. To Lenny the world of men remains shadowy on the personal level, except for her encounters with her cousin, who is exploring his newly discovered sexuality. Those men on the national level who make the decisions for millions of people remain incomprehensible. As she understands the situation, remote and calculating men create the climate for violence, and ordinary men carry out the acts. Women, she learns, are often the victims, as is the case with Ayah and the women who have been raped, then placed in the rehabilitation quarters next to Lenny's family home. On the other hand, she witnesses her mother's display of strength when a gang threatens their home, and she learns about the risk taken by her mother and Electric-aunt when they smuggle gasoline to Hindu friends fleeing Lahore. Godmother also serves as a feminine ideal; she is a powerful personality who can face wrongdoing head on and correct matters. All in all, Lenny grasps an important truth: Women do not resort to violence to solve problems; men do.

Cracking India takes the form of a Bildungsroman, a novel of education. It also offers a multicultural reading experience. As the book opens, the narrator presents a rich account of a childhood in an exotic Asian-city during the early 1940s. Part of the book's interest lies in this faithful rendering of Lenny's daily life with her nuclear and extended family, as well as her adventures with Ayah. Even though Lenny belongs to the upper class, she experiences all levels of society, and being an astute observer, she provides

a variegated account of life in the homes and on the streets of Lahore. Also interesting are her revelations about the Parsis, an Asian community of 200,000 or so people who are descended from Persian immigrants and whose faith is Zoroastrianism. As the story progresses, though, the spectre of partition disrupts this cozy life, and Lenny's education gets under way.

First, Lenny watches Ayah's circle of admirers dissolve. Once a number of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Sikh men were drawn together by Ayah's beauty, but not even her feminine allure can over-come religious intolerance. Lenny learns, too, that the little Muslim boy she had played with during her trip to the countryside was the only survivor when a marauding band attacked his village, massacred the men, and violated the women. From the roof of their house, she and her brother watch parts of Lahore burn. They listen to the weeping of women who had been raped and then, rejected by their families, were relegated to rehabilitation centres where few would be restored. Finally, she watches the kidnapping of Ayah by a gang that Ice-Candy-Man leads.

Moving from innocence into grim reality, Lenny ends her account on a positive note. Caught up in history, the native, spoiled, and fortunate little Lenny gains knowledge about the larger world: It is full of deception, injustice, hypocrisy, religious enmity, and cruelty. At the same time she has witnessed the resilience of the human spirit and the power of individual courage. She has also realized the role women can play, women such as Godmother: "You cannot be near her without feeling her uncanny strength. People bring to her their sores and swollen joints. Distilling the right herbs, adroitly instilling the right word in the right ear, she secures wishes, smooths relationships, cures illnesses, battles wrongs, solaces grief and prevents mistakes." These revelations and the knowledge she has gained from them will serve her well as she enters an uncertain world.

Some reviewers have complained about the narrative voice, observing that Lenny is too precocious for her age. In making such

a criticism, they seem to ignore the second narrative voice, that of an unidentified adult who reveals herself rarely. This other narrator stays in the back-ground until Lenny has established her own authority firmly, and she speaks for the first time when Lenny tells how her mother repeats clever remarks the child has made. This scene closes with the line, "Is that when I learn to tell tales?" This "I" is not little Lenny, but an adult Lenny looking back on a moment in childhood. Such a fictional technique seems all wrong: Here is a novel, written at times in an almost lyrical fashion, a historical account told in the present tense, viewed from a child's perspective except when an adult adds her comments. Yet the technique, however odd, works. The narrator is not a child after all but the child in the adult.

When the novel was originally published in London, it appeared under the title Sidhwa had intended, "Ice-Candy-Man". In the 1991 American edition, the title was changed to *Cracking India*, because the publishers thought Americans would misunderstand "ice candy" and confuse it with drugs. Unfortunately, the new title diminishes Ice-Candy-Man's centrality and blurs his symbolic role. In an interview, Sidhwa said that this character represents what she considers the "icy," unstable quality of politicians who determine the fate of those they rule. In fact, at one point in the novel the second narrator comments, after Lenny relates how her mother took her to see Mahatma (Mohandas K. Gandhi), "It wasn't until some years later... that I comprehended the concealed nature of the ice lurking deep beneath the hypnotic and dynamic femininity of Gandhi's non-violent exterior." Other political figures of the time - Jawaharlal Nehru, Louis Mountbatten, S.C. Bose, Mohammed Ali Jinnah - do not fare much better in the novel. Identified as they are with Ice-Candy-Man, As Lenny realizes, it is the ordinary person, a woman like Godmother, who "battles wrongs," not the remote, icy men in power.

This exquisitely written, tightly constructed novel offers an engaging glimpse into Asian life and a vivid record of a dark

chapter in history. At the same time, it follows a child's education, which prepares her for entry into an adult world whose vilest side she has witnessed at first hand. Finally, the novel presents a vision of a place where feminine values will rule and, in Lenny's words, where Ice-Candy-Man becomes "a truly harmless fellow," and where "the guard lets down his guard."

In this retelling of the partition story, the role of women emerges paramount: first as victims, then as saviors. Historical reports show that during the rage of partition violence, women were paraded naked through the streets before mass rapes; their children were thrown into the air and caught on swords as they watched; and their bodies were mutilated, their breasts chopped off. At the same time, women like those portrayed in *Cracking India* performed heroic deeds and possibly brought some order to the chaos. How often this story has been repeated III place after place, century after century. Although nonstrident in tone the novel focuses squarely on the victimization of women and on their resilience.

Ice-Candy-Man is a novel of upheaval which includes a cast of characters from all communities. There are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis, so a multiple perspective of partition emerges as viewed by all the affected communities. Bapsi Sidhwa uses a narrator to tell the tale. A precocious Parsi girl, eight years old with a handicapped foot narrates the story of her changing world with sophistication and wonder.

With witty remarks and subtle usage of language, Bapsi Sidhwa presents the impact of Independence and Partition in vivid images. The altered social reality becomes even more striking, as narrated by the innocent eight-year-old Lenny. Independence becomes evident to Lenny when she visits the Queen's Garden: "I cannot believe my eyes.

Such subtle comparisons and ironic exposures, Bapsi Sidhwa shows the brutalization which communal frenzy causes. Even lovers turn hostile. Ice-Candy-Man, the Muslim lover of the Hindu

Ayah, watches Shalmi and Mozang Chowk burn with “the muscles in his face tight with a strange exhilaration I never want to see.” The transformation of a fun-loving man who frolicked and acted the buffoon in the park into an ogre due to communal frenzy is aptly revealed by Lenny’s horror at the sadism in his face. A vivid image which is a stark reminder of the brutality of the times. This is the way Bapsi Sidhwa handles the delicate theme of partition, through subtle insinuations, images and gestures. So the stark horror of loss, bloodshed and separation is portrayed without verbosity, sensationalism, lurid details and maudlin sentimentality. The sensitive portrayal of the horrors of Partition enhances the poignancy and cruelty of the event with-out the author ever appearing pedantic or pretentious.

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Eroticism in Audre Lorde's Poetry

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Abstract

Audre Lorde's handling of the 'erotic' is a saluted and commemorated contribution to the movement for women's rights. Lorde's use of the concept of 'erotic' is a feeling which gradually helps in exploration of knowledge about the 'self' and the 'social environment' with the intent of counteracting cognitive tyranny imposed by an unjust society. The 'erotic' is a source of power that provides vision and vivacity for actions integrating a person's obligations.

Keywords: Audre Lorde, erotic, feeling, women, rights, knowledge, self, social, environment.

Poetry is the highest form of literary art which has for centuries been utilised by writers to express not just their emotions, ideas, and thoughts, but also as an adventurous passionate pursuit. Different poets wrote on varied subjects and themes and different types of poetry. For instance, one type of ecstatic and erotic poems penned by Catullus, the Latin poet of the Roman Republic put down the 'neoteric' kind of poetry, foregrounding personal life more than highlighting about classical heroes.

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The tangible images of sex that Catullus employed in his poems utterly appalled the readers. Nonetheless, Catullus is regarded an advantage for pedagogues of Latin.¹

The word 'erotic' is derived from Greek '*Eros*' and means love and desire. Eroticism causes sexual feelings and is a contemplation on sexual desires, and romantic love. This type of projection can be traced artworks such as painting, sculpture, drama, literature. The concept also refers to a condition of sex instincts. Honoré de Balzac, the French novelist declares: "eroticism is dependent not just upon an individual's sexual morality, but also, the culture and time in which an individual resides." (The Physiology of Marriage 1826, 65).

The first poems on eroticism goes back to Indian Literature which exhibits a very amorous proclamation of love in its varied emotions particularly in the Vedas. In classical Sanskrit one comes across erotic poetry in full bloom. This type mesmerised the readers as it warranted the protests of women as a sublime being. In a poem of eighteen stanzas, a conversation takes place between purUravas, a deadly being, and Urvashi, a divine damsel. Eroticism is discovered in the following lines in the conversation between the lover and his sweetheart:

may the mother sleep, may the dog sleep, may the eldest
in
the house sleep, may her relations sleep, may all the
people round about sleep.

In English John Donne is famed for writing erotic poems and the from one of the poems titled projects his sexual urge. "To His Mistress Going to Bed" poignantly regarded as erotic lust poem reads:

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defy,..
Off with that girdle, like heaven's come glistening
Unpin that 'spangled' breastplate which you wear,
That th' eyes of busy fools may be stopped there.

The Latin poet Ovid's *Amores* is a rendering of a love affair with an aristocratic woman Corinna. The lines express erotic feeling of the poet:

Then came Corinna in a long, loose gown,
Her white neck hid with tresses hanging down,
I snatched her gown..... Yet strived she to be covered
therewithal,
Stark naked as she stood before mine eye, How apt her
breasts were to be pressed by me?
How smooth a belly under her waist saw I? How large a
leg, and what a lusty thigh?
I clinged her naked body, down she fell.
Being tired, she bade me kiss.

The eminent poets who composed erotic poems are-Sylvia Plath, Kamala Das, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Sir Philip Sidney, and Audre Lorde.

Audre Geraldine Lorde fondly known as LordeAudre was a self-styled nigger lesbian poet. Charged with passion, exuberance, and profundity, Lorde battled against the marginalization of "lesbian" and "black woman" a central issue to several activists in the second-wave feminism and negrofolk movements and struggles for equality. Her poems are not just "love" or "sex" poem, but they are also about revolution and change. To quote her own words:

dedicated both her life and her creative talent to
confronting and addressing injustices of racism,
sexism, classism, and homophobia.

(Poetry Foundation. Archived from the original on
November. 27, 2019. Retrieved March 28, 2021).

Through her poems, Audre shows her reader that the 'erotic' is a tool against all forms of hegemonies and oppressive forces. The poetic craftsmanship of Audre is so remarkable that her expression of anger satires social injustices that she came across

in the society around her. The artist in her made her diction very powerful yet melodic. The most predominant themes that interested her were issues concerned with civil rights, feminism, lesbianism, illness and disability, and the exploration of black female identity.

Audre denied the identify herself with any poetic group or classified under a particular school of poetry like William Wordsworth, Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, etc.- poets who were classed under in different schools of poetry such as Romantic Poetry, Movement Poetry, and Confessional Poetry respectively. She deprived herself of the idea of belonging to a specific group through it was social or literary. This trait in Lorde Audre was typical of her grit to be recognised as an individual rather than a stereotype. Lorde's poetry was transparent, honest and personal that she began to express her erotic feelings about sexuality in a straightforward manner. In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Lorde states:

Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless
so it can be thought... As they become known to and
accepted by us, our feelings and the honest exploration
of them become sanctuaries and spawning grounds
for the most radical and daring ideas.

(Taylor, Sherri (2013). "Acts of Remembering:
Relationship in Feminist Therapy". *Women &
Therapy*. 36 (1-2): 23-34).

Lorde's works are apprehensive about sex. The documentary by Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson in *A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde*, Lorde exclaims:

"Let me tell you first about what it was like being
a Black woman poet in the '60s, from jump.
It meant being invisible. It meant being invisible.
It meant being doubly invisible as a Black feminist
woman and it meant being triply invisible as a Black
lesbian and feminist"

(Archived September 20, 2013, Wayback Machine).

Audre's essay "The Erotic as Power", speculates the 'erotic' as an asset for power of women.

For her the

Erotic is to be experienced from the bottom, of the heart, since it is a feeling of pleasure, love, and thrill that satiates women. This erotic feeling comes from reading a book or loving one's profession. She dismisses the false belief that only by the suppression of the erotic within our lives and consciousness can women be truly strong. But that strength is illusory, for it is fashioned within the context of male models of power.

(Uses of the Erotic: Eroticas Power, 53-59).

Audre elaborates how patriarchal society has used eroticism against women making them to be frightened of it. Women also fear it because the erotic is powerful, and the feeling is poignant. Women must share each other's power rather than use it without consent, which is abuse. They should do it as a method to connect everyone in their differences and similarities. Utilizing the erotic as power allows women to use their knowledge and power to face the issues of racism, patriarchy, and our anti-erotic society.

In her essay *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Lorde mentions how intrinsic is the erotic to human existence:

In the way my body stretches to music and opens into response, hearkening to its deepest rhythms, so every level upon which I sense also opens to the erotically satisfying experience, whether it is dancing, building a bookcase, writing a poem, examining an idea (Lorde 4).

It is through the erotic that one can create art—and much more. The line "but as your body moves/under my hands" (Lorde lines 8-9) is hypnotising. At the literal level, it reads like a parallel between her lover's body, but on the figurative level, it implies the body of a text, the notion that both "bodies" can move under her hands. The erotic ambience set in the opening of the poem

embodies that work begins soon after their bodies meet. This is a clear allusion to how the erotic gives sustenance and strength to Audre's writing process. The lines give the reader the contentment and joy that the relation and action is shared and exchanged by the lover. Nancy Bereano—the editor of Lorde's essay collection *Sister Outsider* (1984)—was right when she exclaimed that 'Lorde's voice is central to the development of contemporary feminist theory. She is at the cutting edge of consciousness.' I agree!

Lorde's treatment of the erotic is her re-evaluation of anger. In response to it, Roxane Gay writes in her introduction to a new collection of Lorde's selected works that 'what is so remarkable about Lorde's writing – [is] how she encourages women to understand weaknesses as strengths.' Lorde helps us see that the erotic is a strength, and defines it as:

creative energy empowered [and] ... those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love, in its deepest meanings.

The erotic is a source of knowledge that helps one to develop their capacity for mirth. It also allows one to share that mirth with others, and 'lessens the threat of their difference'. When humans are in touch with this feeling, Lorde claims, 'we touch our most profoundly creative source [and] we do that which is female and self-affirming in the face of racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society.' The thinker Nikki Young writes that

Lorde's erotic innovation has established itself as a political, social, and academic tool of deconstruction, subversion, and imagination.

As part of the erotic, Lorde emphasizes on the truth that the ways in which embracing people of different class, sex, race, helps us to see and accept people as they are with complexities, without

any prejudice and helps build solidarity. She encourages us not to ignore difference:

It is not our differences which separate women, but our reluctance to recognise those differences and to deal effectively with the distortions which have resulted from the ignoring and misnaming of those differences.

“Hanging Fire” is Lorde’s complete expression of teenage angst: the speaker is a 14-year-old girl who feels unhappy in her own skin, and in love with a boy who isn’t right for her and isn’t sure if she’ll survive the night. A recurring refrain here is the speaker’s mother being in her bedroom with the door closed: this is a teenage girl struggling towards independence, and filled with the neuroticism and anxiety which plagues so many of our lives during those difficult years of adolescence.

Audre is renowned for craftsmanship and emotional expression, and her poems reveal rage and indignation at social injustices. The artist in Audre comes out with powerful thoughts which are melodic, and intense. A woman of unusual valour, dogma and potency of vision, Audre proffered another horizon through the power of her words and her swift and prompt life. She understood that the strength and mastery of poetry lay in words braided into meaning and yoked into truth about who we are and who we are capable of being. She believed in the credo that Poetry matchlessly brings people into close acquaintance with oneself. Lorde adds: Poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play” — does the vital work of excavation:

For each of us as women, there is a dark place within, where hidden and growing our true spirit rises.... These places of possibility within ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through that darkness. Within these deep places, each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling.

To conclude the article truly ‘Lorde’s voice is the focal point to the growth of feminist theory. And her consciousness reveals

that Audre is the pinnacle of the success in the poetic world. Nancy Bereano claim that Audre Lorde was an eloquent voice who spoke in a language that reached multitudes of people. Like her contemporaries, Audre was concerned with leaving a legacy-to envisage a good future and be proactive in moulding a new world. Her writings continue to reverberate because her feelings connected women to a discovery of their self and discovery of other women as reflection of the self. In a review of Audre's essay collection, *A Burst of Light* (1988), the poet Cheryl Clarke wrote that:

Lorde's work is a neighbour I've grown up with, who can always be counted on for honest talk, to rescue me when I've forgotten the key to my own house, to go with me to a tenants or town meeting, a community festival.

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Quest for Self: Wanderings of a Lonely Woman: A Reading of Vikas Sharma's *Ashes & Fire*.

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Abstract

Suvidha, a young woman who is the daughter of a rich man of Moradabad unfortunately loses her husband very early. As she is ambitious, daring and capable of taking risks in life, she stages a Phoenix like rise in fortune from her early misfortune. She fights with the odds working against her 24x7 in order to establish herself as an entrepreneur even against the wishes of her mentor, her benevolent father. She begins her career as a tutor and, with the generous financial support of her father, she goes on to become the owner of a couple of prestigious educational institutions. Her struggling life is full of incidents and accidents which can fairly be termed as immoral and unethical but, as the adage goes that everything is fair in love and war, she takes long strides in her illustrious life without letting anything hamper her forward movement. She takes bold steps to remove human hurdles from her path ignoring possible legal adverse consequences and succeeds in *managing* her misdeeds. Though her road to success has been murky and dotted with murders, bribery,

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sexual exploitation and what not, she achieves success and social prestige in this mundane world. She not only saves herself from a possible ignoble life and establishes herself in the elite society but also secures the future of her children through her daring acts, though criminal and immoral.

Keywords: Ambition, risks, entrepreneur, unethical, sexual exploits, human hurdles, elite society.

The most important thing in a person's life is their identity in the society they live in. They come from different social backgrounds, face hardships and try hard to establish themselves in the society. There is a continuous struggle- an incessant search for the ultimate truth about themselves. But the ultimate goal is to gain recognition in society. This quest is a life force which keeps a person going till their last breath, always aspiring for yet higher status and striving towards this single goal: the targets may be different for different persons but the desired result is the same- recognition/establishment in the society on a higher pedestal achieved by none ever before.

Vikas Sharma's fifth novel, *Ashes & Fire* narrates the eventful life of Suvidha, a 22 year old pretty student. She is the only daughter of a rich landlord, Seth Deenanath of Moradabad. She is pursuing her studies for the degree of M.A. in English Literature (Sharma 06) and is a voracious reader. She is deeply influenced by the teachings of Lord Buddha, especially the advice of the Sage that "only inner life will help you to reach your destination" (06) is her ideal. A young man of her locality, Samyak Garg, aged 24, who is an engineer with the Irrigation Department and is posted at Lucknow, shows interest in her. She, too, seems to be attracted towards him but is cautious in her movements as her father is a strict person. During one encounter with him she suggests to him to visit them and talk to her father for the matrimonial alliance. On mutual agreement between the two families they get married though there is a huge difference between the economic statuses of the two families. The young couple settles comfortably at Lucknow with the regular financial assistance of Seth Deenanath.

In a span of roughly five years the couple is blessed with two sons and a daughter. One remarkable thing during these additions to the family was the continuance of education of Suvidha and she eventually registered herself successfully for the degree of Ph.D. in English. Life on the earth is, as we all know, a roller coaster ride and sometimes hamartia plays its havoc in life. Something like that happens in the life of this happy family also when Samyak decides to get his services transferred to Ghaziabad according to the wishes of his mother little knowing that the city had, of late, become a den of criminals. He hardly settled down in his newly acquired house at Kavi Nagar, a posh colony in the city when an unexpected visitor knocked at the door. Without mincing words, Jaggu, the notorious gangster of the area demanded one lakh of rupees or “be ready to suffer the consequences” (17). The unwanted entry of a criminal in their otherwise peaceful and happy life is they neither expected nor were prepared for. Whereas Samyak is afraid of the coming events, Suvidha decides to meet the danger head-on. She tells her husband, “If there are problems, there are solutions, too-good or bad. Only the future decides the result of our actions.” (18). Jaggu comes again on the third day and when the demanded money is not paid to him, he attacks Samyak with the butt of his pistol. But, in an unexpected way, he and his companion are silenced by Suvidha who was hiding behind the curtains. The other rascals flee from the scene but soon, finding an appropriate opportunity, one of them disguised as a policeman, kills Samyak, bringing a pall of gloom in the happy, married life of Suvidha.

Suvidha, trained in Judo and N.C.C., decides not to be cowed down by the sinister turn of events in her life. She was approximately only twenty-seven and had the responsibility of looking after her father, her mother-in-law and three small children now. Though she got the offer of a job from the department of Samyak and another from one Vijay Engineering College, she, on the advice of her benevolent and large-hearted father, declined to

accept either of them. Meanwhile she appeared for the Viva-voce examination for her Ph. D. degree and successfully defended her thesis. It is at this stage that hamartia plays its role once again. Her neighbour, Vandana Jain, requests her to teach communication skills in English to her younger brother, Vijay Shekhar, a would-be P.C.S. Officer aspiring to become an I.A.S. Officer. It is here that the proverbial Biblical act of disobedience takes place. Suvidha agrees to coach him, though after much persuasion from her friend, against the strict no-no advice of her father, an act which irritated him to a great extent.

The invisible narrator describes the meeting of a dashing young man with a paragon of beauty in words which remind the reader of the famous *Starry Nights* of Shobha De. Shobha De has painted a realistic picture of the sexual mania of the world of glamour consisting of the upper middle class without any inhibition or stigma. The characters of *Starry Nights*, like Suvidha, are economically well-off and socially uninhibited competent professionals doing their jobs with ease in a male dominated world. They have a strong desire to earn money and a respectable place in the higher strata of society and are even ready to compromise with some unbecoming demands of the society. For Suvidha the characters of *Starry Nights* seem to be the role models. The two sex-starved bodies eventually obey the laws of human gravity and lose their identities in the arms of each other, something which the anxious father of the lady had feared. He accidentally catches a glimpse of their love making, subjects his daughter to some uneasy questions about her future and apparently gets rid of the erring Adam but this chance meeting of the two bodies removes all hesitation on the part of Suvidha and opens doors for such clandestine encounters in future as we notice them hereafter.

Suvidha had always been strong-willed, competent, confident, daring and ambitious. Her dreams were big and she knew how to realise them. The Omniscient narrator tells us about her: "Like Ulysses, she wanted to march ahead without fear of the journey

of life. Like Columbus, she wanted to discover new areas of new knowledge. “ (Sharma 195). She always believed “that there was no end to her journey and adventure.” (146). Now she faced the challenges of life and decided to meet them head-on. She was ready to take all possible risks as she had never ever feared anything. In her journey of life the riches of her father helped her initially in establishing her as a promising entrepreneur. Her father bought her a CBSC school and rechristened it Deenanath Senior Secondary School under IB Board. As its Principal she made several innovations and provided excellent facilities to the students. She was ever hungry for success. Her hunger for recognition took her to the path of dreaded unethical activities but she never bothered about the consequences. She had been a daring girl since her college days and now the act of killing two notorious goons had further emboldened her. Her father had given her crores of rupees to which she had added a lot. Unaccounted wealth ignited a sense of philanthropy also in her. She spread her wings further and started doing social work also. As she had joined Sarojini Naidu Kitty Party with the wives of some very rich businessmen of the city, she gladly undertook philanthropic activities such as donating “sixty woollen pullovers and 10 Kg apples” (70) to beggars, promised 20 fans to give “next March” (71), announced a monthly donation of one thousand rupees for “medicine for the crippled” (72) and gave jobs to two children of a beggar woman in her school. The society recognised her contribution towards the underprivileged sections of the society and someone even compared her to “Mother Teresa” (73) for these acts of kindness.

Widening the scope of her entrepreneurship she established Suvidha Management Institute. However, her approach to life was, notwithstanding her philanthropic activities, purely commercial based on the motive of profit. She had no emotional attachment for anybody howsoever important in her life. When she realised that Vijay Shekhar had established a University with someone else and was presumably physically involved with the girl who was a

partner in his University, she totally snapped her ties with him. For her minting money and getting recognition were the only aims of her life for which she could do anything. She criticised the Communist regime saying "... they have no ambitions, no spirit of progress..." (120). Her efforts in the direction of achieving excellence in the academic world bore the desired fruit when she got "National Award for Best Principal" from the Rotary International (89). She was a worldly wise lady. She knew the tricks of always remaining in the news. She bribed the journalists with suit-length distributed freely in lieu of the coverage of news of her institutions. She knew very well "the fact that journalism has become an industry like any other commercial unit" (139) and never considered it unethical to buy the integrity of the correspondents.

Like all successful business persons, she, too, had the dark side of her personality. She was a young widow and possessed fabulous beauty. She was fully aware of her charms. Her sexual exploitation were many. She enjoyed sex at her own will with a number of carefully chosen people, beginning with her student, Vijay Shekhar, two teachers of her school, Ganesh Salil and Shivender, Ayush Darshan, a widower, whom she marries later. In spite of her second marriage she develops sexual relations with Harsh Pal Harsh, her room mate during her visit to the U.S.A. and a member of the GSE and finally, Dr Vinod Grover, a suspended physician who becomes her play mate. It appears that these sexual escapades were made only to satisfy her lust for which she earned the displeasure of not only her father but also the ghost of her husband, Samyak, who called her "... whore, slut as you are" (119) as well as her would-be daughter-in-law, for whom she was a "degraded mother-in-law" (183).

But, nothing succeeds like success. She had shown exemplary courage in removing human hurdles whenever they confronted her. She killed her opponents, be they Jaggu and his unnamed companion or Aslam and Ashraf. She paid hush money to B.L. Rawat for silencing other potential goons without any moral

compunction. She successfully established herself in the elite society of Ghaziabad and managed to get rewards for her acts of omission and commission from the district administration. Her reading of Gautam Buddha in her early life shaped her future. “Let everybody be his own mentor” (05) was her mantra for success, though Lord Buddha never advocated to use unfair means in life. She declared in no uncertain terms: “I wish to establish my own image in society” (11) and the purpose of her life was, as she stated it, “to build a new society where women lead a life of dignity.” (47). There’s no doubt that she succeeded in establishing her identity in the elite society of the city and earned, not only the appreciation of the government and the society at large but also the accolades of her father who declared, “You are my bold son and not a weak daughter crying for help” (195). She was not destined to be a weeping doll. The novel succeeds in turning ashes (the miserable life of a young widow) into fire (a successful entrepreneur and a celebrity). It is a saga of the bravery of a widow amidst odds and the reader is completely engrossed in it. Suvidha is successful in her quest for identity in this overcrowded world.

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Reconnoitering the Feisty Virtuoso in *The White Tiger* of Aravind Adiga

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to delineate and outline reconnoitering the feisty virtuoso in *The White Tiger* of Aravind Adiga. *The White Tiger* is a dark comedy through which the author satirizes modern Indian caste system, social system, political system and economic system. Instead of showing India as a beautiful, mysterious, exotic and colorful land, Adiga has presented the realistic picture of contemporary Indian society with all its flaws and problems. *The White Tiger*, the title of the novel is extraordinarily considerable and symbolic. The white tiger is a rare animal that is said to come only once per generation. Adiga has titled the novel on the protagonist's nickname. Balram was being given this name by an education inspector as he was the smartest boy in the class. Adiga shows how the landlords suck up the blood of poor people to fill their big bellies.

Keywords: Reconnoitering, contemporary issues, quest for exceptionality & endurance, self-reliant and social divide.

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Introduction

The White Tiger is the pinnacle of Adiga's labours as a reporter in India. He traveled India widely including places whose backwardness has shocked his sensibility. So he attempts to attack through this novel on the cheerful and false notion of a new transformed India. It explores and exposes the inequalities between India's aggressively consumerist urban elite and the deprived rural poor, and shows what happens when people from these two classes collide and collude with each other. Adiga furthermore, incredibly and marvelously recites, through his uneducated and underprivileged protagonist Balram Halwai, who came from India's vast rural hinterland.

Adiga's sharply narrated novel *The White Tiger* is strikingly valiant account of contemporary society and in addition it beats the odds with its remarkable influence and its magnanimous revelation of an India. Adiga most dexterously recreates the India of Light and the India of Darkness, nevertheless *The White Tiger* reveals those touch and contradictory spots where the two meet and overlap. Despite the facts Adiga successfully illustrates India having an intense divide between the rich and the poor.

Arvind Adiga's first novel *The White Tiger* (2008) bagged him The Man Booker Prize in 2008. It is a novel about injustice and power and is written in the form of an epistolary novel i.e., it is narrated through a long series of unanswered letters from Balram Halwai (the anti-hero and prototype of underclass) to Wen Jiabao, the Chinese premier, who is scheduled to visit India soon.

The White Tiger is a dark comedy through which the author satirizes modern Indian caste system, social system, political system and economic system. Instead of showing India as a beautiful, mysterious, exotic and colourful land, Adiga has presented the realistic picture of contemporary Indian society with all its flaws and problems.

Adiga has exposed the bleakness of this country and has explored all the negative aspects of India. Through the novel he

has made an attempt to pin point every problem which our post-colonial society is facing after independence. Metaphorically, he compares the pre-independence India with a zoo where everything was in order but after getting independence the animals in the zoo attacked on each other and those having big bellies ate the smaller creatures. He has given animal attributes to human being to present their real character. Adiga has very accurately described the way of living of the lower-class people.

The White Tiger, the title of the novel is extraordinarily considerable and symbolic. The white tiger is a rare animal that is said to come only once per generation. Adiga has titled the novel on the protagonist's nickname. Balram was being given this name by an education inspector as he was the smartest boy in the class. The narrator has chosen Chinese premiere to narrate his story because he thinks that Chinese people love freedom and liberty and that only they can understand the reason of murdering his master. He tells us that "Only three nations have never let themselves be ruled by foreigners: China, Afghanistan and Abyssinia. These are the only three nations I admire." And he considers that the future "lies with the yellow man and the brown man now that our erstwhile master, the white-skinned man, has wasted himself through buggery, mobile phone usage, and drug abuse."

The protagonist cum narrator, Balram Halwai was born into the "darkness" of rural India - into a low caste in the village of Laxmangarh, in Gaya district. His father was a rickshaw-puller who died of tuberculosis in the government hospital due to lack of doctor and necessary medication. Though Balram was a brilliant student but due to poverty he was pulled out of school and has to work in a teashop, breaking coals and wiping tables in Dhanbad. In Dhanbad, in a quest to make his life better, he learns to drive and gets his break as a chauffeur for the son of a rich man from his village, known as "The Stork" as "Some dark fate had tied his lifeline to mine."

Ashok, Stork's son, has recently migrated from America and is disappointed by the corruption, servant harassment, animal killing, caste system, and religious tensions in India. Ashok has to face family's disapproval as he had married a Christian girl in the US which has caused them to lose respect in the caste system as in India; man is recognized only by his cast. Balram's views are fluctuating while talking about the murder. He has tried to imitate Shakespeare when he says that, "The murder has darkened my soul. All the skin-whitening creams sold in the markets of India won't clean my hands again."

He tries to justify the murder with the story of Buddha and calls it an act of class warfare, "I have woken up, and the rest of you are still sleeping, and that is the only difference between us." On the other hand, he says that he wants to open an English language school for the poor children in Bangalore, "Where you won't be allowed to corrupt anyone's head with prayers and stories about God or Gandhi... nothing but the facts of life for these kinds. A school full of White Tigers, unleashed on Bangalore!"

Adiga in this part shows how the landlords suck up the blood of poor people to fill their big bellies. Due to the rise of naxalism these landlords has sent their children to cities but "The Animals stayed and fed on the village, and every thing that grew in it, until there was nothing left for anyone else to feed on." The poor are tortured, exploited and oppressed by the rich all their life as Balram's father says, "My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey."

Balram has compared the lives of the people in darkness with the lives of pigs. He satirizes the voting system and says, "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth." The politicians make big announcements at the time of elections but they never fulfil them after winning the elections.

The air pollution in Delhi is so bad that the people on motorbikes and scooters have to wrap handkerchief around their

faces. “The air is so bad in Delhi that it takes ten years off a men’s life.” Again he says that the mobile phones corrode a man’s brain and cause cancer. The booming Mall culture has contributed to the deteriorating condition of the poor or underclass and has given birth to more slums, beggars and vendors. The crippling traffic jams are also the result of technological development. Practice of prostitution is another dark spot of the shining India. Due to poverty women are forced to adopt this profession.

The culture of the India of light has contributed to turn even an innocent villager into a criminal. Mr. Ashok returned from America an innocent man “but the life in Delhi corrupted him – and once the master of the Honda City becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent?” “In Delhi the roads are good, and the people are bad. The police are totally rotten. All India Radio is usually reliable on these matters. That was a joke sir. Ha!” He says that in India we can’t trust even the media also because every thing can be manipulated in this country. They show only the bright picture of shining India and hide its darker aspects.

Adiga has most earnestly designed *The White Tiger* as a true epitome of contemporary society and in advance reveals India as not shining and, despite its claims of a booming economy; it is still ‘the near-heart of darkness’, which it has been since time-immemorial. It is, on the other hand, momentous to cite that linguistically *The White Tiger* is a magnificent work of art. The portrayal of the drive to the inherited village in Darkness is a clean and fine piece writing: “We drove along a river, and then the tar road came to an end and I took them along a bumpy track, and then through a small marketplace with three more or less identical shops, selling more or less identical items of kerosene, incense, and rice. Everyone stared at us. Some children began running alongside the car. Mr. Ashok waved at them, and tried to get Pinky Madam to do the same”. It may be stated that the first – person narrative of *The White Tiger* does not simply keep Adiga invisible; it constructs a sociological discourse without once ever sounding didactic.

The White Tiger's vigor happens from many things — the intellectual and innovative reworking of otherwise proverbial and well-worn themes, a witty account, stratagem and milieu, a mercilessly cynical attitude, the unconscious stimulation from Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright exclusive of illuminating the apprehension of power. Consequently, Adiga in *The White Tiger* reveals the new India in our de facto father tongue that speaks in a voice that Adiga have accomplished in the course of insightful scrutiny and investigations.

Conclusion

Thus, Adiga narrates a desolate tale of contemporary India in which the flawed protagonist Balram Halwai, makes the dubious drive from the obscurity of rural India to uncertain entrepreneurial accomplishment. Adiga wittily bypasses the superlatives of the economic boom to reveal India that is savage and murky. It strips away the coating of a immaculate country to divulge a society that is stuck in sleaze and discrimination; where the underprivileged are perpetually the victims of a vicious class system. Undeniably, Adiga reveals a brilliant and unflinching vision of modern India presented in the form of seven letters to the visiting Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao by the murderous protagonist before a highly sanitized state visit. Adiga has attacked hardly on the political authorities and has tried to wake up the spirits of the common people. Reform is the only way to correct the maladies in the system. And unless and until the people of our country will not muster courage to fight for their rights, they will not get justice.

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The Poetry of Taslima Nasrin: The Voice of Protest

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Abstract

Taslima Nasrin, the revolutionary poet, gains popularity because she protests on the issues: social, political, feminist or religious where protests should be lodged in the light of progressivism. A radical feminist, she divulges the secrets of woman's psyche which merit attention in a patriarchal set-up. Her lyrics, strikingly modern in their composition, raise the issue of marginalization of woman, loss of freedom of speech of a rebellious poet, in the matters that are unconventional and anti-establishment. What is so special about the writing is that she understands the complexity of human nature and above all the aggressive instinct of man. The lyrics like Acquittance, Border, Aggression depict her voice of protest in the social circle be it family. Her question in the lyric Can't I have a Home Land to Call My Own repeats Rousseau's questions in a different way: Woman is "born free but she is everywhere in chains"!

The aim of this paper is to analyze her popular poems where she discovers 'the skull beneath the skins'. It also highlights the mode of protest: mild or virulent, implicit or explicit.

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Keywords: Controversial, Feminist, Marginalization, Protest, Unconventional

Taslima Nasrin is a controversial writer because she dares to rebel against the existing system or practices: social, cultural, political or religious. Being a Muslim she does not hesitate to protest against some of the Islamic beliefs which she considers harmful for maintenance of world peace. As a woman she protests against domination of male over female in a patriarchal structure. Her poetry is the spontaneous overflow of her ideas or feelings. She is bold and frank. This paper analyzes some of her poetic expressions which embody the voice of protest- protest against prevailing system, beliefs, culture, customs and practices. Her protest is not without justification. The religious fanatics or the advocates of patriarchal structure of society despise her but she asserts her points of view explicitly or implicitly for the transformation of social order. Anti-establishmentarianism is the major theme in her poetry which attracts controversy but merits discussion in context of a better social structure.

Aggression is a thought-provoking lyric that throws light upon the paradoxical nature of human nature. The poem written in colloquial style contains profound truth about Man who claims to be the crown of the creation. The opening stanza reads as follows:

Human nature is such
That if you sit, they'll say, 'No, don't sit.'
If you stand, 'What's the matter? Walk!
And if you walk, 'Shame on you, sit down.!

(Taslima Nasrin Poems, 12)

The poetess analyzes the nature of humans; it is full of contradictions. Ordinary humans at their subconscious level do not like to tolerate the members of their own species. Hence the issue of human unity is a distant dream. Nasrin is disgusted about such nature of human behavior:

I'm wasting my days getting up and sitting down.

If I'm dying right now, they speak up, 'Live.'
 If they see me living, who knows when
 they'll say, 'Shame on you. Die!' (12)

Nasrin disdains aggressive tendency of the humans. Because such a tendency does not enable one to live peacefully. As there are differences of opinion between the humans a lot of time is consumed in reconciliation or resolution. Hence Nasrin the woman poet concludes: she lives secretly but dies openly.

Here the word 'die' acquires metaphorical force. It means defeat or humiliation or meeting failures. Hence, she likes live secretly- a diplomatic mission. The poem ends with her dexterous utterance: In fear, secretly I go on living is Monalisha's smile-beautiful but puzzle some. Throughout this lyric a voice is heard that is the voice of protest against the imperfections of human nature.

Live is a fine lyric on the human predicament in this century. The poet says:

This is twenty first century,
 but society would outcast you if you tell the truth,
 Nations would force you to leave their land,
 The State would put you in prison,
 Torture you,
 Don't tell the truth,
 Instead, lie. (38)

The price of telling the unpleasant truth is expulsion from social circle, humiliation and insult. Such lines contain the biographical truth Nasrin has a habit of calling spade a spade. Hence she incurs the displeasure of vested interest. She finds it difficult to live in one country-be it the country of her birth. But she has guts to survive on this planet earth. It is due to her artistic temperament, poetic sensibilities. She pictures the ironical situation of humanity. She writes:

... simply lie.

If you lie you would no more be in exile. (38)

Lie has two meanings. The one meaning is that one should utter falsehood. The second meaning is that one should relax. Nasrin views that if one is in a relaxed mood or pretends to hide his or her intention she can survive on this planet. Her voice of protest is thunderous when she utters:

“Say stars, planets and satellites, Universe
Gravity or thunderous lies.” (38)

The poetess raises the voice of protest against the design of the universe. The poem concludes with the paradoxical truth, “So never tell the truth, Taslima / Live.” Thus, Nasrin views that the naked truth about humans is that they should not utter truth. They will have to pretend if they intend to live.

Not My City reads like a fine piece of poetry in the domain of protest literature. Nasrin’s attack is virulent on cunning politicians, rapists, dishonest traders and above all persons who maintain double standards. She writes:

This isn’t the kind of city,
Once I called my own.
The city belongs to foxy politicians,
Unscrupulous traders, flesh racketeers, pimps, loompens,
rapists,
But this cannot be my city. (48)

In the above passage Nasrin disowns her belongingness to the city that belongs to unscrupulous people—be they business men or politicians or gangsters engaged in under world activities. The poetess values civilization and culture and she is dead against the people who do not cultivate human values. She states point blank that she cannot call that her city which is peopled by cheats, liars and religious fanatics. She regrets:

In this city, we’re a handful of men and women
Armed with logic, liberal thoughts,

Voice against injustice,
Live in beating hearts. (48)

Nasrin makes it clear that the cause of palpitation of human hearts is due to prevailing unjust social norms and practices. She looks down upon the hypocritical designs of many city dwellers. Her voice of protest is audible against bigotry, irrational attitudes, illogical thoughts and aggressive designs of the males and above all flesh trading.

Nasrin wakes eloquent against the helplessness of woman in a patriarchal structure of the family. In an ironical vein she composes a lyric entitled *Happy Marriage* in which she delineates the psychological torture that the wife experiences in the hands of her husband. She uses simile of a sandbar for depicting the tortured life of a married woman. The lines read as follows:

My life, like a sandbar,
has been taken over by a monster of a man
who wants my body under his control
so that, if he wishes,
he can spit in my face,
slap me on the cheek,
pinch my rear;
so that, if he wishes,
he can rob me of the clothes,
take my naked beauty in his grip;
so that, if he wishes. (33)

Sandbar is a site where sharks congregate. Similarly a beautiful woman like Taslima Nasrin attracts many sensualists who desert her after enjoying her lovely body. The feminist in her protests such dominant attitudes of males in a patrilinear family. In such a family the male acts in accordance with his wills, whims, caprices and above all lust for the sensuous body of woman. She depreciates the sensual urge of man when it is not reciprocated.

She prefers to use monosyllabic words like spit, slap, pinch, rub, grip which present before the readers the phallocentricity. The way of her protest is oblique because the protest is against male's subjugation of female. Her protest is so violent that she uses the word monster in context of man who marries a woman for domination and sensual pleasure. The concluding stanza of this poem has a message for those women who fall in love only to be disappointed at the end without knowing the psychology of the husbands. She writes the unhappy plight of a woman who marries in haste. The final stanza reads as follows:

So that, loving him,
on some moonlit night
I would commit suicide
in a fit of ecstasy. (33)

The passage contains naked truth about the love affair of a woman in a conservative set up. A woman's life is subject to bondage and suffering if she is not loved by her partner. What Nasrin reveals is the feminine psyche of a woman. In the core of her heart she despises sensual attraction, love at first sight and the craving of man for the enjoyment of the body of the woman. In fact a woman does not will to marry a man if the latter does not share her feelings and care for her femininity.

"The Safe House" is a poem published in her anthology *Prisoner's Poems*. This poem was composed when Nasrin was in exile from 22nd November 2007 to 19th March 2008. She was forced to live in an undisclosed location in Delhi. Undoubtedly this poem reflects upon her agony and trepidation. She protests against such confinement but is to make compromise with her lot. The opening stanza of the poem reads as follows:

I'm compelled to live in such a house
Where I'm forbidden to say 'I like it not'
Though I feel aghast to live in here. (65)

Nasrin the speaker here uses language in a very polished way. The mode of protest against confinement is indirect but the very compulsion to live in banishment tortures her a lot. The words like compelled, forbidden and aghast reflect on it. The idea of compulsiveness associated with suffering is reinforced in the second and third stanza. In the second stanza she uses irony. It reads as follows:

Such a safe house I live in
Where I'm destined to live and suffer
But cannot weep.
I must avoid eye contact with others
Lest I should expose my pains inconclusive.
In this house every day at dawn
My longings are slaying and before evening descends
The pallid corpses are buried on its courtyard. (65)

Nasrin raises a silent protest against her banishment in an undisclosed location. Her mental anguish and agony of her soul beggars description. That's why she uses a qualifier inconclusive before a the noun pains. Ironically she uses a modifier safe before house. Stylistically Nasrin's use of words is suggestive. The entire passage is a protest against her exile.

"Women and Poems" is a beautiful lyric on suffering of Nasrin as a rebellious woman cum poet. She daringly discloses the tortures which are psychological inflicted upon woman by the society. As a poet she is to undergo a process of conscious pain in groping for words to depict her feelings. The poem reads as follows:

With as much pain as a human being becomes a woman,
That much pain makes a woman a poet.
A word takes a long year to be made,
a poem an entire life.
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.
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! (75)

This lyric contains three stanzas. In the opening stanza the poet sheds light upon pain a woman poet is to experience. To be a woman in patriarchal structure of the society is to experience pains due to restrictions imposed upon her movement by the society. As a poet she is deliberately taking pains to choose words for her poetry. Thus a woman poet experiences two kinds of pain: compulsive and deliberate. In the middle stanza Nasrin holds when a woman turns poet she becomes a total woman- mature enough to live life worth living. Words in poetry are not used casually or carelessly. They are born out of a suffering heart. Such suffering is taken consciously. In the final stanza the poet clearly states that a poet who uses diction for poetry is the product of a painful endeavour in which the heart of the poet is exercised. The concluding line of the poem pictures that a woman experiences various sorts of pains. The “lanes and alleys” are metaphors suggesting various dimensions of pain.

“Granary” is a short lyric on paradoxical nature of human love. Granary is a metaphor for accumulation be it an object or an emotion. The woman poet addresses her lover as loves granary; she is conscious to increase love and that’s why she creates conditions in which love should expand. But at a point of time her lover gets dissatisfied and departs. The lyric reads as follows:

You are my love’s granary,
I pour out my water-steeped fertility
unstintingly, to stop does not occur to me.

Suddenly I see you've slipped away,
 I search for you, my heart-usurping boy, then
 find you've fled, there was a ladder in back to step down.
 (31)

What lends to the beauty of the poem is the use of suggestive metaphors like granary and ladder and compound expressions like water-steeped fertility and heart-usurping boy. Granary is a store house which is associated with the idea of hoarding. Ladder is a thing to go up and come down. The compound expressions as well as the metaphors are quite apt and suggestive. The poetic expression water-steeped fertility refers to continual progress of love through communication of soft feelings. As contrary to it heart-usurping boy refers to exploitation of feminine sentiments. On the whole the lyric breathes an air of transitoryness of love. This poem is a protest against the exploitation of woman at the hands of her lover- while the beloved longs to keep love glowing, the lover extinguishes it so suddenly that the beloved breaks down.

"Character" is a lyric in which the feminist in Nasrin voices against the attitudes of men towards women in a conservative set up. The poem begins with an address to girl:

You're a girl
 and you'd better not forget
 that when you cross the threshold of your house
 men will look askance at you. (23)

In the opening stanza the poetess cautions the girl that she is always being watch by men. The presence or movement arrests the attention of the opposite sex. The poetess warns the girl:

When you keep on walking down the lane
 men will follow you and whistle. (23)

The girl is treated as a being of sensuous and sensual attraction. Hence when she walks down the lane man follows her and whistles. The succeeding lines of the poem depict the stark reality. The poetess writes:

When you cross the lane and step onto the main road
men will revile you, call you a loose woman.
If you've no character
you'll turn back,
and if you have
you'll keep on going
as you're going now. (23)

When a girl walks on the main road man has a tendency to call her a loose woman. It is due her freedom of movement. Some girls have a tendency to react but many keep on walking without looking back. Thus, Nasrin exposes the subordinate status of women in an orthodox society. She protests against such ways of looking at or looking for or looking down upon women by male counterparts.

To sum up, Nasrin is a feminist to the core. She pleads for the liberty and dignity of women. She is aware of feminine psyche better than her male counterpart. Hence she delineates it with the dexterous use of minimum words. The style she employs is conversational. In fact the use of colloquial idioms in poetry is one of the salient features of the modern poems. Her poetry is dazzlingly modern like many feminists she pleads for liberation of women from the domestic bondage. What is so special about Nasrin the woman poet that she has been banished from the land of her birth for her frankness and boldness in asserting truth. Her agony because of restrictions imposed by the government upon her movement, utterances and contacts is genuine. Such strictures have made her a better poet, a more popular writer because forbidden fruit always tastes sweet. For the younger generation she will remain a model as a flamboyant writer, a sensitive but rebellious poet. Her poetic achievements will be the subject of research because in them a genuine scholar will note her voice of protest against establishment.

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**That's What She Said: A Feminist
Retelling of Indian Mythology in Chitra
Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of
Illusions* and *The Forest of
Enchantments***

*Komal Verma

Abstract

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has established herself as a successful, award-winning author, poet, activist, and teacher. Her novels, *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) and *The Forest of Enchantments*, are reinterpretations of Vyasa's *The Mahabharata* and Valmiki's *The Ramayana*. Both the novels by Divakaruni are feminist retellings of the two great Indian epics. Divakaruni has presented before us the sufferings of the marginalised and muted characters in both novels. In *The Palace of Illusions*, we have Draupadi, who narrates to the world her side of the story. And in *The Forest of Enchantments*, Sita has been provided with a quill and red ink to write her story. Both were women of two completely diversified yugas (ages) and vansham (dynasties). Draupadi and Sita are born into the royal family; they both suffer at the hands of the patriarchy. This paper is an attempt to show how the voices of Divakaruni's Sita and Draupadi still resonate with the voices of contemporary Indian women who are challenging patriarchy in every walk of their lives. It offers a new interpretation of Draupadi's and Sita's voices, which commanded attention in the original epics.

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Keywords : Mythology, Indian Mythology, retellings, The Palace of Illusions, The Forest of Enchantments, Sita, Draupadi, contemporary Indian woman, patriarchy etc.

When we talk about Indian mythology, the two great mythological epics that flash before our eyes are The *Ramayana* and The *Mahabharata*, written by Valmiki and Vyasa, respectively. Both epics are classified as “holy Hindu content.” Both the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, comprise legendary heroes, wars, sacrifice, family values, family politics, betrayal of trust, and romance. Another common thread that can be found in both the epics is that the wars that were fought in them were either for the rescue or revenge of their respective female protagonists in particular. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions* and *The Forest of Enchantments* are the retellings of Ved Vyasa’s *Mahabharata* and Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, respectively. Both the novels are about the discrimination faced by women in patriarchal society, the dominance of males in family and society, their struggles against patriarchy, and Divakaruni’s magical element, i.e., presenting the epics from the perspective of women during the Vedic ages. In both her retellings, she has offered an absolutely new understanding of the voices of Sita and Draupadi .

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has established herself as a successful, award-winning author, poet, activist, and teacher. She is the author of books such as *Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *Oleander Girl* (2012), *Before We Visit the Goddess* (2016), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), and *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019), etc. Divakaruni not only writes about her contemporary life in America and India, but also tries to incorporate magical realism and mythology as a blend of tradition and modernity in her texts. She observed that the plight of women is almost the same in every corner of the world. In India, even in the 21st century, most women are nurtured with the notion that they are supposed to be submissive, dependent, and should work and act as they are told to. Through the retellings, Divakaruni has tried to break the stereotype and has presented a modernised

version of Sita and Draupadi without hampering the original essence of the epics. To a great extent, the original epics were written by a male, and they provided the mythological stories from a male point of view. Even though the wars in both the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were fought for the 'mighty aid' of women, the voices of women in both the epics were lost somewhere in the songs of valour of the male protagonist. This paper tries to explore how two princesses, born at two different ages, face the challenges of patriarchy and set themselves as an example.

There is no doubt that mythology is considered the foundation of almost all cultures and civilisations, and revisiting mythology has opened up new possibilities and interpretations in the world of literature by giving voice and space to suppressed and marginalised characters. The retellings essentially attempt to recreate the standard characters who are marginalised in the original text. It provides the reader with an irreplaceable experience of reading the re-interpretation of the literary text because the vision and thought have been altered without hampering the original plot. Divakaruni has presented a combination of traditional mythology and the modernity of the contemporary world through the retelling of Indian mythology that might be a message for those who are deeply rooted in accepted traditionalism and for those as well who stay uprooted from the principles of their own culture. Divakaruni, via Draupadi and Sita, has tried to bring the past into the present in a different way by showing the story of love, devotion, humiliation, betrayal, revenge, war, and self-determination.

Divakaruni wrote both the novels because she was not satisfied with the portrayal of female characters in the mythology. She states in her author's note of *The Palace of Illusions*,

I was left unsatisfied by the portrayals of women characters. It wasn't as though the epic didn't have powerful, complex women characters that affected the action in major ways...But in some way, they remained shadowy figures, their thoughts and motives mysterious, their emotions portrayed only when they affected the lives

of the male heroes, their roles ultimately subservient to those of their fathers or husbands, brothers or sons. If I ever wrote a book ... I would place the women in the forefront of the action. I would uncover the story that lay invisible between the lines of the men's exploits. (Divakaruni, xiv, xv).

Ten years later, when Divakaruni introduced the world to "her" Sita through *The Forest of Enchantments*, she again penned down in the author's note that may her Sita be able to give us a new definition of the age of blessing: 'May you be like Sita'.

When we interpret texts or anything else [from a feminist perspective], the way to deal with our subjectivity is not to try to avoid it but to be as aware of it as possible, to include it in our interpretation as fully as possible, so that others will be able to take it into account when evaluating our viewpoints. (Tyson, 95)

Divakaruni has presented the predicament of Draupadi and Sita by giving them 'human emotions' and 'human failings' which resonate with the life instances of many contemporary women.

In *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), we see that Draupadi is not a woman who suffers in silence, but rather one who is inquisitive and dares to speak out against wrong doing. As the novel begins, we get an idea that Draupadi is fascinated by her birth story, which she insists her Dhai Ma to narrate quite often. Draupadi has a twin brother, Dhristadyumna, or Dhri. Both of them emerged from the flames of the sacrificial fire. Dhri was welcomed with open arms by his father, King Drupad, ruler of Panchaal. He was born to avenge Drupad's friend-turned-foe, Dhronacharya or Drona. That's why Drupada even named him Dhristadyumna, the destroyer of enemies. On the other hand, Draupadi was 'the Girl Who Wasn't Invited' even though the priests predicted that Draupadi was born to change the course of history, she was never prioritized. She even had a complaint about her name, which shows her progressive thinking. Her brother was named after the prediction that he would kill Drona, the guru of warcrafts for the Princes of the Pandavas and the Kurus.

Draupadi was simply named after her father i.e. the daughter of King Drupad. She believes that she should have an individual identity of her own as she has been destined to bring a remarkable change in history. Divakaruni's Draupadi receives education of the Shastras along with her brother. She questions and retaliates with the tutor when he tries to tell her the only purpose of a kshatriya woman is to support the warriors (men) in her life. All of these instances give us an insight that, during the age of The Mahabharata, girls were mostly not allowed to get an education and the sole purpose of their lives was to serve and obey the men in their lives. It can also be seen that Draupadi was forced to learn the 'sixty-four arts' that noble ladies must possess. She was forced to learn to sing, dance, and sew, but she was better at writing poetry, composing and solving riddles. She would always remark that the prediction of her destiny, which was made at the time of her birth as she emerged from the sacrificial fire, was kept forgotten. On the other hand, her brother, Dhristadyumna was endowed with all the necessary bits and pieces which would help him to fulfill the prophecy and avenge his father. She starts to feel empowered only after she is named 'Panchaali' - 'a name that knew to endure' by the sage Vyasa.

During the time of Swayamvar, Draupadi's mind was framed to marry Arjun, the son of King Pandu. At Swayamvar, where the bride has the liberty to choose her better half, Draupadi is instructed by her brother,

Arjun isn't the only one who can pass the swayamvar test...
He [Karna] plans to come to the swayamvar, along with
Duryodhan. He plans to win you. We must not allow it.

(Divakaruni, 84).

Dhristadyumna puts in the picture to her that she cannot marry the low-born Karna because the honour of the family is more important than any other honour. Here, Divakaruni has tried to show how women were supposed to prioritise their family honour over their own choices. Here, while re-visiting The Mahabharata, the author gives us a hint that Draupadi feels sorry for Karna's

fate. This side of Draupadi has never been mentioned in the original epic. Divakaruni's Panchaali says,

Through the long night, out of love for Dhri, I tried harder than ever before to bar Karna from my mind. But can a sieve block the wind? Fragments of stories floated in my head, women who had saved their husbands by countering their ill luck with their virtue. Perhaps I could do the same for Karna?

(Divakaruni, 88)

In order to save the prestige of the family and the life of her brother, she keeps her feelings for Karna to herself and humiliates him at the time of the swayamvar. Arjuna, who has disguised himself as a Brahmin, wins Draupadi's hand in the swayamvar contest. Draupadi puts the garland on Arjun, the best archer and a mighty warrior. Draupadi's trust was immediately betrayed when he took her to his mother, Kunti. Kunti accidentally suggests that Draupadi should be shared among the five brothers. To Draupadi's surprise, Arjun neither protested his mother's command, nor supported Draupadi. As a result, Draupadi enters polyandry by marrying the five Pandavas.

Through Draupadi, Divakaruni has shown how, at times, girls or women have to sacrifice their happiness, ambition, and desires just to fulfil the aspirations of men in their family or society. In the novel, we do not meet a Draupadi who is weak or submissive. Divakaruni's Draupadi knows how and when to raise her voice. During the game of dice, when Draupadi was gambled as an object by one of her husbands, Yudhishtir, she was well aware of her rights as a woman. She states, "If perchance a man lost himself, he no longer had any jurisdiction over his wife." (The Palace of Illusions, 190) In the court-room full of men, where Draupadi was being disrobed by her husbands' cousin Dussasan and humiliated by Karna and Duryodhan, her husbands sat paralysed and Draupadi was burning in her inner anguish. No man present in that courtroom could protect her honour. Her nobility was saved by her dear friend Krishna, who performed a miracle by sitting far

away from the courtroom of Hastinapur. Draupadi's saree was extended by Krishna when Dussasan was trying to take it off.

As Maya Angelou has penned in her poem Still I rise,
 Out of the huts of history's shame
 I rise
 Up from a past that's rooted in pain
 I rise
 I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
 Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

(Angelou, Lines 29-34)

Divakaruni's Draupadi also rises from the clutches of 'history' and comes forward to tell the world her side of the story. We see that Divakaruni's Draupadi is a contemporary woman who is also a victim of patriarchy. But she is also a headstrong, educated woman who is well aware of the rights of women. She does not let anything make her spirits go down. She crosses the ocean of pain and suffering in the novel as well as in the epic, and still manages to rise and shine. She starts to run a help centre for women of Hastinapur who have been wronged.

In *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019), Divakaruni hands Sita the greatest weapon, i.e., the quill and the red ink. The colour red is symbolic here because, according to the Rasa Theory, the colour red symbolises anger. So, it can be said that Sita is venting out the anger, the pain, and the suffering she has bottled inside herself for years. The author was well aware of the challenge that in order to present Sita as a courageous woman, she should not end up making her readers hate Ram. She makes us au fait with the dilemma of Ram, where he has to choose his public life over his private one only to fulfil the duties assigned to him by his father, King Dashrath. In a very subtle way, Divakaruni showed us how patriarchy compels a man to act as per the gender norms formed by society. Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* is Sita's Ramayan, and she has tried to alter the archetypical image of Sita and re-establish her as a contemporary woman. Divakaruni's Sita

is a well-educated princess who was discovered by the childless King Janak of Mithila. She has been provided the warfare education which was prohibited for the women of that time. Divakaruni has used her Sita as a mouthpiece for all the female characters in the epics who have either remained silent or had their voices suppressed by the male characters throughout the epic. In the novel, Sita does not let anyone take control of her life. She takes her decision all by herself, whatever the outcome may be. She does not regret her choices. When her step-mother-in-law, Kaikey, sends Ram into exile, she voluntarily agrees to accompany him into the forest for fourteen years. Despite having a choice between staying in the kingdom of Ayodhya or returning to Mithila, the princess chose the company of her husband, Ram. She wanted to tell her husband that not all women are weak and helpless like you think. For all you know, I might be of help to you.” (Divakaruni, 139) . Through this, we get an image of Divakaruni’s Sita, who does not consider women as the weaker sex. She wants to break the stereotyped image of women. She does not consider herself a burden, rather thinks that she might be helpful to her husband.

During the time of exile, Ravan, the King of Lanka, abducted Sita and locked her up in his castle. Ravan was one of the suitors at Sita’s swayamvar who failed to lift the sacred bow of Lord Shiva. She knew that Ravana was trying to avenge Ram by using her as an object even then. She kept all her faith and belief in her husband. And Ram did come to Lanka. He defeated and killed Ravan to rescue his wife, Sita.

But just when she is of the mind that she would live a peaceful life after returning to Ayodhya, her life takes a sharp turn. Now the subjects look at their queen as a woman who is impure as she has spent days at ‘another man’s castle’. Ram’s dilemma can also be seen when he is confused between his duty towards his subjects and his responsibilities towards his pregnant wife. Eventually, he chooses his duty as a king and orders his younger brother, Lakshman, to drop Sita off at sage Valmiki’s ashram. Sita is

shattered when she gets to know about Ram's decision. She lashes out her anger, and says,

But he didn't trust me Lakshman. My husband whom I trusted from the very moment my father put my hand in his. My husband whom I believed in through the darkest nights of my despair in Lanka. My husband whom I forgave even after is harsh words on the battlefield in Lanka gave me no choice but to throw myself into fire. My husband to whom the gods themselves proclaimed my Innocence. That husband has now discarded me like an old sandal. He sentenced me to banishment because people were whispering that I might have betrayed him. But he is the real betrayer. Who's going to send first sentence him?" (Divakaruni, 374)

Sita's questions throughout the entire novel resonate with the voices of many contemporary Indian women. Her questions bring a transformation in her character and present her from being a nave, gullible woman to a rebel. One might think that no woman could forgive the man who had betrayed her trust, but Sita did. She not only teaches us how to forgive and love someone but also gives us a new definition to the word 'endure'. Divakaruni's Sita preaches that the word endure does not mean easily giving up or surrendering oneself, but it means to take up the challenges and grow stronger than them. Divakaruni's Sita gives a lesson to the women of the world that one must have the courage to say 'enough' and stand for herself. When time comes, Sita leaves her husband when she is not welcomed whole heartedly in his kingdom.

In an interview Divakaruni has said, I wanted to retell those stories putting a woman right at the centre... Sita and Panchali are both very strong women. But they are strong in their own different ways. (Times of India)

In both novels, we can see that the focus has been shifted from the male protagonists and re-adjusted towards the female characters. The retellings of mythological epics are not the same as the old classical ones. The retelling brings a fresh perspective

to the classic one. It also makes the story acceptable or adaptable to contemporary society. Rewriting a text from the perspective of marginalised, overlooked, and muted characters offers a new way to approach the classic narrative. Divakaruni, in another interview, goes along with the view that the major incidents must not be changed. She elaborates,

Each writer retells in a different way. For me, it is important to use the same incidents... just change the focus. All the major incidents in both my retellings are taken from the epics. I don't want readers to say, 'Oh, she just made up these stories, so they are not really about Draupadi or Sita, just her imagination'. I want readers to really understand the reality of these characters, their strength and intelligence. (Financial Express)

Divakaruni has shown the world that both her Sita and Draupadi are not looking for their knights in shining armour; they are princesses dressed in armour.

Conclusion

Divakaruni's Panchaali and Sitaseek to undermine male power structures, albeit in different ways. Draupadi or Panchaali suggests that the concept of women in general should not be viewed as an object, and asks why it is considered to be exchanged in as a pawn. Even though Sita's devotion towards Ram sets the bar for all loyalty, she declines to support him when she is not given an open and genuine welcome upon her return to Ayodha, leaving him all alone. The author successfully alters the age-old blessing "May you be like Sita" in her novel *The Forest of Enchantments*. In *The Palace of Illusion*, Divakaruni's Draupadi is a woman who is very different from the women of her era. Both Sita and Draupadi are princesses, and through them, Divakaruni has projected that even the women who belonged to the highest status were not spared from the chains of patriarchy. Through the voices of Draupadi and Sita, Divakaruni has altered the archetypical image of both the characters and presented them in a new and fresh perspective. Divakaruni's Draupadi and Sita are no longer

voiceless queens; they are rebels who are courageous enough to not succumb to the chains of patriarchy. They do become victims of patriarchy and suffer a lot in their lives, but they also know how and when to say no to the suffering. Divakaruni's Draupadi and Sita do not represent themselves as 'damsels in distress'. Both the characters are strong and courageous in their own .

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Gender Discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*

***P.K. Singh**

Mahesh Dattani is one of the most prominent playwrights of the contemporary times whose plays are inspired with a mission to communicate profound meaning. The complexities of human relationship and predicament of the modern men find due expression in his dramatic works. Dattani's play *Tara* provides bitter commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards injustice done to a girl child under the cloak of gender dichotomy. In this play, Dattani highlights the complex situation in which conjoined twins are trapped by nature. The manipulation made by the patriarchal society creates the situations more complex and intricate. Tara and Chandan are Siamese twins. Though they are twins, they don't resemble same. Actually they are conjoined by the chest and are having three legs. The parent along with the doctor decides to separate the twins. Due to gender discrimination it is decided to give the third leg to the male child against the medical advice. The gender discrimination and patriarchal thinking account for the death of the innocent girl Tara. At the time of the gruesome decision of giving third leg to the male child Chandan, the doctors opined that chances of survival of the leg were more with Tara and not Chandan. Along with the tragic tale

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and gender discrimination, an unpleasant document of material discrimination against the women folk is also woven in the fabric of the text of the play.

All the plays of Mahesh Dattani are rooted in realism focusing attention on subalterns, which are the neglected groups of society who are ostracized, exploited and suppressed. Being conscious of the positive role that a creative writer specially a playwright can play in social reformation, Dattani chose tabooed themes such as homosexuality, lesbianism, transvestism not merely for shocking the public or as a popularity-gimmick but with a specific purpose of arousing awareness about these significant problems. His portrayal of the plight of the girl-child or woman is a part of this mission only. Literature demonstrates the subversive position of such subalterns sympathetically pondering over the question why they are treated as subordinates when society benefits by their respective contributions in one way or the other and that they are also the creations of the same God as are others. No study on Dattani would be complete without paying attention to his delineation of subalterns and specifically that of the neglected womanhood.

Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* portrays characters that suffer from repressed desires, bondage to unreasonable traditions and very often are victims of cultural construct of gender. In *Tara* Mahesh Dattani delves deep into the mind of such characters laying stress on their fractured psyche especially when they are living in an equally fragmented social set up. The play *Tara* revolves around the physical and later the emotional separation of two conjoined twins, Tara and Chandan. The surgical operation is manipulated by Bharati, the mother and the maternal grandfather as to favour the son, Chandan. The twins had three legs between them with the major supply of blood in the girl's side. However, as tradition required, it was essential for the boy to survive with two legs. Surgically the twins are separated in such a manner that Chandan has two legs while Tara remains with one leg though fate

had its own plans and Chandan's leg was not accepted by his body resulting in amputation. Perhaps it would have suited Tara's body better. Consequently, both Tara and Chandan have one artificial leg each. Later several physical complications arise leading to the early demise of Tara.

The plays of Mahesh Dattani focus actual life problems and sometimes cause controversy. Dattani's plays are about the marginalized sections of our society: minorities, women, gays, and hijras (eunuch). Dattani once said: "The function of the drama, in my opinion, is not merely to reflect the malfunction of the society but to act like freak mirrors in a carnival and to project grotesque images of all that passes for normal in our world. It is ugly, but funny." *Tara* as a play deals with the theme of gender discrimination and social consciousness in modern society. *Tara* is not only the story of the hero of the play, but it is the story of every girl child born in society whether urban or rural. *Tara* is a touchy play which shows the partiality towards the male child in highly educated and an upper middle class Bangalore society. The story of the play is about the twins who are born with three legs and blood supply to the third leg is from the girl child. Father, mother of the twins and the doctor decide to fix the third leg to the male baby's body so as to make male baby complete. The decision is taken to make male child physically fit and complete is not on the basis of medical ground but is influenced by the grandfather, a politician.

In *Tara*, the parental authority is vital as the children comply with the words of their parents. Starting from children's separation, Chandan's education, Tara's food chart is decided by the parents. Male domination is reflected in the role of grandfather who donates all his property and wealth to the male child. In our society, male child is considered as an asset and female child the liability. This is mainly due to certain misconceived religious beliefs and the problem of dowry. This discrimination against the girl child by family members shows attitude and mentality of the society. It is tragic that the mother also supports the act of attaching the third

leg to the boy's body. It is our cultural heritage that boy is always superior to girl. The common method of obtaining higher death rate for girl children than boys is neglecting the girl child during early childhood. Lata Mishra's "Gender Politics in Tara" also talks about the gender discrimination that is meted out to Tara and how Mahesh Dattani uses the medium of the family to discuss the gender role conflicts that dominate in our society. The play Tara provides bitter commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards injustice done to even a girl baby under the cloak of gender dichotomy. The play shows how the devil of gender discrimination kills all other bond of familial relationship and how socio-cultural myths and conventions control and construct the course of the human life. While separation after the three months of the birth of Tara and Chandan, the chances of survival of the third leg were more with Tara. So it is not just a story about gender identity nor it is a story of medical phenomenon. It presents how women are marginalized to the extent of distorting herself. Gender discrimination comes in the way of science. Mrs. Bharati Patel and her politically powerful father without taking Mr. Patel in confidence decided to give the third leg to Chandan. It doesn't mean that Mr. Patel is devoid of fault. He is also a party to gender discrimination.

The death of the daughter Tara is the ultimate result of parental preference of the son over the daughter. Dattani makes the readers think that there may be no female infanticide in the society in the present but it has taken a new form where the son is preferred over the daughter in terms of education and providing opportunities. At the time of the gruesome decision of giving third leg to Chandan, the doctors opined that chances of survival of leg were more with Tara and not Chandan. The doctor was persuaded by giving some acres of land in Bangalore by Bharati's MLA father. It brings forth the very unhappy and absurd situation for a girl, Tara. The play also indicates that the patriarchal social setup also deprives women from gaining economical stability. The leg

with Chandan could survive only for two days, while it could have survived forever with Tara. As Patel explains: "A scan showed that a major part of blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl!" He also appears to be more concerned about the future of Chandan and Tara.

The playwright Mahesh Dattani himself mentions in an interview with Erin B Mee that his plays deal with the invisible issues of the society and Tara is about a life of a girl who "wastes away and dies after coming to know she wasn't really loved the way she thought she was." Dattani establishes that it is not machine, but human motives that matter much. Along with the tragic tale and gender discrimination, an unpleasant document of material discrimination against the woman folk is also woven in the fabric of the text of the play. The play revolves around the theme of favouring the boy and neglecting the girl. Bharati's excessive love for Tara results from her past guilt. It is because of this that she wants to give her own kidney to Tara when there is another donor available. She, allied with her father did great injustice to Tara. So she wants to give part of herself and craves satisfaction out of this. The play Tara shows how technologically enhanced equipments are used to subjugate the woman. This play raises a few questions of discrimination, i. e. religious discrimination, gender discrimination. This play is not only deals with gender issues and the treatment of girl child in a male dominated society, but also it deals with gender biases and prejudices which stifle the lives of several girl-children even amongst educated, urban families. Dattani satirizes human follies and foibles in a very interesting way. In fact not a single character has escaped the stroke of his satire.

After a few years Chandan migrates to London for residing with his uncle Praful adopting the name Dan. Both Tara and Chandan knew the details of the surgery. Tara accepted decisions complacently with an attitude of compromise and surrender to the customs and traditions of society. She knew that she was less

privileged than her brother because she was a girl child. Dan's later life became a burden for he was submerged in thoughts of his dead sister. The brother and sister were close to each other just like two sides of the same coin. In order to overcome his sense of isolation and guilt consciousness Dan decides composing his autobiography in which Tara naturally recurs as an essential character reminding Chandan how life was dull and lonely without her.

Through Roopa, a neighbor, Dattani narrates how Gujaratis would drown a baby girl in milk and then declare that the death was due to choking. Bharati, the mother of the twins is torn between tradition and motherly instincts to nurture the girl child in the best possible way feeling guilty of manipulating the surgery of the twins leading to the death of Tara. Bharati is aware of the emotional needs of her daughter as the following words prove:

"She She must make friends. Chandan is alright—he has his writing, but she ... He is different, he is sort of self-contained, but Tara ... She can be very good company and she has talents. She can be very witty and of course she is intelligent. I have seen to it that she ... more than makes up in some ways for what she doesn't have." (340)

Though Tara was physically handicapped Bharati would look for her assets and would affectionately pamper her saying,

"Tara! My beautiful baby! Tara you are my most beautiful baby! I love you very much." (355)

Consequently, she has a nervous breakdown and dies though as long as she was alive, she would attempt to cover up her guilt by lavishing excessive love and affection on Tara.

Tara is not merely an individual character but emerges as an archetype, an icon of the Indian girl child who is vanquished and subdued in the mill of tradition and modernity. During one of her conversations Bharati expresses her deep concern for the girl child:

"It's all right while she is young. It's all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you—but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! Oh God!" (348-49)

It is not only the mother who is terrified over the plight of her daughter but Tara, the daughter realizes that her position as a girl child is underprivileged. When Dr. Thakkar explains the details of the surgery to separate the twins, Tara instantly comments:

"Oh, what a waste! A waste of money. Why spend all the money to keep me alive? It cannot matter whether I live or die. There are thousands of poor sick people on the roads who could be given care and attention, and I think I know what I will make of myself. I will be a carer of those people. I ... I will spend the rest of my life feeding and clothing those Starving naked millions everyone is talking about. May be I can start an institution that will ... do all that. Or I can join Mother Teresa and sacrifice myself to a great cause. That may give ... purpose to my existence. I can do it. I can do it, can't I? I will be very happy if I could, because that is really what I want." (370)

Thus we see that Dattani's plays have been acclaimed widely for their social realism more so because he brings out the plight of the subaltern woman who is no better than a second grade citizen in her own country. As a playwright he has succeeded in portraying the innermost emotions and feelings of the women characters. Though society suppresses them yet they have a desire to make a mark for themselves.

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Voices to Choices: A Journey Towards Women's Empowerment

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Abstract

Women have similar rights to live, work, and enjoy themselves as a part of God's creation as men have. However, despite age-old conflicts and battles, some sort of gender inequality continues. This paper records these age-old conflicts through the lens of society and media but highlights that this inequality is slowly disappearing giving rise to joy and blissfulness in women too. In some developed countries women are enjoying more independence and so they can make their own choices in life and work. Indian women in India also look forward to living a life of dignity and grace by making their choices and living a life of fulfilment.

Keywords: feminism, freedom, women empowerment, globalization, commodification

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Women are frequently equated to the motherland, water, and the natural world and are portrayed as commodities too. The ideology of feminism is founded on the egalitarianism of women and men in both the social and economic spheres. Every association has both positive and negative aspects, much like feminism. However, it is incorrect to think of feminism as a challenge to the social order. When it is analyzed, it is revealed that women are still, in certain ways, used historically as a product of delight. So, can we refer to this process as one of women's freedom? People who practice true feminism, in my opinion, oppose using women as a product. Before the middle of the 19th century, women were considered physically and mentally weak. Women were not allowed to enter public life or were able to question the way they were treated. Another side of the women was to stick to their private life. Women were made to indulge in household work, cooking and taking care of the family. They were not allowed to think beyond. A passion cannot precede in her life just because she was a woman.

Everything has changed from fashion to feminism but women are still fighting to a greater or lesser degree for their rights. Women were not allowed to get an education or to think on their own. Women were asked to follow the norms which were set for them and follow them blindly. In the middle of the 19th century, women were not allowed to handle money. It was considered that it was not their duty to deal with money matters. Even in the 21st century, women are trampled, and treated as bad omen; honour killing is in practice in many parts of the globe, and with minor justifications, they are agonized and abused while the main perpetrators move freely without any penalty. Further, they are prohibited to use mobile phones; are excluded to decide on their clothing or career; have little freedom in weddings and reproductive issues. It took about twenty-five years for the United Nations to announce the year 2001 as the 'International Year for Women's Empowerment' after announcing the 'Women's Decade' in 1975.

India also declared the year 2001 as the Women's Empowerment Year.

According to Sushama Sahay (1998), "Empowerment is a vigorous, multi-dimensional progression which facilitates women to comprehend their full uniqueness and powers in all fields of life". It involves the devolution of influence and ability in the underprivileged, subjugated and ineffective people who have not been able to partake in choice building and execution of policies and courses of government associations. The empowerment of women is not only indispensable but also essential for the holistic growth of a society and country.

The feminist scholar and activist Srilatha Batliwala (1995) expresses her view of empowerment as "the process of tough existing power relations, and of in advance greater control over the resources of power, may be termed as empowerment." According to Chandra (1997), "Empowerment in its uncomplicated form means the manifestation or reorganization of power that confronts patriarchal ideology and the male domination." Mahatma Gandhi also spoke in the goodwill of women's empowerment and their rights. He speaks out, "According to me, empowerment may mean equal status to woman, opportunity and freedom to develop herself" (Gangrade, 2001, 1).

Different Feminist Groups

Mary Wollstonecraft is seen as an originator of feminism due to her 1792 book titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in which she argues for women's edification. Charles Fourier, a utopian socialist and French philosopher is recognized for having coined the word "feminism" in 1837. This formula of dividing the world into two worlds was against human nature. Accordingly, it led to the emergence of several feminist groups which attempted to provide solutions to women's questions. The feminist groups could be classified into liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, social, existentialist and post-modernist. None of them has developed a comprehensive answer to the feminist question. But

such coordination and understanding among them can make feminists achieve their goals, and help them eradicate women's sufferings effectively. M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011) has declared that the health of women members of SHG has certainly taken a turn for the better. It illustrates that the health of women members converse among themselves about health-associated troubles of other members and their children and makes them responsive to diverse Government provisions specially meant for them. Doepke, M. and Tertilt, M. (2011) raise a pertinent question, 'Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development?' This study suggests that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a sequence of non-cooperative family bargaining models to understand what kind of friction can augment the experiential practical connection.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*

A Room of One's Own written in 1929 is an extensive essay and an essential feminist text. Woolf assumes if someone does not intend to have fine food, he/she won't be able to love or sleep well. In other words "you have to wait to get the better side of life". Woolf thought that the money which was spent on religion could have been sent to the university pedestal where age or motive and reasons would come. Just because of the lesser number of people who want women to get an education sourced universities to become men's schools. On the other hand, if only mothers could have brought affluence there and in the other women's schools, the subject would be science and intelligence. Regrettably, it is not only tough for women to earn money but also women weren't permitted to be the owner of it (the money).

The Feministic movement even though it stood to fight for the equal rights of women in society, didn't achieve its mission but, in its process, deviated to shadow the women's state of dominance instead of providing the benefit of rights and freedom. Christian Delphy argues that women become a victim from a capitalistic point of view. This statement can also be supported by the words

of Virginia Woolf. Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* throws light on the argument about how women are not able to enjoy creative freedom which is the reflection of oppressed economical freedom. Until a century back, men took the social and public roles while women were made to take private and household roles. Women were given the responsibility of maintaining the house and children and were economically dependent on the man or men in their life. The works that the women were allowed to enjoy were that of few of the art forms. This is because the notion that men are stronger than women in both physical and psychological perspectives has been prevailing in the collective consciousness of the respective generation and the opportunities to falsify the idea have never been supported. When the counter-reaction is made from the side of women it wasn't easy for them to be accepted in the men-dominated and men-oriented fields of society until then. Women were denied education in the universities. The women portrayed in the men's literary writings are different from what women could portray of themselves in their writings. The denial of education and the economy made it hard for women to make their role evident in the literary world.

Literary writing is a creative aspect which demands the tranquillity of mind which is not easy for women to attain. Virginia Woolf mentions the need of the women with the word 'Room'. 'Room of one's Own' as a term defines the need for women to have their own space to enjoy ownership over their life by themselves. Enjoying economic independence of their own and being relieved of constant responsibilities in the household and having time for themselves to explore and practice their passion was their major concern. Women were made to believe weak for several decades and to revolt against the oppressed system was not generated at ease. The economic independence of women was crucial so that they weren't allowed to earn money and even if they were able to make some, they were not allowed to hold rights to the money. All the oppression played over the women hindered

their progress in public and private, while this also troubled their ability to create literary writings. The reason for the respective idea is that inner intelligence and spirit should be clear to generate creativity and while women experience unbounded oppression which lessens their creativity. Even Virginia Woolf stresses the need for every women's own space and room.

Women portrayed in Western writings by men all converge on one single point that women are weaker than men, and it was a demanding need to erase and alter the wrongly generalized idea through writing. While the division is made on the gender basis over the natural birth of men and women as a result of which women are dominated and deprived of all rights, which men enjoy without trouble, is sensed against nature to make the biased partition in the society. These ideologies are highlighted by Virginia Woolf who was a great pioneer in imitating the argument for women's rights in the literary world. Globalization has impacted women in India greatly. Whereas it has brought a healthy work culture and courage to work in all kinds of situations, it has raised a new kind of challenge in India and that is the commodification of female bodies for pleasing males' psyche.

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Decolonizing the Green Study

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Abstract

Indian philosophical thoughts have always been underrated and undervalued. The distinctiveness of Indian philosophical tradition is under siege due to epistemic cannibalisation by the West. Many intellectuals denounce the dharmic point of view without adequately understanding it. They are prompt to highlight the abuses of traditional Indian society and culture and harbour the view that India has nothing positive and productive to offer to the world. For them, the salvation of Indian society lies in mimicking Western values and practices. Western paradigms are considered universal and the fierce conspiracy is there to digest and assimilate nonwestern social mores into Western thinking. Indians are often anxious about their unfamiliarity with Western philosophical thoughts and feel hesitant in asserting the uniqueness of their own cultural traditions. In Indian philosophy, there has been a profound respect and reverence for nature. Nevertheless, in spite of its potential to contribute to the development of environmental aesthetics, natural beauty based on Indian traditional thoughts has not been discussed fully. In recent years contestations around European colonial heritage and legacies have been voiced

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around calls “to decolonize” institutions, public spaces, curricula and forms of knowledge. To decolonize has different meanings, but the underlying assumption is that the effects of colonialism on the cultures of the colonised have been profound, negative and enduring. Decolonisation, therefore, is not merely an event that took place when and where formal colonial rule came to an end, but rather a process of challenging the cultural and epistemic legacies of colonialism in broader fields of history, aesthetics and culture. The present paper attempts to study the contributions of Indian philosophical system in Green Study and dismantle the Western Universalist claim.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Green Study, Epistemic cannibalisation, Western Universalism.

The most serious crisis which humanity is facing today is the environmental crisis. Environmental crisis is posing a grievous threat to the very existence of humanity. The pressing need of the hour is to imbibe and inculcate environmental ethics. Ramachandra Guha elaborates Roderick Nash’s view that nature appreciation is an indication of a culture’s maturity. Indian philosophical thoughts have always been underrated and undervalued. The distinctiveness of Indian philosophical tradition is under siege due to epistemic cannibalisation by the West. Many intellectuals denounce the dharmic point of view without adequately understanding it. They are prompt to highlight the abuses of traditional Indian society and culture and harbour the view that India has nothing positive and productive to offer to the world. For them, the salvation of Indian society lies in mimicking Western values and practices. Western paradigms are considered universal and the fierce conspiracy is there to digest and assimilate non-western social mores into Western thinking. Indians are often anxious about their unfamiliarity with Western philosophical thoughts and feel hesitant in asserting the uniqueness of their own cultural traditions. In Indian philosophy, there has been a profound respect and reverence for nature. Nevertheless, in spite of its potential to

contribute to the development of environmental aesthetics, natural beauty based on Indian traditional thoughts has not been discussed fully. That, Indians are somehow, natural environmentalists is also daily contradicted in contemporary India by peasants who mindlessly use pesticides in agriculture. (Guha, 4). Guha believes that the real root of environmental destruction lies not in ancient Indian tradition but in secular processes of modern world, in the bloated appetite of modern society. (5) Guha believes that after attainment of independence in 1947 began an age of ecological innocence, when the zest to industrialise and catch up with the so-called developed world relegated environmental concerns to the background () The ancient and indigenous Indian tradition has unbounded repository of epistemic base with a potential to assuage environmental crisis.

One of the greatest menaces which the entire human civilisation is grappling with today is environmental crisis. Mary Robinson in her book *“Climate Justice: A Man-Made Problem With a Feminist Solution”* writes: “The climate crisis is a crisis of humanity.” In “The Money-Sucking Octopus Economy” (Masanobu Fukuoka’s phrase) people’s value or worth comes to be determined by their possessions. The “Myopic fog” (Wilson’s phrase, 6) of human understanding is the reason for underestimating the gravity of environmental problems. Environmental crisis is posing serious threat to biodiversity. Human beings alone are responsible for increasing environmental crisis. Human species is, in a word, an environmental hazard. (Wilson, 5). Ethical erosion is all-pervasive in our culture. Rachel Carson says “No witchcraft, no enemy action had snuffed out life, the people have done it themselves.” 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 nonliving. The ‘Cartesian’ division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves and treats material objects as multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. Fritjof Capra, a physicist and deep ecologist writes in his book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975) that 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. Rajiv Malhotra in his book *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* says that: ‘The dharmic traditions are steeped in the metaphysics of the non separation of all reality, physical and non-physical, from the divine—what is referred to henceforth as ‘integral unity.’ All dharmic schools believe in the innate oneness of all beings. This approach is alien in Western religions, which...presume intrinsic cleavages: God and humans are separated by sin and utterly removed from one another. The unity is a tentative, tenuous and artificial in Western tradition. The difference between integral and synthetic unity is illustrated by a conversation that took place between Albert Einstein and Rabindranath Tagore on 14th July 1930. Einstein contended that cosmic existence is independent of consciousness, but Tagore argued that man and the universe are mutually dependent: the entire universe is connected with us. Tagore was emphasising the inherent unity of God-Cosmos-Humanity, asserting their inseparability, whereas in Einstein’s worldview, all fundamental building blocks are entities that exist independently of one another. (Malhotra, 103). The unity in most of the dharmic traditions is a unity of consciousness, and matter is a form of consciousness. In Indian tradition, Absolute consciousness is understood to be the source of everything. The Dharmic golden rule is that there is no

ultimate 'other' because each apparent other is ultimately the same as oneself. The Bhagavadgita (2:14-15) advocates equanimity toward all because the Ultimate Reality is manifest as all beings, and all beings are in it and are inseparable from it. It clarifies that the self is alike in all beings. There is conviction that there dwells in each person the same spirit.

Limitations of Scientific Knowledge

Fritjof Capra in his book *Uncommon Wisdom* writes: "Scientific theories can never provide a complete and definitive description of reality. They will always be approximations of the true nature of things. To put it bluntly, scientists do not deal with truth; they deal with limited and approximate description of reality" (69)

Indian philosophy believes that the true nature of Reality could only be known by the intuitive power of the purified mind. It was Heisenberg's intuitive exploration of the atomic world which resulted in the ground breaking discovery of the uncertainty principle. This is known as Atomysticism. Heisenberg's talks with Tagore helped Heisenberg a lot with his work in physics, because they showed him that all these new ideas were not that ground breaking. He realised there was, in fact a whole culture where similar ideas flourished. Heisenberg realised the potential of intuitive knowledge and limits of rational thought. The crucial role of our cultural and spiritual heritage in environmental protection and sustainable development was either ignored or outrightly rejected by international bodies, national governments, policy planners, and even environmentalists. The religious and spiritual perspectives in environmental protection is considered as regressive, primitive and obsolete. Many people express their concern that bringing religion into the environmental movement will threaten objectivity, scientific investigation, professionalism, or democratic and secular values. But none of these need be displaced in order to include the spiritual dimension in environmental protection. The spiritual dimension, if introduced in the process of environmental policy planning, administration, education, and law, could be very

effective in creating self-consciously a moral society which would put conservation and respect for God's creation first, and relegate individualism, materialism, and our modern desire to dominate and exploit nature to a subordinate place.

Science alone cannot solve the environmental issues. Newtonian science with its machine-like universe and a mechano-morphic God gradually brought a division between the universe, the automation, and God, the ruling mechanic. Swami Jitatmananda quotes from Max Planck's book *Where is Science Going?* in his book *Modern Physics and Vedanta*:

"Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because in the last analysis we ourselves are part of nature...Every advance in knowledge brings us face to face with the mystery of our being." (152)

Fritjof Capra remarks in this connection:-

"Wherever the essential nature of things is analysed by the intellect, it will seem absurd or paradoxical" (32, *Uncommon Wisdom*).

Interconnectedness & Interdependence of the Universe

Indra's Net is a metaphor for the profound cosmology and outlook that permeates Hinduism. Indra's Net symbolises the universe as a web of connections and interdependencies among all its members, wherein every member is both a manifestation of the whole and inseparable from the whole. This concept is the foundation for Vedic cosmology and it later went on to become the central principle of Buddhism, and from there spread into mainstream Western discourse across several disciplines. The metaphor of Indra's Net originates from the *Atharva Veda*. This philosophy talks about the interdependence of all the creatures of the universe.

Ilya Prigogine, the Nobel scientist comments in his book *Order out of Chaos*: "This is the heart of the message in my book, matter is not inert. It is alive and active." The similar concept is

discussed by many philosophers and scientists. David Bohm offers the idea of the universe of an “unbroken wholeness.” Brian Josephson, winner of 1973 Nobel Prize in physics states in a 1982 interview: “It raises the possibility that one part of the universe may have knowledge of another part—some kind of contact at a distance under certain conditions. (Jitatmananda, 147). “We are living in a single universe”, says Ilya Prigogine. The old Cartesian or Newtonian paradigm of a dualistic world vision of a ‘schizophrenic culture’ of division between mind and matter, between matter and matter is totally replaced by the new paradigm—the ‘Holistic Paradigm’ as Ken Wilber calls it. This ‘Holistic Paradigm’ is only another name of the monistic or advaitic (non-dualistic) philosophy of Vedanta which India developed three thousand years ago. Some truths on which Vedanta philosophy stands and focuses on the interconnectedness of universe are:

- Everything living and non-living is interpenetrated by Brahman, the all pervading consciousness (Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma—Chandogya Upanishad).
- The finite has infinite as its background. The smallest contains the greatest (Anoranian Mahato mahiyan—Katha Upanishad).
- The universe is full of energy which is derived from One cosmic energy or Prana.
- It is a holistic universe where everything is fundamentally interconnected by a common background—the Brahman. (Mayi Sarvam dam Protam Sutra Maniganaiva—Bhagavad Gita)

Vivekananda spoke of the Vedantic idea of the unity and oneness of all things in his speech on ‘God is Everything’ delivered in London in 1896:

This is another great theme of the Vedanta, this oneness of life, this oneness of everything. We shall see how it demonstrates that all our misery comes through ignorance, and this ignorance is the obsession with manifoldness. The

separation between man and man, between nation and nation, between earth and moon, between moon and sun. Out of this idea of separation comes all misery. But, the Vedanta says, this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent, the limitations imposed by the five instruments of knowledge man is bound with—the five sensory organs. In the heart of things, there is Unity still. And that Unity is God. (Jitatmananda, 149)

Each atom says Vivekananda reflects the whole universe. The biggest is reflected in the smallest—says the Katha Upanishada. Swami Vivekananda says:

One atom is this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, it is becoming everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national or narrow ground. (Quoted in Jitatamanda, 34)

Modern Physics has proved the interconnectedness of the universe. The Theory of Relativity, Quantum Physics and Particle Physics have shown that matter doesn't have purely objective reality, the concept of a separate, individual, isolated piece of matter does not exist. What we see as separate and isolated matter is deeply and intrinsically interconnected with the whole universe. Vivekananda vigorously asserted the Vedantic philosophy of oneness of mind and matter. 'Mind becomes matter and matter in its turn becomes mind, it is simply a question of vibration'. (Qtd. in Jitatamananda, 45)

The discoveries of New Physics stand totally against the scientific materialism of classical physics of Descartes, Laplace and Newton which was based on the strict division of mind and matter.

Environmental Crisis & Religion

Environmental activists across the world have focused on the 'resurgence of religion' to tackle environmental crisis. Religious

environmentalists not only challenge individual behaviour, but also present a critique of broader social, economic and political processes that are considered to be environmentally detrimental. Indian philosophy has always had a unique concept about the spiritual and material life of human beings. These are not two different aspects of life but are manifestations of the same universal reality. In other words, Indian philosophy believes that whatever mundane activity we do it must be guided and backed by ethical and spiritual values. In Indian thought man-nature relationship is of mutual dependence, no separate existence for man apart from nature can be imagined.

Indian Philosophy and Environment

Environmentalism as a phenomenon of the western world is an expression of '*disciplinary chauvinism*' (Guha, 3). Indian Philosophy of environmental protection is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual values. The Assisi Declarations (1986) comprised the first significant attempt by religious traditions to come together to discuss the relationship between their teachings and practices and the environment. Within this debate it is frequently argued that humanity has 'forgotten' the sacredness of nature and that this needs to be rediscovered in order to address the environmental crisis. Thus, religious teachings have been reinterpreted and in order to express concern for the environment, old rituals have been given new content and new rituals have been devised to reinforce the idea that there is a need for a re-evaluation of humanity's relationship to the natural world. (Emma Tomlin, 2). In the seminal 1967 article *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, Lynn White Jr. states: "more science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (1967, 1206). (Emma Tomlin, 3).

White says that man's relationship with environment is dynamic and interactive and human beings must abandon "superior contemptuous" attitudes that makes us "willing to use it (the earth) for our slightest whim". He also talks about the democracy of all creations.

We know that God pervades the whole universe. It is due to this knowledge alone that we never have thought of nature as inanimate and never did we make the mistake of over exploiting it for our own benefit. That is why an average Indian has always had an inclination to worship everything in nature.

According to the Advaitist, the followers of Shankaracharya, the whole universe is the apparent evolution of God. God is the material cause of the universe. The sign, put by the Himachal Pradesh state's Forest Department, proclaimed in Hindi: *Kahte hain Ved Puran, bina vriksh ke nahi kalyan*. (The Hindu sacred books say there's no happiness without trees), (Qtd. in Guha, 2) contains the seeds of an alternative theory of origins of environmentalism. It also shows the historical roots of environmental ethics. Rig Veda is the first literary work in Indian philosophy which talks about the concept of man-nature relationship in the universe. The hymns of Rig Veda consider man and other entities of nature as the manifestation of same higher reality. This belief is intimately linked with Indian philosophical concept of Monism (Advaita). According to Vedic tradition this cosmos is the manifestation of divine blessings of nature and compassion of mother nature. Emma Tomlin in her book *Biodivinity and Biodiversity: The Limits to Religious Environmentalism* says:

In the ancient spiritual traditions, man [*sic*] was looked upon as a part of nature, linked by indissoluble spiritual and psychological bonds with the elements around him. This is very much marked in the Hindu tradition, probably the oldest living religious tradition in the world... [T]he natural environment also received the close attention of the ancient Hindu scriptures. Forests and groves were considered as sacred, and towering trees received special reverence.... The Hindu tradition of reverence for nature and all forms of life, vegetable or animal, represents a powerful tradition which needs to be re-nurtured and re-applied in our contemporary context. (Emma Tomalin, 1)

The Vedic vision of unity is a very profound and holistic ecological vision in which we learn to revere the entire universe as part of higher Reality. In Western religions God is looked upon in anthropomorphic terms, as a gloried human being. It is considered profane to look at the Divine in the form of an animal, plant or other objects of Nature. The sense of the Divine in all of nature is the reason why Indians find sacredness in all places. The Indians have sacred mountains & hills, sacred rivers and lakes, sacred trees and groves. The Indian devotional attitude is not mere primitive and crude idolatry as the Western religions would deem it. The Hindu rituals are designed to harmonise the human with the world of nature and higher cosmic power. The Hindu worship of nature is a great yogic science which enables its practitioners to access and experience all the curative and transformative power of the universe. The Vedic shanti mantras pray for peace in the sky, in the vast ethereal space, all over the earth, in water and in the herbs, trees and creepers.

In 1967 the historian Lynn White Jr. wrote an article in *Science* on the historical roots of the ecological crisis. According to White, what people do to their environment depends on how they see themselves in relation to nature. White asserted that the exploitative view that has generated much of the environmental crisis, particularly in Europe and North America, is a result of the teachings of late mediaeval Latin Christianity, which conceived humankind as superior to the rest of God's creation and everything else as created for human use and enjoyment. He suggested that the only way to address the ecological crisis was to reject the view that nature has no reason to exist except to serve humanity. (Dwivedi, 2)

Verrier Elwin (1902-1964), an outstanding Oxford scholar and the foremost interpreter of adivasi (tribal) culture of India, pioneer of ecological anthropology shows the intimate relationship between forests and the life-world of adivasi. All tribals, he argues, had a profound knowledge of wild plants and animals, some could read

nature and fathom its hidden meaning and message. These tribals loved to consider themselves as children of Dharti Mata, Mother Earth, cared and nurtured by her.

Sacredness of Animals and Birds in Indian Philosophy

The most important aspect of Indian Philosophy pertaining to the treatment of animal life is the staunch belief that the Paramatman was himself incarnated in the form of various species. The Lord says, "This form is the source and indestructible seed of multifarious incarnations within the universe, and from the particle and portion of this form, different living entities, like demigods, animals, human beings and others, are created." (*Srimad-Bhagavata* Book 1, Discourses III: 5).

In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: 'Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both its origin and dissolution' (*Gita* 7.6). And the Lord says again: 'The whole cosmic order is under me. By my will it is manifested again and again and by my will, it is annihilated at the end' (*Gita* 7.6).⁷

Flora in Indian Philosophy

Plants play a key role in Hindu mythology. Plants are seen as sacred and thus worshipped. Trees in India have always been treated like human beings, endowed with a soul; a heart that weeps with grief and laughs with joy and participate in human joys and sorrows. They have feelings and aspirations like ordinary mortals. The Rig Veda regarded plants as having divine powers. Trees were considered as being animate and feeling happiness and sorrow. It is still popularly believed that every tree has a *Vriksha-devata*, or 'tree deity', who is worshipped. Also, in Indian thought the planting of a tree is still a religious duty. The *Vrkcyurveda* says that planting a tree is as beneficial as having ten sons—

*"dasakkpa sama vpi dasa vpi sama hrada dasahrada
samah putro dasaputra sama druma"* (*Vrksayurvedah*-5).

The sacred place which the trees are accorded in Indian philosophy can be seen in these lines from Mahabharata “Even if there is only one tree full of flowers and fruits in a village that place becomes worthy of worship and respect”. (Mahabharata, Adiparva, 138.25).

Pollution and its Control in Indian Philosophy

The Gandhian economist J C Kumarappa strongly reprobated industrial civilisation, “There can be no industrialisation without predation,” he observes, whereas agriculture is and ought to be “the greatest among occupations” in which “man attempts to control nature and his own environment in such a way as to produce the best results.” (Guha, 61). Kumarappa views the substitution of chemical fertilisers with organic manure as an example of the Economy of Permanence and it’s more enduring than the man-made Economy of Transience. In Indian philosophy man-nature relation is pure and sacred. Contaminating nature is considered as an unpardonable sin. Persons engaging in unsocial activities and in acts polluting the environment were cursed: ‘A person, who is engaged in killing creatures, polluting wells, and ponds and tanks, and destroying gardens, certainly goes to hell’ (*Padmapurana, Bhoomikhananda* 96:7-8). Indian world-view considers water as a powerful medium of purification and also as a great source of energy. Sprinkling of pure water purifies a person.

Loss of Respect for Nature

The concept of biodiversity is found in many of the world’s religiocultural traditions but the belief is not getting translated into actions. For instance, people in India worship River Ganga as Ganga Ma, but they indiscriminately pollute her also. The idea of the sacredness of nature (*biodiversity*) is deeply ingrained in Indian philosophy but people behave in an insensitive manner. Growing industrialisation, urbanisation and consumer capitalism have made people ethically barren. People who oppose unchecked industrialisation and urbanisation are dismissed as a bunch of

reactionary Luddites. There is very callous indifference towards environmental issues. There is utter disregard for ecological health. After the attainment of political independence in August 1947 began an age of ecological innocence when the urge to industrialise and mimic the developed world relegated environmental concerns to the fringe. In the ideology of the market, people are defined as poor if they do not participate overwhelmingly in the market economy and do not consume commodities produced for and distributed through the market. People who satisfy their needs through self-provisioning mechanisms are perceived as poor and backward. People are perceived to be poor if they eat satttu, millet or maze, common non-Western staple food that are nutritionally far hygienic and superior to processed foods. Huts constructed with local materials, rather than indicating poverty, represent an ecologically more evolved method of providing shelter than concrete houses in many conditions. Similarly, natural fibres and local dress are for superior in satisfying region-specific needs to machine made nylon clothing, especially in tropical climates.

The West uses its own misguided definition of poverty and backwardness to legitimise non sustainable forms of development which have, in turn, created further conditions for material poverty or misery by diverting essential resources to resource intensive production processes. The concrete context of culture—the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the languages we speak, the faiths we hold- is the source of our human identity. However, economic globalisation has hijacked culture, reducing it to a consumerist monoculture of McDonald's and Coca-Cola on the one hand, and negative identities of hate on the other. Living cultures are rooted in life-the life of the earth, the life of the community. The use of appropriate, humane and eco-friendly technologies should be encouraged. Industrial agriculture destroys ecosystem and farming diversity. It also pushes crops to extinction. The productivity of industrial agriculture is actually negative. More resources are used as inputs than are produced as outputs. Usually productivity is

increased by the implementation of labour displacing machinery and chemicals. However, labour is not the scarce input. Land, water and other natural resources are. If instead of focusing on labour costs, we take energy, natural resources and external inputs into account then industrial agriculture does not have higher productivity than ecological alternatives. The prevailing economy is negative one and the growth is environmentally damaging and devastating. Negative economies and negative politics feed on and fuel negative cultures and identities. It is an essential to dispel the illusion that globalisation is natural and inevitable. Globalisation is political project and it needs a political response. We must not allow the annihilation of human rights by all powerful global corporation. We must stop treating corporations, markets and capital as people for whose protection, all beings can be put at risk. Globalisation is elite and exclusivist, localisation is inclusive and democratic. Localisation is based on the interdependence between nature and culture, humans and other species, local and global, micro and macro. Localisation treats every place as the centre of the world and provides cordial and conducive atmosphere to every entity for growth.

Globalisation's expansion is in contradiction with democratic space needed for citizens to determine and influence the conditions for their health and well-being. If globalisation is the corporate-driven agenda for corporate control, localisation is the countervailing people's agenda for preserving the environment, survival and livelihood. Localisation is indication of living democracy. Living democracy is based on the living diversity of cultures and communities but also on the idea that we all share one common humanity and one commonality with all beings and life forms. The living democracy movement is based on a local-global, micro-macro symbiosis. Industrial agriculture based on high external inputs of chemicals and water creates a push for uniformity and monoculture and leads to the erosion of biodiversity. Our destinies are out of our control. Earth Democracy is a way to handle the

real challenge of bringing our destinies back into self regulation. Earth Democracy is about ecological democracies—the democracy of all life. The democracy of all life is a living democracy; it recognises the intrinsic worth of all species and all people. Because all people and all species are, by their very nature diverse, it recognises diversity not just as something to be tolerated but as something to be celebrated as the essential condition of our existence. And all life, including all human beings have a natural right to share in nature’s wealth, to ensure sustenance—food and water, ecological space and, evolutionary freedom.

Historical Roots of Environmental Crisis

The characteristic of modern civilisation is that the Natural Resources are used to satisfy the bloated appetite of cities. The consumer capitalist society is ruthless in its material ambitions, it does not care for human health and ecological ethics. Roderick Frazier Nash, a professor emeritus of history and environmental studies at the University of California , views nature appreciation as an indication of a culture’s maturity. In that way the modern civilisation seems to be culturally immature. In medieval civilisation—or What Tagore calls the “natural state”—the “village and the town have harmonious interactions. From the one, flow food and health and fellow being. From the other, return gifts of wealth, knowledge and energy.” This balance is ruthlessly shattered by the growth of industrialisation. Now, “greed has struck at the relationship of mutuality between town and village”. (Guha, 98) “In the incipient golden era, the spiritual vision thoughts and actions of mankind were uncontaminated by corruption of any kind. Man and Nature were in perfect harmony, enjoying the abundance and the bliss of the supreme”. (International Journal for Environmental Rehabilitation & Conservation Vol. IV , 50-55, ISSN- 0975-6272 by V. Rajeev). John Ruskin (1819-1900) thought the destruction of nature owed itself to the fact that modern man desecralised nature, viewing it only as a source of raw materials to be exploited, and thus emptying it of the mystery, the wonder and divinity with which premodern man saw nature.

Guha quotes the Native American thinker Vine Deloria, Jr., “the white man must drop his dollar-chasing civilisation and return to a simple, tribal, gamehunting, berry-hunting life if he is to survive. He must quickly adopt not only the contemporary (American) Indian worldview but the ancient Indian worldview to survive.” (100). The philosopher Rudolf Bahro says: “the present way of life of the most industrially advanced nations stands in a global and antagonistic contradiction to the natural conditions of human existence. We are eating up what other nations and future generations need to live on”. (Guha, 295)

Further

“the Book of Genesis says that Man shall dominate Nature; Christians have taken this to heart and been uniquely irresponsible in their use of nature and natural resources. Or to simplify further: Christianity is principally responsible for the environmental crisis.” (Guha, 4). This seems the apparent denunciation of Christianity. He did not suggest that Christianity has been somewhat intrinsically “anti-ecological”. In his new technologies of production and communication empowered European man to think more in command of his surroundings.

Tragedy of the Commons

The poor are the worst victims of climate crisis. The American ecologist Garrett James Hardin (1915-2003) argues that the tragedy of the commons is a situation in which individual users, who have open access to a resource unhampered by shared social structures or formal rules that govern access and use, act independently according to their own self-interest and, contrary to the common good of all users, cause depletion of the resource through their uncoordinated action. In 1968, ecologist Garrett Hardin explored this social dilemma in his article “The Tragedy of the Commons”, published in the journal *Science*. The essay derived its title from the pamphlet by Lloyd, which he cites, on the over-grazing of common land.

“Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons” —Garrett Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garrett_Hardin)

To conclude, environmental crisis is posing a serious threat to entire ecosystem. It must be tackled with utmost urgency to prevent the extinction of life on this planet. Bill Gates in his book *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and The Breakthrough We Need* says that we have to use all the tools at our disposal including government policies, current technology, new inventions to prevent climate catastrophe. Bill Gates doesn't include the religious and spiritual solutions to environmental crisis. We need to rethink and revisit the Indian philosophical doctrines to get the holistic solution to the climate catastrophe. Patrick Geddes, a Scottish biologist & sociologist, made some methodological contributions to the art of town planning. There should be change from a mechanocentric view of nature to biocentric one. Environmentalists are not concerned with Utopia, no place, but with Eutopia, the best possible place possible under the circumstances. Ramachandra Guha in his book *How Much a Person Should Consume?* quotes Radhakamal Mukherjee “ecological adjustment will be raised from an instinctive to an ethical plane.” (Guha, 59). The following lines from the poem published by Rainer Maria Rilke in 1901 do signal a ray of hope:—

Everything will again be great and mighty,

The land simple and the water bountiful,

The trees gigantic and the walls very small

And in the valleys strong and multiformed,

A nation of shepherds and peasants farmers,

The natural calamities like drought, floods, lightning and earthquake were taken as violent forms of anger manifested by

the gods and goddesses (Shastri, 2005, 2). *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* (All the creatures of earth are one family), *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* (non-violence is the best form of duty) and *vriksho rakshati rakshitah* (save trees, the trees will save you) are some of the preachings that demonstrate the ancient values towards environment. The Vedic texts have also condemned and prohibited the cutting of trees, polluting water, air and land as acts of impurity and dreadful sins. The privatisation of common resources in inequitable manner by the British led to the non-recognition of rights of communities over these resources and increasing restrictions over their use. The consequence of legalised and *de facto* privatisation of CPRs was to turn the non-cash economy into the market economy by affixing a price for most primary resources, which were earlier free. The introduction of the concept of private or individual ownership over resources by the British continued to be 'promoted' even after the independence. Community control of common resources was well depicted by none other than Englishman Dr. Francis Buchanan in 1801. While studying the condition of forests Buchanan noted that: "The forest are the property of the Gods of villages in which they are situated, and the trees ought not be cut without having obtained leave from Gauda, or the headman of the village, whose office is hereditary, and is also the priest (Pujaris) to the temple of the village God. The idol receives nothing for granting this permission, but the neglect of the ceremony of asking his leave brings his vengeance on the guilty person." (Vandana Shiva - Reclaiming the Commons Biodiversity, Traditional Knowledge, and the Rights of Mother Earth (2020, Synergetic Press) - libgen.li.pdf, 269)

In contrast to the western formal legal system where property rights belong to the individual only, there are multiple examples in which societies retained the community control over their resources. In fact, throughout history, societies have been protecting the commons which have remained the domain of the community only. All members of the community have equal access to and

responsibility for the commons, like pastures, forests, water resources, seeds, and biodiversity which provide the conditions of life and have been managed as the CPRs of communities. Community control is still a living tradition in some of the tribal societies of India. Due to the imposition of incongruous laws such as Land Acquisition Act(s) and Forest Act(s), and the complex administrative system which disregarded their rights over the commons, the local people and members of traditional villages have been struggling since the British Raj against the criminalisation of the whole community. The tribal people of Santhal Parganas protected their community rights over village tanks even at the risk of their lives. The Kevats of Ganga rejected the rights of Zamindars over water and fought to establish their own rights over water resources. The people of Kolhan stuck to their traditional system of self-management and did not surrender their rights in favour of formal institutions established by the state. The Rai Sabha of Adilabad managed all affairs of the village community on their own. The people of Bastar and Gardchiroli claimed primacy of community in the management of social matters, forests, and other resources. They took the resolve of “our government in our village” (*mawa mate mawa sarkar*). The deep-rooted aspirations of the people for self-government were finally given formal recognition by the parliament of India through a legislation accepting the communities as the real sovereign and at last honoring the verdict, “We, the People of India,” of our Democratic Constitution. This legislation not only treated the communities as the pivot of the system of self-governance in the scheduled areas, but also recognised them as a competent authority in all matters concerning community.

India is a civilisation whose knowledge, economies, and democracy are based on diversity. India possesses a unique wealth of biological diversity— from the ecosystem level to the species and genetic levels—which have been preserved, protected, and evolved by our indigenous peoples and traditional cultures over

thousands of years. It is the biodiversity of our spices, our cotton, and our indigo that was the source of India's wealth in pre-colonial times and was the reason for colonisation. Today there is a new attempt to colonise our biodiversity—our seeds and medicinal plants through biopiracy and patenting.

Impacts of globalisation have eroded the biodiversity and knowledge sovereignty of local communities, pushing them into deep poverty and unemployment.

In Indian philosophy, we think in terms of *so-hum*: “you are, therefore I am.” Fundamentalisms, however, function on the belief “If you are, I am not.” or “My existence requires your annihilation.” Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* is based on this paradigm of mutual exclusion, hence mutual annihilation. “For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential.” (Earth Democracy, 140). According to an ancient Indian text the Isho Upanishad:

The universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant for the benefits of all creation. Each individual life must, therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not any one species encroach upon other rights. (Vandana Shiva, Earth Democracy, 116).

Whenever we engage in consumption or production patterns which take more than we need, we are engaging in violence. Non-sustainable consumption and non sustainable production constitute a violent economic order. One thought that has had a immense impact on Indian thought even in the current age is that of nonviolence/ non-injury (*ahinsa*). This thought comes to us from the traditions of SC., *khyas*-Yoga and Jainism. Many scholars appreciate the overarching moral considerability of *ahimsa* and also acknowledge other forms of empathetic beliefs in later movements of Hinduism such as *Bhakti* (devotional) traditions.

The categories and terms used to describe the universe and its components and experience of the world in Indian thought are

distinct from Western philosophical conceptualisations of nature as “non-human”. There is a loka-centric view of the universe in Indian tradition. Another important idea that is prevalent in Indian philosophical thought has to do with the whole creation as being the embodied form of god. This creates a common metaphysical grounding for nature reverence. According to Mumme (2000), the Sr+-VaicG,,ava tradition describes the whole creation as emanation of the divine and the body of god. Though this seems somewhat similar to the idea of sacred nature, it is conceptually a metaphysical interpretation based on classical philosophical traditions and not based on just narratives and oral cosmology. (Baindur, 76)

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Social Identity and Sachchidananda Sinha: A Study of His Memoir on Formation of Bihar

***Stuti Prasad**

Abstract

The formation of Bihar, when India was under British rule, is an instance of how the exigencies of group and social identities operate. The essay “Introduction : Bihar – Then and Now : Some Recollections (1893- 1943)”, which is the first chapter of the collection of biographical sketches by Dr Sachchidananda Sinha with the title *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries*. (1944), is a record of how Bihar, currently a separate Indian state, was separated from Bengal, of which it was a part till 1912. This document is also a very interesting example of the combination of a biography, a memoir and history. This paper discusses how the text “Bihar – Then and Now : Some Recollections (1893-1943)” is not only a very important document that records the formation of Bihar, a province / state of India, but also reveals how aspects of social identity become crucial to and form the basis of many landmark historical events.

Keywords: Social identity, Bihar, *Biharee*, memoir

Introduction

The formation of the province of Bihar when India was under British rule is an instance of how the exigencies of group and social

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identities operate. The essay “Bihar – Then and Now : Some Recollections (1893- 1943)” is the first chapter of the collection of biographical sketches by Dr Sachchidananda Sinha with the title *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries* (1944). It is a record of how Bihar, an Indian province/ state was separated from Bengal in 1912. This document is a very interesting example of a combination of a biography, a memoir and history. In the ‘Preface’ of this book Dr Sinha states that ‘this book is a record of the life-work of only those eminent Beharees*, whom it has been my privilege to have known more or less intimately, in some sphere or other of public activities.’ (Preface) . If we accept the definition of memoirs, as Abrams states, that they are autobiographical writings in which ‘the emphasis is not on the author’s developing self but on the people and events that the author has known or witnessed’, then from what Dr Sachchidananda Sinha has presented, his work has very strong elements of a memoir. If, according to the definition, the writers of memoirs are usually persons who have played roles in or have been close observers of historical events and whose main purpose is to describe or interpret the events, then we find that this essay is an excellent example of a memoir.

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha was the Acting Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, which was established to draft the constitution of India. He was an eminent lawyer and a scholar; he also functioned as the Vice Chancellor of Patna University. Though in the ‘Preface’ Dr Sinha has stated that he has attempted to write the biographical sketches of prominent Biharis he was acquainted with, what is significant is that the introductory essay of this collection “Bihar – Then and Now : Some Recollections (1893- 1943)” is not a biographical sketch of any personality, but his memoir of how Bihar was formed or separated from Bengal. This essay provides very illuminating details related to formation of Bihar. It is also an excellent example of how group identity and social identity are constituted and how they operate.

Judith A. Howard in her work “Social Psychology of Identities” has made a few very significant observations regarding social identity which are very relevant to this study. These observations form the basis of analysis in this research paper. The first point that Howard makes is:

‘Social identity theory focuses on the extent to which individuals identify themselves in terms of group memberships (Tajfel & Turner 1986). The central tenet of social identity theory is that individuals define their identities along two dimensions: social, defined by membership in various social groups; and personal, the idiosyncratic attributes that distinguish an individual from others..... Social identities provide status and enhance (or not) self-esteem. Because people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively, they tend to evaluate positively those groups to which they belong....’ (368-369)

Judith Howard also mentions another aspect of social identity related to group identities that lead to conflict. She says:

People tend ‘to discriminate against groups they perceive to pose a threat to their social identity.... The more positive, and more personally important, aspects of the self are likely to be bases on which a person locates her- or himself in terms of collective categories, demonstrating the relationship between categorization and evaluation. This points toward more successful attainment of a positive social identity for those in dominant social groups. This process is a challenge for members of stigmatized, negatively valued groups, who may attempt to dissociate themselves, to evaluate the distinguishing dimensions of in-groups as less negative, to rate their in-group as more favourable on other dimensions, or to compete directly with the out-group to produce changes in the status of the groups.’ (368-369).

Judith Howard has referred to studies on the connection between language and identity formation, when she states:

‘The interactionist literature on identity articulates the construction, negotiation and communication of identity

through language, both directly in interaction, and discursively through various forms of media.... At the most basic level, the point is simply that people actively produce identity through their talk.' (371-372)

The last point being used from Howard relevant to this study are expressed by the following two observations made by her :

'The influence of socio-political forces is central to national and ethnic identity struggles' and 'Identity struggles may also generate explicit social movements. One influential theory of social movements hypothesizes a collective identity that motivates group action (Taylor & Whittier 1992). This identity requires a perception of membership in a bonded group, consciousness about that group's ideologies, and direct opposition to a dominant order.' (384)

The defining points of these observations can be enumerated as given below:

- Social identity of individuals is defined by their membership of different social groups.
- Social identity provides status and enhances (or not) self-esteem. Because people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively, they tend to evaluate positively those groups to which they belong.
- The members of the dominant social groups develop a positive social identity, which is a challenge for members of stigmatized, negatively valued groups, who may attempt to dissociate themselves from the dominant group, to evaluate their group as less negative and as more favourable, or may try to compete directly with the dominant to produce changes in the status of the groups.
- Collective identity may lead to group action against the dominant group.
- A powerful means through which construction, negotiation and communication of identity is achieved is language, both directly in interaction, and discursively through various forms of media.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to discuss how the essay “Bihar—Then and Now : Some Recollections (1893-1943)”, is a very important document, a memoir, that records the formation of a province / state of India, and to reveal how aspects of social identity become crucial in forming the basis of many landmark historical events.

The Introduction of *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries* is an essay with the title ‘Bihar-Then and Now: Some Recollections (1893-1943)’. This chapter is a historical record and a first person account of the following situations –the socio-political scene of Bihar before its separation in 1912 from the province of Bengal, the germination of the idea of forming a separate Bihar province in 1893, the long struggle to achieve this status, and the condition of Bihar after achieving an independent provincial status. A short summary of this essay will illustrate what a historically valuable record this work is regarding the birth of a separate Bihar.

We are told that there was no Bihari political leader in 1890s who had the stature of Mr Guru Prasad Sen, a ‘masterful political leader’, belonging to the Bengalee community of Bihar, strongly opposed to ‘the establishment of Bihar into a separate provincial administration’. (iv) The only centre of public activity was Patna where the ‘atmosphere was damp and chilly’ (vii) and outside Patna ‘it was a case of a lower deep in the lowest deep’. (vii)

Sinha mentions a few influential Bihareemen of Bihar of that time; some of these prominent men were Mr Bisheshwar Singh (who later founded B N College along with his brother Saligram Singh), Rai Bahadur Gajadhar Prasad, Mahesh Narayan (the great ‘Biharee journalist’), Rai Bahadur Krishna Sahay, and Mr Sharfuddin (who later became a judge of Calcutta and Patna High Courts). *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries* includes biographical sketches of Guru Prasad Sen, Biseshwar and Saligram Singh and Mahesh Narayan in separate chapters.

The minute details of the public life of Bihar have been recounted by Sinha. The Biharee politicians were helpless since they did not have any journal of their own; the single journal in English *the Behar Herald* was under the dominance of Guru Prasad Sen, who was strongly opposed to formation of the separate province of Bihar. Since they had no journal to communicate their viewpoint, the opinions of Biharee politicians had no public outlet or expression; and were not heard at all by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal whose visits to Bihar were rare. In January 1894 a weekly paper *Behar Times* was started, later rechristened as *Beharee*. This journal started by Biharees naturally had a marked pro-Biharee policy and played a crucial role in expressing support for the formation of a separate Bihar.

The essay 'Bihar-Then and Now: Some Recollections (1893-1943)' records the historic journalistic war between *Behar Times* and the *Pioneer* on one side and the Calcutta papers on the other side on the question of forming a separate Bihar. We are given information about how the struggle continued and how the partition of Bengal brought Sir Andrew Fraser as the Lieutenant Governor of "new Bengal", who we are told 'acquired for his residence the Chhaju Bagh House' in Patna in 1906. (xxii) Fraser was the first British administrator to have paid special attention to Bihar. Immediately after this Mr Sharfuddin became the first Biharee lawyer to become the judge of Calcutta High Court in 1907, and very soon out of four seats assigned to representatives of 'new Bengal' in Legislative Council of Bengal, two were captured by Biharees. Dr Sachchidananda Sinha recounts his role in persuading Mr Ali Imam to accept the Law Membership of Government of India in 1910, which he did only because one suggestion appealed to him - that he might then be in the position to bring about the separation of Bihar. Sinha provides details of his own meeting with the Viceroy Lord Minto regarding the already mentioned law membership and also the inside story of how he suggested the use of the term 'Lieutenant-Governor in Council' in all notes made

by Mr Ali Imam on the issue of separating Bihar, to which the latter consented. This term was finally used in the royal declaration of the formation of Bihar and Orissa; and it meant that Bihar now had a Lieutenant-Governor with an Executive Council which the provinces of Oudh, Agra and Punjab did not have. Sinha states, 'Such is the rough outline of the history of the movement which resulted in the establishment of a self-contained Bihar, endowed with an Executive Council – which was for years the envy of Agra and Oudh, and the Punjab – and also a Legislative Council with an elected non-official majority, which did not exist in any other province, except Bengal.' (xxxiii-xxxiv)

This short summary illustrates many features of the formation and operation of group and social identity provided by Judith Howard. The statement regarding how social identities provide status and enhance self-esteem, how people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively and how they tend to evaluate positively those groups to which they belong can be discerned in the following statement of Dr Sachchidananda Sinha in which he extols the achievements of many contemporary Biharees and their contribution to society:

Since the constitution of Bihar as a separate administration, public life had made – comparatively speaking – considerable advance, in testimony whereof it is sufficient to recall the success of the sessions of the Indian National Congress held at Patna in 1912, and at Gaya in 1922. Mr Ali Imam, as the Law Member of the Government of India, and some others in the Provincial Government, and Mr Justice Hasan Imam, Mr Justice Jwala Prasad and Mr Justice Kulwant Sahay ...had amply demonstrated the administrative capacity and the judicial acumen, of the Beharees, respectively, while the late Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque and Srijut Rajendra Prasad – to mention no others – have shown the depth and intensity of self-sacrifice which the best type of Beharees are capable for what they believe called for in public interest (xxxiv-xxxv).

The long struggle described by Dr Sachchidananda Sinha to attain a separate statehood for Bihar brings into focus issues related to greater success in attainment of a positive social identity for those in dominant social groups (in this case the dominant Bengalee community), the manner in which this becomes a challenge for members of stigmatized, negatively valued groups who may attempt to dissociate themselves, to evaluate the distinguishing dimensions of in-groups as less negative, to rate their in-group as more favourable, or to compete directly with the out-group to produce changes in the status of the groups (in this case the Biharees).

Daphna Oyserman Kristen Elmore George Smith in “Self, Self-Concept, and Identity” have stated:

Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future-the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. Identities are orienting, they provide a meaning-making lens and focus one’s attention on some but not other features of the immediate context.

The issue of how orienting the state of subordination or marginalization is for groups becomes clear when we read what Dr Sinha states in the opening chapter “Bihar – Then and Now: Some Recollections. (1843-1943)”:

To begin with, there was no Bihar at all, as both popularly and officially, the Lower provinces (of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) were known until the 31st March 1912- as “Bengal” only. And as official imprimatur even in matters of spelling—witness the official “Bihar” now in use—still counts for much in our public life, it is not surprising that, except to the Biharees themselves, the very name of Bihar was almost unknown. (i-ii)

It was while studying in Britain that Dr Sinha recognized that Bihar was a terra incognita not only to the Britishers and the Anglo Indians but also to most of the Indians there. He states:

It would be difficult for me to convey to the Beharees of today the sense of shame and humiliation which I, and some other equally sensitive Biharee friends, felt while prosecuting our studies in Britain, on realizing that we were a people without any individuality, without any province to claim as ours; in fact, without any local habitation with a name. (ii)

After his return to his India in 1893, when he saw a Biharee constable wearing the badge of “Bengal Police”, he decided then and there to try his best ‘to secure for Bihar a distinct and honourable status as an administrative unit, with an individuality on the same footing as that of the more important provinces in the country.’ (iii) The ‘individuality’ he is mentioning is the Biharee identity which he wants to secure and get recognized.

The struggle for establishing and securing Biharee identity is a major example of national and ethnic identity struggle leading to a social movement. This perception of identity required a perception of membership in a bonded group; in this case the bonded group was the ‘Biharee’ social group. This also included a consciousness about the group’s ideologies, and direct opposition to a dominant order constituted by the subordinate administrative status of Bihar to Bengal which was held by Bihar before 1912. Dr Sachchidananda Sinha states: ‘How to materialize the dream of my life was then the task before me, and the setting about of a plan of campaign was no easy matter’. (iii) Absence of a single journal in English, owned or even edited, by a Biharee was strongly felt. The journal *Behar Herald* started in 1874 was under the control of Mr Guru Prasad Sen, a member of the Bengalee community based in Bihar. He was ‘bitterly hostile’ to the idea of separation of Bihar from Bengal. Under the influence of Guru Prasad Sen other members of Bihar based Bengalee community and the entire Calcutta Press was strongly opposed to the idea of separation of Bihar. Dr Sachchidananda Sinha states:

Such, in brief, was the situation facing me at the time when I started my public life, in 1893 – an active, organized and vigilant opposition from the most advanced community in the province, with a long-established organ of their own in the *Behar Herald*, and a masterful political leader in Mr. Guru Prasad Sen. (v)

The establishment of the *Behar Times* in 1894 is an outstanding example of what Howard has specified as the close connection between identity and language, and how media articulates the construction, negotiation and communication of identity discursively through its various organs. Dr Sinha has underscored the enormous strength the paper *Behar Times* provided to the cause of separation of Bihar from Bengal. Earlier, we are told : ‘Without an organ of their own, the Biharee politicians were in a helpless plight, as their opinion did neither gain publicity, nor carry any weight with the “Local Government”, which term then meant only one officer, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa...’ (vii) After the paper was started Dr Sachchidananda Sinha records ‘With the date of its birth may be said to have begun the period of renaissance in Bihar.’ (xi) He further elaborates what crucial role it played in ‘negotiation and construction’ of Biharee identity in the following words: ‘By the end of the first year, the paper was fairly-well established, and had come to be recognized as the accredited exponent of Biharee public opinion.’ (xii)

The struggle for an independent Bihar was long drawn and involved many petitions, reviews, committees etc before Bihar was declared a separate province. Dr Sachchidananda Sinha played vital role in many of these endeavours. After his mission was complete, in his memoir, he has underlined the Biharee identity in glowing terms: ‘A people with such great and glorious traditions—historical and spiritual – of which they can justly be proud, now that they have achieved a distinct individuality in the country, will surly rise, in the fullness of time, to the occasion.’ (xxxvii)

The other chapters of *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries*^d are biographical sketches of the illustrious Biharees who were personal acquaintances of Dr Sacchidananda Sinha and have distinguished themselves in different fields and contributed significantly to the province and also to the nation. This can be taken as the site to celebrate the social and group identity of Bihar.

The memoir cum biographical sketches recorded in *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries* is a historical document which sets down and exemplifies the various aspects related to struggle for social and group identity.

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Psyche-epipsyche Strategy in the Major Poems of P.B. Shelley: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

P.B. Shelley, indeed, seeks Truth in poetry, but it is a poetic truth which he pursues, by means of the creative imagination which is embodied in poetic language. His poetry strives continually to express by images an absolute truth or beauty beyond the scope of imagery. The present paper seeks to study the use of the psyche-epipsyche strategy as it operates in the major poems of P.B. Shelley. The poems which have been discussed in this paper include *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Epipsychidion*, *Adonais* and *The Triumph of Life*.

The genesis of this assumption of the 'psyche-epipsyche strategy' can be traced back to Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. According to *Phaedrus*, it is 'the emulous desire for what is fine' in the absence of which neither the statesman nor the individual can do any great and noble work. In the same way, the central idea of the *Symposium* is that the soul craves for union with the Divine and has to pass through various stages before such union is achieved. This course can be seen as from the beauty of form and body, one rises to the beauty of mind and spirit, and so the Beauty of God himself.

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To put the matter in Shelley an terms, the mind (psyche) imaginatively creates and envisions, what it does not have (epipsyche) and then seeks to possess epipsyche to move towards it as a goal. Therefore, the psyche-epipsyche strategy, in a nutshell, is the evolution of the mind of an ideal pattern towards which it then aspires.

Keywords : Psyche-epipsyche strategy, emulous desire, Shelley an, envision, nutshell, evolution.

Like Plato, Shelley believed that the world is perceived by the senses inan imperfect shadow of a higher world; and the things which we pursue here in life- like Wealth, Pleasure, Fame or Power- are phantoms. The phenomena of this world are transitory and subject to change, the one thing that remains is the Supreme Reality. The life on earth is a painted veil which obscures and hides the light of eternity.

It can be explained as whether or not the mind is disciplined it wishes to possess that which it does not have. When the mind is reined in by discipline, its motivating or driving force, which is the eros of the Symposium, is directed towards that of what is fine: the good and the beautiful, or rather the best and the most beautiful.

Although we do not find this epipsyche terminology in Shelley till 1821, but the very idea of a search for a true mate, a complementary heroine for Shelley an hero had been there since 1815 which was developed by 1817. Such a relationship is always, at its highest level, a spiritual union. Shelley tells us that the hero's

mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves The vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of the wonderful or wise or beautiful, with the poet, the philosopher or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet-Hero is represented as

uniting these requisitions and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for aproto type of his conception¹.

An inception for the epipsyche notion in Shelley may be traced to his conviction that he was dependent upon "woman of character" for complete self-realization. Shelley told Elizabeth Hitchener, "You are my better genius-the judge of my reasonings, the guide of my actions, the influencer of my usefulness"². But when Miss. Hitchener's place was substituted by another female:

Your thoughts alone [he told Mary] can waken mine to energy; [my mind] without you is dead and cold.... It seems as if you alone could shield me from impurity and vice. If I were absent from you long I should shudder with horror at myself. My understanding becomes undisciplined without you³.

The Shelley an hero is dependent upon the Shelley an heroine and is craving to establish a connection with some epipsychological counterpart. Thus, in Shelley an terminology we can understand it as the mind i.e. psyche creates by virtue of imagination what it does not have i.e. epipsyche, and, then desires to possess epipsyche, to move toward it as a goal. As such the psyche epipsyche strategy, in a word, is the evolution by the mind of an ideal pattern toward which it then aspires. Therefore, Shelley held that the archetype of one's love "forever exists in the mind, which selects among those who resemble it that which most resembles it; and instinctively fills up the interstices of the imperfect image"⁴.

If one traces the course of Shelley's development as a philosophical and psychological poet, one would consider *Alastor* as a key poem. This is the first of Shelley's major poems in which he undertook an experiment with the psyche epipsyche strategy. To Shelley, this poem is his first serious attempt to interest the best feelings of the human heart.

Alastor pictures a superior young man who cannot escape from pursuing an ideal, even though sometimes he may suspect that his ideal is an illusion, and never learns otherwise prior to death. The delusion about Elizabeth is described thus:

You loved a being, an idea in your own mind.
 You concreted this abstract of perfection...
 the being, whom that name signified, was by no
 means worthy of this ... you loved a being, the
 being whom you loved, is not what she was,
 consequently, as love apertains to mind, and not
 body, she exists no longer⁵.

In this romantic allegory an idealist Shelley is shown to be very happy in the contemplation of high thoughts and visions of beauty. He desires to possess epipsyche i.e. seeks the counterpart of his dreams, meets with frustration and then dies in despair. The poem records the poet's pursuit of vision and his deep agony because he is not able to realise it in the earthly form. He is tortured between the two realities- his discontentment with the love of abstract being and secondly, his inability to realise it in a concrete form. Carols Baker has observed:

"As analyzed in *Alastor* and other documents of the 1815 period, love is a necessary concomitant of and motivating force in the individual mind, but it has not yet been purged of its fleshy attributes, nor has it passed beyond the sphere of imperious individual need"⁶.

Shelley does not regard *Alastor* as a spirit of evil, rather he associates the word with psychological determinism. If epipsyche is divorced from the psyche, it causes death whether actual or symbolic. The lamp is incapable of giving light because the energizing power is not there.

Shelley has made the considerable use of this strategy in *The Revolt of Islam*. Here the main aim is to create a new faith in liberty and devotion to a high ideal of life. The hero's dependence and yearning for an epipsychological counterpart has been projected in the Laon-Cythna relationship. The poem depicts the growth of an individual mind which aspires after excellence. Cythna seeks the intellectual liberation of sex and is mated with Laon in the

comradeship of kindred spirits. Love has broadened in Shelley's thought to an ethical principle. Admittedly, the spirit of liberty inspired the composition of *The Revolt of Islam*. As for the psyche-epipsyche strategy, the hero's spirit is "girt round with weakness"⁷ and he is unable to cope with his environment effectively unless he is able to establish a connection with some epipsychological counterpart, through whom he is completed and strengthened, waken to energy, shielded from impurity, disciplined and directed. This pattern has been established in the Laon-Cythna relationship.

In *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley used the psyche-epipsyche strategy as one of the major inter-related themes. The same spirit of liberty that inspired *The Revolt of Islam*, finds a true expression here. Prometheus stands for intellect, understanding and rational faculty of mankind. Asia is the effective side of mind: emotion, passion and imagination. It is Prometheus's union with Asia from which a new universe is born. It is this union which Shelley celebrates here in this poem because it consummates the aspiration of humanity.

Here, also, love is the 'sole law which should govern the moral world. It is the most important socializing, civilizing and restorative power available to man. This development is symbolically represented in the transfiguration of Asia. Love has become merged with the metaphysical concept of the "One".

As the impulse of union between the two souls, it is described as an effluence passing from the lover into the heart of the beloved object. Prometheus pictures it as the flowing wine of his youth which Asia received as gold. Panthea relates to Asia how the light shooting from the image of the transformed Titan "flowed and mingled with her blood till it became his life and grew mine." This absorption of lovers into one united entity is stressed by the love-torn maiden, the Moon.

The use of psyche-epipsyche tragedy is at its highest possible level in *Epipsychidion*, *Adonais* and *The Triumph of Life*.

Epipsychidion owes much to the *Symposium* of Plato in its presentation of human love as a forest of an ideal and perfect union. It is inspired by a beautiful girl Emilia Viviani, who is put into a cloister against her will, and in whom Shelley imagines that he finds his long-sought ideal of womanhood.

The poem is “a song of praise about the little soul within the soul” occasioned by an existing friendship between Shelley and a beautiful Italian girl. The different types and aspects of love which the poet contemplated, have been summed up here in this poem. To Shelley, love is a desire that always remains unsatisfied and that perhaps never is capable of being satisfied. The idealizing of Viviani in this poem where the earthly lady becomes the embodied spirit of the poet’s dreams and the incarnate spirit of beauty, is the direct outcome of Shelley’s Platonism.

In love, he must find something ideal, something ever to aspire after, something ever to look forward to. It is in the non-realization; it is in the expectation of fulfilment that his happiness lies. He is in love with an ideal and ceases to be an ideal as soon as it is realized. The image of Emilia and the thing imagined become the same, and there is nothing left but the vision of Beauty embodied in his *Epipsychidion*. The whole description symbolizes the idealy earning of the soul towards Beauty, which but touches earthly women on its path as a means towards its end.

Shelley’s *Adonais*, a noble elegy on the death of John Keats, followed *Epipsychidion* with a similar idea of the divine. It is inspired by Plato in its declaration of faith in the immortality of spirit. Shelley’s conception of Love, Death and Goodness, which are propounded in this poem, are more or less derived from Plato. The poem is not only a lament for the death of a young poet forced to death by the critics, it is a quest for the meaning of the mystery of death, a discovery that death is the gate of life.

Godwin’s intellectualism had ignored the soul and human emotions. Shelley, like Plato, believed that the Universe possessed a Soul and that the soul of man is pure in its nature, and though

soiled by earth is capable of its original perfection. Shelley believed that the only all-pervading spirit in the Universe is the Spirit of Love and Beauty. It operated in the entire universe being both immanent and transcendent. It sustains the world from beneath and kindles it from above. This power of Love- this spirit of Beauty- struggles with all that is hostile to it, and seeks to transform to its own likeness, all the grossness of The dull, dense world- "The one spirit' plastic stress..."

According to Godwin, the reason is the cure of all the evils of the world, whereas to Shelley, love is the alchemy that will transform the world. Shelley believed in the immortality of the soul. The soul goes back after death to the burning fountain from where it came. Like Plato, Shelley believed that death releases the soul from the prison-house of the body and admits us to eternal life. Death shatters into pieces the many-coloured glass-house of life and makes the soul a portion of the Eternal. All this is Platonism, but Shelley believes all this passionately and is woven into the texture of his poetry.

The Triumph of Life was the last poem in which Shelley was engaged at the time of his death. It describes Dante's journey from the lowest depths of Hell through Purgatory to Heaven and back to Earth under the power of love. Shelley had a kindred spirit with Plato as he conceives love as the very principle and the regenerative force in mankind. He believes that the great secret of moral is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. This seems to be an echo from the *Symposium* and adheres to the "Psyche-epipsyche strategy" as well. Shelley had studied the philosophers like Hume and Berkeley but he felt consciously or unconsciously more drawn to Plato.

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Deconstructing Stereotypes: A Feminist Critique of the Film *Arth* (1982)

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Abstract

Stereotyping is generally an ingrained and preconceived view on the characteristics of an individual or groups in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, religion or nationality. These oversimplified beliefs often lead to biases, misconceptions and discriminations. In this regard, stereotyping of women in cinema is a prevalent issue today. Be it cinematic screen or literary text, historically, women have been represented in their stereotypical role, neglecting their voice. Nevertheless, women's diverse and multifarious roles soon began to be screened with time, challenging the same stereotyping. The present study offers a feminist critique of the classic Hindi cinema *Arth* (1982), directed by Mahesh Bhatt, starring Shabana Azmi and Kulbhushan Kharbanda in the lead roles and Smita Patil, Raj Kiran and Rohini Hattangadi in their supporting roles. The film with its sophisticated storytelling unravels the narrative of gender stereotypes and power dynamics in the context of Indian film. Hereto, the study aims at deconstructing stereotypes through an investigation of the patriarchal and traditional gender roles within the narrative of the film. Through a

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close analysis of the film *Arth* (1982), the study focuses on the journey of the female protagonist, Puja, who struggles with her complex ways of negotiations with the existing norms in a male dominated society. Moreover, the present study examines Puja's on-screen projection in terms of gender and identity as the film is evident in challenging conventional gender roles and at the same, dismantling such stereotypes through her lens. Furthermore, it unveils the representation of women's stereotyping and its impact on the roles of gender in Indian society applying different feminist film and gender theories. Hence, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse within the context of feminist film criticism through a comprehensive analysis of the film *Arth* (1982). At the same time, it also highlights the role of cinematic narratives in shaping people's views and perceptions in a society.

Keywords: feminist theory; film studies; identity; patriarchy; social norms; stereotypes; women in film.

Stereotypes about men and women often refer to personality traits such as "men are tough, rational, and adventurous," or "women are nurturant, tactful, and emotional." But stereotypes can describe any situation, such as "women go to college to find a husband," or "men feel threatened if their wives make a higher income than theirs." Sex-role stereotypes are so familiar to us that, given no additional information other than the sex of a person, we are likely to ascribe certain traits and behaviors to him or her. Furthermore, sex-role stereotypes govern our own behavior. To varying degrees, we have learned to be good observers of human nature as...an attempt to "fit into roles at school, at work, and in social situations" (Franks and Rothblum, 4-5).

Stereotyping relating to men and women generally encompasses personality traits and societal expectations and the same preconceptions impact the way we perceive and behave towards other individuals on the basis of their gender. Nevertheless,

stereotypes are a prevalent phenomenon of a contemporary society which is socio-cultural and psychological driven. Women's position has often been neglected and has remained unacknowledged by the men's chauvinistic world compared to their male counterparts since ages. Be it the literary texts, cinematic screen or the present day societal appearance, women have often found their existence and individuality as gloomy, shadowy and darker at the threshold of male domination and patriarchy. In an explicit way, the popular media including mainstream Indian cinema, television, and advertisements is evident to bring multifarious social issues into light and to make aware of the common masses about the happenings in the society. The debate regarding the role of gender and stereotyping and sexism is a current issue not only in the literary realm but also in the cinematic world. Hereto, women's representation in the context of gender and stereotyping is an emerging issue of discussion among film scholars, critics, feminist activists, film-makers and others, adding as an integral part to the feminist film studies. As discussed regarding the concept of gender in Braudy and Marshall's *Film Theory and Criticism* (2009), "Gender is only one element of identity, she argues, and accounts that privilege its importance ignore racial and social difference" (Braudy and Marshall, 532). Hereto, Braudy and Marshall emphasizes that concentrating merely on gender overlooks other significant aspects of identity including racial and societal background which must not be neglected in the discourse. Furthermore, Teresa de Lauretis's text *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987) defines the notion of gender:

I believe that to envision gender (men and women) otherwise, and to (re)construct it in terms other than those dictated by the patriarchal contract, we must walk out of the male centered frame of reference in which gender has and sexuality are reproduced by the discourse of male sexuality...(Lauretis, 17)

Teresa de Lauretis suggests that to reinterpret gender and sexuality beyond the patriarchal realm. While redefining the notion of the same, we must reject the male-driven ideologies that fosters the traditional ideas of gender and sexuality. Henceforth, the study deconstructs the notion of women's stereotyping through a feminist analysis of the classic Hindi cinema *Arth* (1982). It investigates how the film challenges and critiques the inherent gender roles and stereotypes through the lens of the female protagonist, Pooja. The study also takes a look into the impact of cinematic narratives on the views and opinions of common people living in the society. Moreover, the present paper adds to the feminist film criticism reading the film within the framework of feminist film and gender theories. In the course of doing so, the purpose of this study is also to focus on the significance and need of dismantling such stereotyping in cinema, keeping in mind how the same influences societal attitudes and people's mindsets towards women broadly.

Hindi films serve as a mirror of Indian culture, values and society. Cinema as an art form very well voiced and outlined the changing scenario of India in context of its cultural and social beliefs and attitudes. Braudy and Marshall in their book in *Film Theory and Criticism* (2009) validates film as an art, "Film art is the only art the development of which men now living have witnessed from the very beginnings; and this development is all the more interesting as it took place under conditions contrary to precedent" (Braudy and Marshall, 247). Moreover, early Hindi cinema touches upon the set stereotypical frame of women in cinema which impacted the individual and society at large. Soon women's role and position changed from being devoted and virtuous to emancipated and independent career women with the arrival of India's Independence.

With the evolution of Hindi cinema, there has been a shift in women's portrayal in cinema regarding their stereotyping. The Hindi cinema with strong narrative of women includes Radha in

Mother India (1957), Sonbai in *Mirch Masala* (1987), Sita and Radha in *Fire* (1996), Aditi in *Astitva* (200), Susanna in *7 Khoon Maaf* (2011), Sashi Godbole in *English Vinglish* (2012), Rani in *Queen* (2013), Usha, Rehana Abidi, Leela and Shireen Aslam in *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016), Minal Arora, Falak Ali and Andrea Tariang in *Pink* (2016), Salu in *Tumhari Sulu* (2017), Sehmat Syed in *Raazi* (2018), Amrita in *Thappad* (2020), Shakuntala in *Shakuntala Devi* (2020), Rashmi Chibber in *Rashmi Rocket* (2021) Gangubai in *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022), Naina in *A Thursday* (2022), Debika Chatterjee in *Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway* (2023) and many others. These film narratives poignantly raised questions on the position of a woman in a man-made society, which is one of the important aspects of feminism in cinema. The film, *Arth* (1982) is evident to showcase women's stereotypical image and their objectifications on screen which are today's prominent issues within the frame of feminist film studies, accentuating the significance of debunking such preconceived ideologies. Thus, the study investigates the main female character, Pooja in the film, adopting feminist film theories including intersectionality, the representation of women and the power of storytelling that emphasizes the significance to offer criticism. It also debates the necessity to question the hierarchy of conventional gender roles and the stereotypical depiction of women in films. In doing so, the research also focuses on key notions including gender stereotyping, patriarchal values, feminist analysis and the cinematic impact on the social views of the common masses.

The film, *Arth*, is a feminist exploration of how patriarchy forces the same set roles for the protagonist, Puja, as in the real social life of a woman. It also interrogates how she is a typical projection in the film such as-common stereotypes linked to Pooja's portrayal; how such stereotypes unveil through cinema and what does the notion of stereotyping mean in Hindi cinema with a particular focus on Puja's role and character in *Arth* (1982).

Within the context of gender stereotypes, the analysis includes the relevant existing literature review and film criticism to reflect stereotyping associated with Puja's depiction in the film. The other secondary reading related to feminist film theories include Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) and *Visual and Other Pleasures*. (1989), Violet Franks and Rothblum Esther's *The Stereotyping of Women: Its Effects on Mental Health* (1983), Teresa de Lauretis's text *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987), Shoma A. Chatterji's *Subject Cinema, Object Women: A Study of the Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema* (1998), Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen's *Film Theory and Criticism* (2009), Karen Hollinger's *Feminist Film Studies* (2012) Hilary Neroni's *Feminist Film Theory and Cléo from 5 to 7* (2016), Mari Ruti's *Film Theory in Practice: Feminist Film Theory and Pretty Woman* (2016) and others. The reading is based on these texts in order to provide a nuanced elaboration and understanding of the female protagonist, Pooja within Hindi feminist film discourse. A qualitative content and feminist analysis of the film *Arth* (1982) with respect to the journey of Pooja, specifically her transformative role and dialogues, deconstruct the perpetuation of women's stereotyping both in reel and real world in terms of gender, identity and social beliefs. Hereto, Karen Hollinger in her book *Feminist Film Studies* (2012), traces the origin of feminist film theories:

The history of feminist film theory begins in the 1970s and parallels the development of film theory itself as an academic discipline. It stems from the woman's movement of the 1960s and was influenced by germinal feminist works like Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*. Providing the basis for feminist examinations of film were De Beauvoir's concept of women as "other," Friedan's discussion of the social mythology that works to bind women to a "natural" female role of passivity and maternal nurturing under a dominant patriarch, and especially

Millett's examination of how the ideology of femininity is instilled in women through many forms of cultural texts from scientific theories to literary works (Hollinger, 7).

These groundbreaking feminist texts laid the very foundation for examining how cultural texts perpetuate gender stereotyping and women's otherness. The Indian Hindi cinema *Arth* (1982), directed by Mahesh Bhatt, starring Shabana Azmi and Kulbhushan Kharbanda in their lead roles and Smita Patil, Raj Kiran and Rohini Hattangadi in their supporting roles. The film is a semi-autobiographical, set against the backdrop of urban India, written by Mahesh Bhatt himself on his extramarital relationship with Parveen Babi. *Arth* (1982) was remade in Tamil as *Marupadiyum* (1993) directed by Balu Mahendra. The film touches upon the prevalent themes including infidelity in marriage, women's empowerment, self-discovery and assertion of self. It realistically depicts a woman's struggle to find a place in a patriarchal realm, manifesting the changing cultural shifts in early Indian cinema and making it a timeless classic.

The storyline begins with the female protagonist, Pooja who is raised as an orphan. Pooja always dreams of owning a house of her own. Amidst her struggle to fulfill her dream, she feels insecure when she comes to know that she and her husband, Inder, have to vacate her rented apartment. Pooja's fate ironically turns when she finds out about Inder's extramarital affair with another woman, Kavita whom he gives the keys of a new house that he buys while working and earning money in the cinematic industry with Kavita. Hereto, Pooja finds herself in the situation like her maid was after being cheated in the marriage. Afterwards, Inder leaves Pooja for Kavita. Pooja too, chooses to live in the women's hostel with her self-respect, leaving behind the apartment. Pooja's financial independence and her refusal to take any sort of support from her husband, Inder, symbolizes her capabilities to make her own space in a male chauvinistic society. Furthermore, Pooja's individual identity dismantles the stereotypical notion about women

being economically dependent on men. Karen Hollinger too, advocates regarding women's image in cinema in her book *Feminist Film Studies* (2012), "...images of women approach as a whole stems from its limited conception of representations of women onscreen as stereotypes and its simplistic advocacy of positive images..." (9). Likewise, in her book *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987), Teresa de Lauretis deconstructs the ideology of gender stereotypes. She states:

In the feminist writings and cultural practices of the 1960s and 1970s, the notion of gender as sexual difference was central to the critique of representation, the rereading of cultural images and narratives, the questioning of theories of subjectivity and textuality, of reading, writing, and spectatorship. The notion of gender as sexual difference has grounded and sustained feminist interventions in the arena of formal and abstract knowledge, in the epistemologies and cognitive fields defined by the social and physical sciences as well as the human sciences or humanities (Lauretis, 1).

Gender as sexual difference offers critique, questioning the conventional notions in both-culture and theory within the discourse of feminism in the 1960s-70s. This perspective is evident in the context of Pooja's negotiation of gender roles, projecting the societal constructs and the individual entity. Hereto, the analysis of *Arth* (1982) through the eyes of Pooja, adds significance to the study of how Indian Hindi cinema addresses and unveils gender dynamics and how the same fosters inclusive narrative in popular media. Siddhaarth Mahan points out regarding the female character's strong projection in *Arth* (1982) in his article titled "40 years after *Arth*, Hindi cinema's elusive quest for women empowerment" (2023) published on the website, *The Federal: News That Talk Sense*. He remarks:

The film is a mighty rebellion against conventional mores wherein women seek no validity through a male relationship by discarding all emotional and financial crutches to find

Arth (meaning) in life. In a nuanced, non-preachy way, Arth is a milestone in women's empowerment. It isn't overt, in-your-face feminism but effectively buries the myth of women being the "weaker sex" and reflects women's resolve to live life with dignity and uncompromising independence (*Mahan*).

The film depicts a powerful rebellion against socio-cultural norms. It projects women who move forward not only rejecting the need for validation through male relationships but they also stand on their own emotionally and financially, identifying the meaning of life. Again he adds, "After this milestone film, women were just portrayed as glamourised dolls until *Queen*, *Thappad* and *Darlings* are now changing the script of the female lead in Hindi cinema" (*Mahan*). Hereto, the film dismantles stereotypes exposing patriarchal norms and mindset wherein women no more compromise within the institution of marriage, rather they have their own voice in the existing social realms.

Amidst her struggle, Pooja comes across another man as Raj who helps her to surpass the obstacles of her life and later on turning into the bond of friendship. On the other hand, Kavita is deeply insecure and unstable despite Pooja and Inder's divorce. While Raj develops feelings for Pooja in course of life and struggle and soon he proposes to her. After Inder's distrust and cheating, Pooja rejects Raj's proposal. Nevertheless, Raj doesn't give up, rather he keeps his efforts to get Pooja out of her terrible past feelings. Kavita deserts Inder when she realizes her mistake of destroying a happy marriage. And Kavita says, "I haven't realized till today what I really want. But now I have realized what I don't want. Inder, I don't want this fake life and lies full of happiness" (*Arth*, 01:39:56-01:40:10). Here, Kavita's decision shows her very moment of self-discovery and a shift in her opinion regarding the very purpose of her life. Similarly, her words including "fake life" and "lies full of happiness" reflect her desire for authenticity and truthfulness towards her life. This is how Kavita, too emancipates herself from the fear and insecurities in order to live a life with

dignity. Her realization can be viewed as a critique of social norms associated with patriarchy. As Kavita successfully rejects the imposed societal roles and she searches for real happiness outside the walls of the social domain. Mari Ruti's text, *Film Theory in Practice: Feminist Film Theory and Pretty Woman* (2016) interprets feminism as... "the system of male domination — patriarchy — must be dissociated from individual men, many of whom find this system just as unpalatable as feminists do" (Ruti, 7). Instead of adhering to patriarchal values, Kavita recognises her need to redefine her own path, dismantling the preconceived norms.

Then, Inder returns to Pooja with a proposal of starting their life afresh. Raj says, "There is nothing between Kavita and me any more. Really? Consider that she has disowned me. Anyway, she couldn't separate me from you" (*Arth*, 01:42:12-01:42:29). Inder's statement reflects his hypocrisy dictated by his male chauvinist attitude. Nevertheless, Pooja is consistent with her decision to live on her own terms and she, too, disowns Inder from her life. Her refusal to conform to the societal expectations of being a meek and docile wife challenge the existing stereotypes that women must prioritize marriage and family despite the infidelity and hollowness in a marriage. Furthermore, Pooja claims to Raj, "Law has separated the name Malhotra from my name. Now I have completely felt my true identity today" (01:44:54-01:45:00). Pooja asserts her emancipation as she accepts the legal separation happily from the name 'Malhotra'. Pooja's assertion of being without surname 'Malhotra' signifies, reclaiming her individual identity. As Pooja says to Raj, "One day you had said to me, Raj ..Pooja, you are complete in yourself. I want to separate my name from everyone else...and live like Pooja only" (01:45:15-01:45:27). With this powerful declaration, Pooja asserts her self-completeness, distinct from societal expectation. This manifests Pooja's new found independence, individuality and her moment of self-discovery. Hence, this new facet of Pooja showcases her autonomy and a

departure from the role and expectations of a woman in a social realm. Hilary Neroni too, in her feminist theoretical text titled *Feminist Film Theory and Cléo from 5 to 7* (2016), deliberates on the role of patriarchy in assigning a woman's position in a society. She says, "When feminism acknowledges moments in which women are purposely unacknowledged or barred from participating in an aspect of society, it is also laying bare the very structure of patriarchy" (Neroni, 87). Pooja's assertion of her individual identity in *Arth* mirrors feminist critiques as by breaking away from the stereotypical role of a woman, she presents the oppressive and harsh face of patriarchy.

In this way, Pooja neither comes to live with Inder nor with Raj, rather she finds a new meaning of her life with maid's daughter. As Pooja promises to her maid that she will take care of her daughter. As Pooja believes, "But I have gained. Something from her. A chance to be a mother. A chance to share my loneliness..." (*Arth*, 01:44:34-01:44:45). Pooja's struggle and difficulties in her marriage, especially her ways of coping up with emotional turmoil, reflects that women are multi-dimensional personalities and marriage and relationships are not the sole definition of women's existence. If a marriage fails, life doesn't stop on this, rather a woman's own journey starts from here itself beyond the imposition of social and cultural norms. Karen Hollinger in her book *Feminist Film Studies* (2012), discusses how women's film remain an important field of discourse despite women's objection and, "In spite of these objections, the woman's film remains an important area of feminist criticism and its study has foregrounded issues of importance to feminist film scholarship" (Hollinger, 37). Pooja's journey of self-discovery in the film *Arth* questions the social structure. Her role in addressing the existing issues, contribute significantly to feminist film discourse, bringing forth women's voices in the cinematic world.

Pooja finds her independence in being a single mother of Made's daughter and being away from the institution of marriage

and any relationship. After being cheated within the institution of marriage, she believes marriage as a fetter and cage to a woman's individuality that only weakens a woman. Pooja's metamorphic role as woman in *Arth* (1982) defies set traditional gender roles making her individual identity pursuing her career as a singer. Thus, *Arth* (1982) delves into debunking stereotypes through Puja's economic and emotional independence. It also throws light on common stereotypes regarding ongoing negotiation of gender roles and social expectations within the context of Indian society that women's happiness is tied not only to their romantic partnerships. Arpita Chowdhury notes in her article titled "How Shabana Azmi's Role In "Arth" Opened The Debate Of Women's Agency" (2022) published in the website *Youth Ki Awaaz*:

Pooja reclaims her identity and is not ready to compromise her self respect. She acknowledges the support of Raj, but she is not ready to develop a romantic relationship with him. She wants to live her life on her terms. (Chowdhry)

Both Pooja and Kavita in *Arth* (1982) emerge as stronger and emancipated women defying social norms and expectations. On the one hand, Pooja refuses to fit into Inder's world despite his return to Pooja after Kavita leaves him. On the other hand, Kavita refuses to live a life as other woman in Inder's life despite he gives divorce to pooja in order to provide a sense of security and comfort to Kavita. Here, both of these women assert their identity beyond the institution of love and marriage. Hence, *Arth* (1982) is a groundbreaking film giving rise to the discussion on gender identity and individual freedom through women's progressive portrayal in this film. Film scholar and critic, Shoma A Chatterji opines regarding the portrayal of women in Hindi cinema. She states:

Women in Hindi cinema have been decorative objects with rarely any sense of agency being imparted to them. Each phase of Hindi cinema had its own representation of women, but they were confined largely to the traditional, patriarchal frame-work of Indian society. The ordinary woman has hardly been visible in Hindi cinema. (Chatterji)

Since time immemorial, women have been a subject and subordinate to men. Be it as a mother, wife or sister, their desires and choices have often been neglected and silenced. But Pooja is a dominant voice in today's contemporary society living on her own terms and conditions, turning down the notion of subjectivity. Hilary Neroni in her book *Feminist Film Theory and Cléo from 5 to 7* (2016) reviews regarding the nature of subjectivity:

Subjectivity is neither the symbolic identities we cling to nor the void beneath them but rather the way we are situated between the two. Subjectivity is the failure of the woman to see herself in the ideal of female beauty (Neroni, 111).

Subjectivity, placed between symbolic identities and hollowness, has been denoted as women have often been subjected to tackle the idealized conception of female beauty, which represents the conflicts between societal values and individual self-perceptions. It shows women's struggle to adapt their identity with ideals and its predefined notions that may not project their diverse experiences. Moreover, stereotyping has adverse and profound effects on a society, perpetuating prejudiced and biased unfair judgments on the basis of caste, class, race, gender, religion and other characteristics. As far as women's stereotyping in film is concerned, women are still objectified, misrepresented and marginalized which greatly affects how women are perceived and acknowledged regarding their values and worth by the society. In contrast to this, *Pooja* doesn't fall prey to the pattern of typical wife or to any emblematic image of Devi in *Arth* (1982), rather she establishes her own identity giving a new meaning to her life. Regarding women's representation with patriarchal values, the film critic, Laura Mulvey very well reflects in her book *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989):

Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman

still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning (Mulvey, 15).

To conclude, women's new image in the cinematic narratives helped both in tackling women's cause and fostering women's empowerment through individual independent identity. In this regard, Laura Mulvey in her book *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989), remarks, "Women's Liberation struck a blow against this narrow destiny, against the physical confines of the way women are seen and the way they fit into society" (4). Here, Laura Mulvey's statement aptly fits in the context of Pooja's liberation in *Arth*. Pooja's changing facet of a new woman-from an ideal housewife to an independent individual, challenges the limited predefined roles assigned to a woman in society. Besides, it also highlights the resistance against the narrow ideologies that confines a woman both visually and socially. Hence, it advocates for inclusive efforts to redefine women's position, roles and visibility, both in reel and real world, particularly, outside the traditional and restrictive norms. Pooja's positive depiction in the film advocates for gender equality and boundless aspirations, reaching far beyond the screen. Thus, *Arth* (1982) has a diverse, empowered woman who sets an example of inclusive role for a more equitable world interrogating against predefined women's space and their stereotypical portrayal both in film and society.

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Sri Aurobindo: A Prophet of the Divine Life

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Abstract

Sri Aurobindo, a great philosopher poet and writer of modern India, emerges during freedom movement, as a revolutionary nationalist leader until 1910, became a prominent reformer through spiritual awakening introducing his vision on human progress via divine realization. Now a Yogi and Maharishi he has his own ways to contribute in the making of new India awaiting to revive its past glory of ancient times. He is quite aware of the danger of modern materialistic science and its chief outcome 'atheism' which proves instrumental in degrading the moral standard of man's life. Sri Aurobindo observes that life is already present in the matter because all the existence is a manifestation of Brahman. To a yogi, Nature which is divine has evolved life out of matter and the mind out of life. A progress of mind to the Supermind is the central point of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical system. Supermind is an intermediary power between the unmanifested Brahman and the manifested world. He says that the Supermind can be realized within ourselves as it is always present within mind. However he does not claim the Supermind as original creation of his

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own. It can be found in the Vedas and that the Vedic gods represent powers of the Supermind. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo presents a theory of spiritual evolution and suggests that the present crisis of humanity will lead to the spiritual transformation of human beings. He envisions the advent of the divine life on earth. The aim of his 'Integral Yoga' is not only to enter into the divine consciousness but to bring it down on earth to transform mind. A self-surrender, giving up of the human being into a being, consciousness, power, delight of the divine and divine himself shall by light of his presence and guidance will perfect the human beings in all the forces of the nature for a divine living. Thus the human society will be free from the vices of inequality and immorality.

Keywords: Philosopher, Awakening, Relization, Vision, Ultimate Reality, Mind, Supermind, Integral Yoga, Divine, Nietzschean, Supermanhood, Spiritual evolution.

Early Life : Born on 15th August, 1872 in Calcutta to Smt. Swarnlata and Anglophile Dr. Krishnandan Ghose Sri Aurobindo emerged as an illuminating personality during the Indian Renaissance. He was sent at the age of seven to England for education. He was a brilliant student and in spite of hardships there he became eminent scholar. Before coming back to India in Feb. 1893 he had completed ICS but did not join the service. He explained :

"I appeared for the ICS because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later, I found out what sort of work it was and I had disgust for administrative life and work. my interest was in poetry and study of language and in patriotic action. (Sri Aurobindo: *The Spiritual Revolutionary*, 11-13)

While preparing for the ICS he studied Indian philosophy and was attracted towards advait darshan of it. The seed of spiritual awakening was sown there but it was germinated after the arrival in India. He writes :

Since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these

were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. (*The Spiritual Revolutionary*, 13)

In London Sri Aurobindo was interviewed by Sir Sayajirao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda, and accordingly he joined the services of the Baroda State firstly in administration, then as a Professor of English in the Baroda college. He also became the principal of the college. But his inner conscience compelled him to leave the respectable service of the state and finally he left Baroda in 1907 to join freedom movement in Calcutta. His wife Mrinalini Bose stayed in Baroda till her death 1918. Sri Aurobindo wrote to his father in law:

I am afraid I shall never be good for much in the way of domestic virtues. I have tried, very ineffectively, to some part of my duty as a husband, but there is something too strong in me which forces me to subordinate everything else to it. (*The Spiritual Revolutionary*, 18)

Prophet of Nationalism : In Calcutta Sri Aurobindo got involved in the Swadeshi Movement. He took charge of the Bengal National College, taught English, French and History, wrote so many pamphlets titled No Compromise. It would be pertinent to mention here what he said about the nature of education:

We may describe national education tentatively as the education which starting with the past and making full use of the present, builds up a great nation. Whoever wishes to cut off the nation from its past is no friend of our national growth. Whoever fails to take advantage of the present is losing us the battle of life. We must therefore save for India all that she has stored up of knowledge, character and noble thought in her immemorial past. We must acquire for her the best knowledge that Europe can give her and assimilate to her own peculiar type of national temperament. (*The Spiritual Revolutionary*, 26-28)

Sri Aurobindo was arrested along with others for the conspiracy of bombarding in Alipur in which two English women were injured. They were charged with raging war against the king the penalty for which was death. But thanks to the masterly defense of young Chittaranjan Das for Sri Aurobindo that he was acquitted after one year in jail. However this imprisonment brought drastic changes in him as a result he decided to leave political activity and Calcutta for spiritual pursuits in 1910. On the night of March 31 Aurobindo accompanied by Bijoy Nag boarded a ship and left Calcutta. As Calcutta faded away into the darkness it closed the chapter on Aurobindo's political life and opened one on the extraordinary adventure of consciousness he was engaged in.

Sri Aurobindo reached Pondicherry where he established an ashram, popularized yoga, authored books on divinity and spread light of spirituality to the mankind. He lived here to the rest of his life.

A Prophet of Spiritual Evolution through Yogic Experiences: What is yoga? Yoga is a system of exercises of body, mind and soul which generates balancing energy and which aims at uniting the Self with the Spirit of the universe. Such a union tends to neutralize ego-driven thoughts and behaviour creating a sense of spiritual awakening. When we talk of mind we generally mean it a mind of a common man with consciousness of mortality. The main object of yoga is to raise an ordinary human mind to the spiritual consciousness of divine and immortal being.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy creates awareness in us of our mental evolution. Higher Mind is a first plane of spiritual consciousness where one becomes constantly and closely aware of the one everywhere and knows and sees things habitually with that awareness. He adds however that it is still very much on the mind level although highly spiritual in its essential substance, its instrumentation is through an elevated thought power and comprehensive mental sight. It is not illumined by any of the intense upper light. It acts as an intermediary state between the

human mind and the truth light above. Illumined Mind is a greater force. It is a mind no longer of higher thought but of spiritual light. It adds to the calm and wide enlightenment and vast descent of peace which characterise the action of the large conceptual spiritual principle, a fiery order of realisation and a rapturous ecstasy of knowledge. Moving forward an Intuitive Mind is a higher form of the reason or intellect. It acts in a self-light of the truth, which does not depend upon the torch flares of the sense mind and its limited uncertain percepts. It proceeds not by intelligence but by visional concepts. It is a kind of truth vision, truth hearing, truth memory and direct truth discernment. This true and authentic intuition must be distinguished from a power of the ordinary mental reason.

The Overmind is the highest of the planes below the Supermind. Again it is difficult to distinguish between two levels of consciousness, Overmind and Supermind. However it is clarified that the Supermind is a total truth consciousness, the Overmind draws down the Truth separately and gives them separate activity. Between the Supermind and human mind are a number of ranges, planes or layers of consciousness. The Overmind is the highest of the ranges. It is full of lights and powers.

A Prophet of Integral Yoga- The term integral yoga is popularized as a result of Sri Aurobindo's studies and experimentation in yogic sadhna. He came to realization that if a man have to reach complete and perfect consciousness he must have holistic approach to life and universe. He should not stick to a particular method of yoga:

Integral Yoga is integral since it includes gyanyoga which aims at the realisation of unique and Supreme Self by the method of intellectual reflection to right discrimination viveka, Bhaktiyoga which aims at the enjoyment of the Supreme Lord and Bliss and normally utilisation the conception of the Supreme Lord, Karma Yoga which aims

at the dedication of every human activity to the Supreme Will.

Integral yoga attempt to synthesise these three yoga systems by a central principle common to all which will include and utilise in the right place and proportion their particular principles. The principle that includes and transforms these three yogas is the Yoga of Self-Perfection. (*The Spiritual Revolutionary*, 54)

A fine instance of integral yoga is highlighted in Sri Aurobindo's the Secret of the Veda. His commentary on Hymns of the Mystic fire of the Rig Veda is revealing of the wholeness of perfection. The Hymns are a dialogue between Maharshi Agastya and Lord Indra over sacrifices in Yajna. The maharishi wants to offer sacrifices directly to the Supreme Being to attain Moksha. He wants to establish a new order in which gods and goddesses should not come in between the human beings and Ultimate Reality. He requests Lord Indra to do their own with other gods and leave rishis to do their own work. Lord Indra replies Maharshi Agastya that gods are not their enemies and that the Ultimate Reality cannot be realized and approached with one sided effort. As all parts of a body are actively involved to achieve a desired goal, similar is the condition of the divine order of the universe. The whole arrangement must be involved to achieve perfection and approach to the Ultimate Reality. That is, common people, rishis, maharishis ,gods ,goddesses and entire divinity must be co-ordinated to attain a spiritual achievement .Maharshi Agastya realises the dignity of the holistic approach and agrees with Lord Indra to perform sacrifices as per set norms. An extract:

Indra and Agastya together the universal Power and the human soul, will extend in harmony the effective inner action on the plane of the pure intelligence so that it may enrich itself there and attain beyond. For it is precisely by the progressive surrender of the lower being to the divine activities that the limited and egoistic consciousness of the mortal awakens to the infinite and immortal state which is its goal.

Agastya accepts the will of the God and submits. He agrees to perceive and fulfill the supreme in the activities of Indra.
(*The Secret of the Veda*, 255-256)

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, an epic poem of high spirituality challenge, presents a drama of self-realization attaining the goal of divine union. Its spiritual conception is so integral that it gives birth to power which transforms life on earth into a life of divine activity. The epic is an expression of Sri Aurobindo's inner findings leading to his visions of an age of truth consciousness and immortality. It portrays the progressive states of consciousness to nirvanic heights never reached before. The legend of Savitri and Satyavan of love conquering death is made the basic symbol of this mystic scripture of divine life on earth. The poet reveals how at the climax of meditation with God where many cease their search he comes to realize the presence of God's consciousness, and bliss which he calls the 'Divine Mother', a creatrix of boundless love and wisdom. The darkness is transformed into light, the unreal into real and death into immortality. A few lines from the epic:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
One shall descend and break the iron law, change
Nature's doom by the lone Spirit's power...
Beauty shall walk celestial on earth,
Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair
And in her body as on his homing tree
Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her moral step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will

(*Indian Writing in English*, 197)

A Prophet of Spiritual Elevation in Modern World: The various concepts and theories of mind prevalent today in Western

World such as Psycho-analytical, Behavioural, Gestalt, Psychological, Psycho-physical, Evolutionary, Functional, Mental or Home-Sapiens oriented, etc finally come to the conclusion that mind is mysterious and beyond scientific explanation. According to their main contemporary view there is something essential in human understanding that is not possible to stimulate by any conceptual means. This indicates that the nature of mind continues to remain a source of acute discomfort to Western thinkers. Perplexity arising out of indecisiveness of the West might find a way in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual evolution of mind and mankind. Sri Aurobindo also has realized the superficialities of western ideologies:

That would mean a supermanhood of the Nietzschean type; it might be at its worst the reign of the "blonde beast" or the dark beast or of any and every beast, a return to the barbaric strength and ruthlessness and force: but this would be no evaluation, it would be a reversion to an old strenuous barbarism or it might signify the emergence of the Rakshasha or Asura out of a tense effort of humanity to surpass and transcend itself, but in the wrong direction. (*The Life Divine*, 1105)

A few words from Sri Aurobindo's writing appears to provide solution:

The spiritual man living in the sense of the spiritual self, in the realization of the Divine within him and everywhere, would be living universally a divine life and its reflection would fall on his outer acts of existence, even if they did not pass-or did not seem to pass-beyond the ordinary instrumentation of human thought and action in this world of earth nature. (*The Life Divine*, 1055)

Conclusion: A Great yogi and visionary Sri Aurobindo foretold the future of human civilization in his message on the occasion of India's independence in 1947. It may be glimpsed in a passage from it:

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever-increasing measure. The movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time, more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even increasing resort to not only her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.... Hereto, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement be hers. (*The Spiritual Revolutionary*, 71)

Today Sri Aurobindo's prediction appears to be true. Along with materialistic development. India's religious culture and spirituality are gaining recognition over global panorama. May it be International Yoga Day, ISKCON Temples or celebration of Indian festivals such as Diwali, Durga Puja, Chatth, etc. India is moving forward with its own dignity and spiritual excellence in the modern world of materialistic science and technology.

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Dependent or Independent?: A Feminist Study of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

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Abstract

Manju Kapur is a highly praised contemporary feminist writer from India. Her works are known for their bold and candid portrayal of women's issues and the struggles they face in society. Kapur's writing serves as a powerful commentary on gender discrimination, patriarchy, and other social injustices those women face. Through her works, she has been able to create a platform for women's voices to be heard and has become a leading figure in the feminist literary movement. The research hypothesis, therefore, suggests that *Difficult Daughters* can be interpreted as a feminist novel that not only highlights the struggles of women in patriarchal societies but also advocates for the importance of personal agency and self-determination. The novel offers insights into the complexities of gender relations in Indian culture and how they impact women's lives. Thus, the present study aims at exploring the feminist sensibilities, gender discrimination, and the challenges of women's empowerment in contemporary societies.

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Like other post-Independence Indian English women novelists—Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy and others, Manju Kapur is concerned with describing the life of women in the patriarchal Indian society, their struggle to seek their identity and place in society and the different stages of their journey of life. Two of her novels selected for study in the light of the above-mentioned perspective – *Difficult Daughters* and *Custody* – show Indian urban women in two periods of Indian history, the first in the background of India before Independence and the second at the turn of the 21st century.

Manju Kapur's first novel, *Difficult Daughters*, which was published in 1998, is set in the Punjab of 1940s. As the title of the novel suggests, it tells the stories of daughters, not just of one generation but of three generations. The central character of the novel, however, is Virmati whose story is narrated by her daughter, Ida, along with the third person narrator. We know the story of Virmati's mother, Kasturi, largely through Virmati's account of her. The novel begins with the statement of Ida – "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother." (1) Virmati herself led a life entirely against the wishes of her mother. Hence the title "Difficult Daughters", difficult because they swim against the currents of the traditional values of the contemporary Indian society and so are difficult to handle. There is another such daughter in the novel, Shakuntala, Virmati's cousin who, after doing her M.Sc., became a lecturer in a college in Lahore and refused to marry early as her mother, Lajwanti desired. K.K. Vishwakarma remarks about her: "Like Shaw's Candida, Shakuntala is a 'new woman' - self-confident, independent in spirit, morally courageous and emotionally controlled". (54) Kasturi, on the other hand, represents the woman of earlier generation. She was a typical Indian woman following completely the patriarchal values

of Indian society. She could not even help producing children though her wishes and frail physical condition were completely against it. This is what she wanted for her daughter also, but Virmati was entirely different from her mother. She wanted to live a life of her own without bowing to the wishes of others and doing what her heart told her to do, even ready to face the censure of the society for it.

Kasturi, Lajwanti, Ganga, Kishori Devi and other shadowy female figures in the novel represent the feminine way of life in patriarchal Indian society. Undivided Punjab of the early twentieth century was ahead of most of India in female education, largely because of the influence of the Arya Samaj which had worked for female education in India with a missionary zeal. However, the early generation of these educated women had not benefitted from their education; so far freedom from the patriarchal values was concerned. Describing the early education of Virmati, which was similar to what her mother, Kasturi had got, the novelist writes:

So far, not much attention had been given to Virmati's education. As a child she had been sent, a ten-minute walking distance, to the Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya, situated in a gully so narrow that, with the drain on either side, it took one person, single file. The school was a single set of rooms around a courtyard, with a dark bathroom in a corner. Every morning at nine, the school maidservant collected Virmati from her house, along with others who lived in that area.

The Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya believed in grinding the essential rituals of life into their pupils' consciousness by daily example. Every morning started with prayer. (19)

Virmati had studied in that school till Class VIII and had been sent to Stratford College of Amritsar for further studies. Partly driven by circumstances and partly by her desire to study further, she finally got her M.A. degree from Lahore.

Kasturi, though educated, did not give much importance to education. Her education had started at the age of seven in a

Christian missionary school, but it could continue there only for a few months. One day when her mother found her praying to a picture of Christ, she was shocked. She threatened to marry her off, but her uncle intervened. A follower of Arya Samaj, he was against child marriage. He had started a school for boys and now he decided to start a school for girls. In this way Kasturi became the first girl in her family to be educated. This education, however, was not meant to instill any independent thinking in her:

Her father, uncle and teacher made sure that this step into modernity was prudent and innocuous. Her head remained modestly bent over her work. No questions, no assertion. She learned reading, writing, balancing household accounts and sewing. . . . After five years of this education, it was considered that Kasturi had acquired all that it was ever going to be useful for her to know. (62)

Keeping in tune with the patriarchal beliefs, she considered household skills like cooking, knitting, stitching and cleaning etc. to be more important than higher education. She believed that running a family was what women were destined for. So she was quite happy when she was married to Suraj Prakash, the younger son of Lala Diwan Chand, a prosperous and respected person. She was also quite happy at the birth of her eldest daughter, Virmati, but the succeeding births of a large number of children made her miserable:

By the time Virmati was sixteen, Kasturi could bear childbirth no more. For eleventh time it had started, the heaviness in her belly, morning and evening nausea, bile in her throat while eating, hair falling out in clumps, giddiness when she got up suddenly. How trapped could nature make a woman? She turned to God, so bountiful with his gifts, and prayed ferociously for the miracle of a miscarriage. Her sandhya started and ended with this plea, that somehow she should drop the child she was carrying and never conceive again. (7)

Kasturi did everything she could do for a miscarriage, but this was not to be and she gave birth to her eleventh child, a frail, puny little girl. She herself was so weak and sickly that all doctors – hakim, vaid and allopath – declared that her body was depleted and would not bear any more childbirth. Kasturi, like an ignorant woman, had suffered this repeated assault on her body as her fate, a result of the divine wish, a commonly held belief – “It is God’s will. How is it in our hands?” (26)

The successive births of her siblings had affected adversely the life of Virmati also. As her mother was too sickly to look after her children, this responsibility had fallen on the young shoulders of Virmati:

Ever since Virmati could remember she had been looking after children. It wasn’t only baby Parvati to whom she was indispensable, to her younger siblings she was second mother as well. She was impatient and intolerant of fuss. If they didn’t eat their meals, on her return home from school she would hunt out the offending brother or sister and shove the cold food down their throats. If they refused to wear the hand-me-down clothes she assigned them, she slapped them briskly. Usually once was enough. Sometimes she tried to be gentle, but it was a weary work and she was almost always tired and harassed. (6)

Virmati, thus, was forced to be in a position of shouldering the household responsibilities. Her education was also continuing with these household responsibilities.

Manju Kapur has shown in this novel the condition of Indian women in the early decades of the twentieth century. Women education was introduced for middle class urban women, but it was only for making them literate. Looking after the members of the family, cooking, sewing and teaching these womanly tasks to their daughters were supposed to be the main role of women. Nonetheless, education did impart the idea of an individual existence in some women, howsoever limited might be their number. In *Difficult Daughters* also we come across such

characters. Shakuntala is one such character. She was sent to Lahore for higher education. There she realized the value of an independent existence. So she refused to marry and went on to get a job as a lecturer in the college where she studied for her M. Sc. in Chemistry. Kasturi echoes the thoughts of Lajwanti and other women when she says to Shakuntala – “What is the need to do a job? A woman’s shaan is in her home. Now you have studied and worked enough. Shaadi.” (16) For every Indian woman then, as it largely continues to be now, education was something a girl was occupied with till she got married. Marriage and her own home were considered to be her ultimate goal. Shakuntala now does not believe in this. She says to Virmati:

These people do not really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else. . . . I wish you could see what all the women are doing in Lahore. But for my mother, marriage is the only choice in life. I so wish I could help her feel better about me. (17)

Not following the traditional role of woman imposed by the patriarchal society has given an independent existence to Shakuntala. It has changed her entire personality, even her very appearance. Virmati is fascinated by the change in Shakuntala – “She looked vibrant and intelligent, as though she had a life of her own. Her manner was expansive, she didn’t look shyly around for approval when she spoke or acted.” (16) Her dress too had changed from her Amritsar days. The way she wore her sari or hair was different from the traditional dressing. Her shoes and jewellery had also changed. Virmati is charmed but Kasturi does not approve: “She has become a mem ... Study means developing mind for the benefit of the family. I studied too, but my mother would have killed me if I had dared even to want to dress in anything other than was bought for me.” (16-17) Shakuntala tells Virmati that she is not alone in her decision not to marry. Her friends, who are from different backgrounds, have all chosen not to marry and the

families of all of them are unhappy about it. These women, however, are happy as they travel, entertain themselves in the evening, read papers and attend seminars. One of them is even going abroad for higher education. This is a new world for Virmati – “Maybe here was the clue to her unhappiness. It was useless looking for answers inside the home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom, and the bright lights of Lahore colleges.” (17)

Another character in the novel who opposes the traditional concept of woman is Swarna Lata. She is the room-mate of Virmati in the hostel when she comes to Lahore for her studies. She also has proved a difficult daughter for her mother. Like other mothers in the novel or for that matter in Indian society in general, her mother also wanted her to marry once she had done her B. A. Swarna Lata, however, wanted to live in Lahore as all her friends and activities were there. So she decided to do her M. A. and as her photograph was being sent to prospective bridegrooms, she told her decision to her parents:

I was very clear that I wanted to do something besides getting married. I told my parents that if they would support me for two more years I would be grateful. Otherwise I would be forced to offer satyagraha along with other Congress workers against the British. And go on offering it until taken to prison. Free food and lodging at the hands of the imperialists. (118)

It was Swarna Lata's father who supported her and sent her to Lahore to do her M. A. In Lahore, she had turned into a political activist, participating in political meetings, drafting petitions to the government and taking part in demonstrations.

It is with Swarna Lata that Manju Kapur has created a character who is different from other female characters in the novels who do not want to follow the traditional role of wife and housemaker. Shakuntala does not marry because she values her independence which leaves her free to pursue a life of her own. Virmati breaks free from the marriage arranged for her because

she has fallen in love with someone else and does not want to marry the person chosen for her. Both of them refuse to accept the traditional role given to women in patriarchal society. They, however, do not relate meaningfully to the world outside them. India at that time was passing through the final stages of its freedom struggle and intense activities were going on throughout the country, including Punjab which is the background of the novel. It is through Swarna Lata that the novelist gives us a glimpse of the women's participation in the national life. Swarna Lata started her political activities as a student leader when she contested in the students' election in her college and won, defeating her friend turned rival. It was in early years of 1940s that Virmati was doing her BT. and Punjab was full of political activities. Congress leaders in the satyagraha movement were being arrested in a large number. The idea of a Muslim nation was already afloat which the Congress opposed and the Muslim League supported. Women throughout India had joined the freedom struggle in a large number. Students of different women's colleges of Lahore and nearby places were also participating in political meetings and other activities. Manju Kapur describes one such meeting through Virmati. It was a wet and cold Saturday afternoon in January 1941 and Virmati was supposed to attend a meeting of women students with Swarna Lata where some women leaders were to address them. Looking at Virmati lying in her cot under her quilt, Swarna Lata suggested that if she did not want to go to the meeting, it was alright. Though not very enthusiastic, Virmati got ready to go when she heard that a prominent leader, Mohini Datta, whom Swarna called 'Auntie', would be there and, what is more, Swarna Lata would also be speaking at the meeting. Despite the cold and rain, the hall was packed with girls. Manju Kapur creates the atmosphere of the meeting brilliantly by describing the various comments of the girls in the audience and throwing in between the names of the women speakers whom the girls had come to listen. The first name that we hear is that of Leela Mehta who despite being sick had come to attend the meeting. She is reported

as “the guiding spirit of the women’s conference. Half the girls have come to hear her” (141). Others mentioned are Sita Rallia, Noor Ahmad, Mary Singh, Saba Malik, Phero Shroff and Mohini Datta. Manju Kapur, by mixing names of different religions and regions, gives the event a wider significance. Concluding her speech, Leela Mehta says:

We want not only degrees but constructive work. We demand the right, the privilege of doing something for our country. . . . That is the real Inquilab. Not slogan shouting. Not posturing and empty speech making. If you, the hope of the future generation, can achieve some difference in the lives of your fellow men, then indeed you are the true wealth of your nation. (143)

Saba Malik asserted that the traditional view of women was changing as girls were joining the freedom struggle. In her turn, Swarna Lata spoke about the divisions of Indian society, divisions not only of economic differences but also of religious differences, and exhorted the girls to work for the unity of the country. For Virmati, it was an exposure to a whole new world – strikes, academic freedom, rural upliftment, mass consciousness, anti-imperialism and such others. She felt out of place among those women. Later on, when she gets pregnant before she is married, it is Swarna Lata and Mohini Datta who help her to get rid of the unwanted child. Though Swarna Lata gets married later on, she does not give up her political activities.

Difficult Daughters is really the story of Virmati. It is around her that, what Vikram Chandra, quoted on the cover page of the novel, says, “urgent and important story about family and partition and love” is woven. It is the love story of Virmati and Professor Harish which, though uniting them, divides the families of both. It is much later when both of them are dead and Ida, in search of the story of her mother’s life, meets her aunt Parvati that Parvati sums up their love story: “He came to Amritsar like a person from another world. He dazzled his students. Small-town people. And then his glance fell on your mother. What chance did

she have after that? She was a simple girl at heart.” (224) It all started when Harish came to live as a tenant in the house of Virmati’s uncle which was adjacent to her own, being merely a partition of the same house. He, who had his higher education in England, had joined the local college in Amritsar as a lecturer of English. Virmati was studying for her final F. A. examination when she came in contact with Harish’s wife Ganga.

Ramnavmiwale M. C. observes about Virmati:

Her attraction for Harish, her awareness of her womanly duties and her desire to be free from patriarchal shackles of Indian family – these three forces work simultaneously in her life. The situation is a trying one. Different persons around her demand different things from her. (19)

Manju Kapur has presented Ganga as a foil to Virmati. She is a typical Indian woman cast in the mould of patriarchal values. In the early part of the novel, she is not even mentioned by her name. It is as ‘that woman’ or more frequently by the pronoun ‘she’ that we know her, and it is only towards the end of the novel that her name ‘Ganga’ is mentioned. The interaction of Virmati with Ganga started with an exchange of food between them. Ganga loved to cook and also loved to see other people enjoy the food that she cooked. She had no education and despite Harish’s wish and several attempts, she had made no progress in that direction. Manju Kapur presents a contrast between Virmati and Ganga since the very beginning. Virmati was not only interested in education but she was also charmed by the Western classical music which Harish played on the gramophone, and which left no impact on Ganga. This music also created a favourable impression about Harish in Virmati’s mind against the shadowy image of the man who had been chosen for her marriage by her grandfather. In their first meeting Harish asked her if she liked music and, finding her interested, put a record on the gramophone: “The professor put on his sweetest Bach and was rewarded by the look on Virmati’s face. This girl has potential, he found himself thinking (39)

Ganga was confined to her home and had not gone out of the house even once in Amritsar. It was Virmati who took her out and Ganga felt that outside her kitchen or house she had no knowledge of the world outside. Harish, himself a well-read man had found it unacceptable that his wife should be illiterate. So he had tried his best to make her learn. He had started with Hindi with the hope that once she mastered that she would move to English and later on read the books he liked and became his companion in the real sense. Ganga, on the other hand, found that she was not cut out for it and so despite several attempts by Harish she made no progress in studies.

The novelist does not put the blame for Ganga's predicament on her; rather she holds the patriarchal mindset that considered women to be made only for household works responsible for it. She makes a perceptive analysis of the situation:

The woman's own mother had never read, nor ever felt the need. She had taught the woman everything she knew. By the time she was ready to leave for her husband's house at the age of twelve, she had mastered the basic items of a pure vegetarian diet. She was quick and inventive with the embroidery and knitting needle, as well as with the sewing machine. After her marriage her mother-in-law made sure that she learned the ways of her in-law's household from the moment of her arrival. All this was part of her growing up, she knew, but how was she ever to dream that without the desire to read and write, she was going defenceless into union with a man so unlike the others she knew, who didn't seem to care about her household skills at all? Yet he was impatient and angry when the food was badly cooked, and the house carelessly managed. (40)

Manju Kapur has brilliantly summed up the predicament of Indian women in a male-dominated society. Since her early years a woman is taught what is considered to be feminine qualities – cooking, sewing, knitting and other things required for running her home. She learns these things from her mother and other women

in her house, but she has to learn afresh the tradition of her in-laws' house after her marriage and make her abilities match with new requirements. Her first training is at her mother's hands and her second training takes place at the hands of her mother-in-law. In this way, it is the women who are the carriers of the norms of the patriarchal society, and those who do not follow these norms blindly are termed 'difficult daughters'.

Manju Kapur here makes a comment on the custom of early marriages in Indian society, widely prevalent till the middle of the twentieth century and continuing even today in many communities, particularly in rural India. The system was unfair to both men and women, but particularly so to women. Married very early in life they ran a risk of early widowhood and if they were unfortunately widowed early, they virtually lost all opportunities in life. Unlike men, who could remarry, remarriage for a woman was very rare. There is a reference to this in *Difficult Daughters*. The sister of Virmati's grandfather had become a widow at an early age and he had brought her to his house where she remained a widow throughout her life. Though she enjoyed respect and whatever comfort her brother's family could give, there was no personal happiness in her life.

Manju Kapur also makes an ironical remark on the typical patriarchal mentality of Indian males, even quite educated ones, when she describes Harish's response to Ganga. Ganga found to her disappointment that Harish didn't seem to care about her household skills at all and wanted her as an educated companion, but she also observed that he wanted his wife to cook well and keep the house in order, and became 'impatient and angry' if this was not so. This shows the hypocrisy of the typical male in Indian society. Harish's own contribution to the household affairs was nil, as was the case with nearly all men in those days. When Virmati asks him who washed and ironed her clothes, he is at a loss to answer and says – 'perhaps mother or perhaps she', meaning Ganga thereby.

In her first meeting Virmati was favorably impressed by Harish, though she was not attracted towards him romantically. She found him quite friendly and wondered why his wife was in awe of him after all those years. Harish too did not find such attraction in her at that stage. It was only when Virmati joined college and started attending his classes that he found her attractive. When Virmat passed her FA, she wanted to study further. By that time her marriage was already fixed. So her parents thought that she had enough education, and her fiancé's parents also thought that she was well qualified to be the wife of their son who was a canal engineer – "They didn't want too much education in their daughter-in-law, even though times were changing." (45) Virmati wept and sulked at which her mother was irritated. She wanted her to be married without further delay so that they could think of the marriage of their second daughter who was only a year younger. As it so happened that the canal engineer's father died. There had to be a mourning period and so the marriage was postponed. This gave Virmati an opportunity to get admission into B.A., but Kasturi was ill at ease at the prospect of her studying in a college where there were four hundred boys and only six girls. It was Ganga, to whom Kasturi had gone for advice, who assured her that there was nothing to worry. She knew several students who came to her house to consult their professor. Many of them were married and several others engaged, and all of them came from good families. The world of education, however, was a foreign territory for the professor's wife. The novelist remarks:

The woman became vague. She wasn't sure, but it had something to do with the books her husband taught, and the way in which he taught them. She herself distrusted books, they had caused her so much misery, but as the Professor's wife she was hardly in a position to do so. It was just that the whole business involved so many other things as well. Students at all hours, students beginning to be dissatisfied with life the way it was, with the brides their parents had chosen. (46)

Manju Kapur, herself a former professor in a college in Delhi, was familiar at first hand with the change education brought in the way students looked at life.

The novel describes a particular day in college when Harish was attracted towards Virmati. That day she entered the class a little late and found the first row where girls sat full. So she sat on the floor in front of the professor's desk and began to look up at him with her large eyes. That look captivated him who found this posture to be a symbolic one. He remembered that moment throughout his life. Virmati at this stage did not reciprocate his love. A girl and that too the eldest whose marriage was impending – Virmati knew that she could not return the passion that the professor showed towards her, and yet she could not remain indifferent to this passion. Her heart revolted at the prospect of life that her impending marriage presented before her. She had finished her B.A. and her marriage date was fixed. The professor began to insist that she should tell her fiancé about their love. Virmati did not know how to do so.

Manju Kapur describes the contrast between the two men in the life of Virmati through the two letters, one from her fiancé and the other from the professor, that she receives simultaneously. Her fiancé's letter, telling her that he will be coming to Amritsar in connection with preparations for their marriage, is cold and impersonal, the professor's letter, on the other hand, is passionate. While the former began with 'Respected Virmatiji' and closed with 'Respectfully yours', the latter began with 'Dearest love' and closed with 'Ever your H'. Virmati read her fiancé's letter several times but found no trace of passion or impatience to be united with her. She finally tore up the letter, but still did not know how to realize the passion of her lover's letter in her life. She remembered the time when she was quite happy to be engaged to someone her elders had chosen, but now she did not want to turn away from the passion that was extended to her. Nonetheless, the thoughts of humiliating her grandfather who had decided her marriage, betraying her father who had given her the freedom to

study, and spoiling the chances of marriages of her sisters were daunting.

She did not know how to overcome them, and the professor also was not proving helpful in this regard. When she broached the subject of not wanting to marry to her mother, giving the example of Shakuntala, she got the expected reply:

Shakuntala Pehenji did not have five sisters waiting to get married either. And do you think it makes her mother happy to have her daughter unmarried? She may say what she likes about jobs and modern women, but I know how hard she still tries to find a husband for Shaku, and how bad she feels, you want to do the same to me? To your father and grandfather? (52)

Ultimately Virmati has to take a drastic step to get out of the marriage with a person she does not love. She decided to drown herself in the canal at Tarsikka where her grandfather lived and looked after his mill, gin and flour units. The day she was going to be married, she wrote a letter to the Professor about what she had decided to do, boarded the shuttle bus between Amritsar and Tarsikka which was owned by her grandfather, and after reaching Tarsikka, went straight towards the canal. The suspicious employees of her grandfather followed her and saved her from drowning after she had jumped into the canal. Her grandfather, who was also informed about her movement in the direction of the canal, rushed there and took a dripping Virmati inside the house. Meanwhile, the Professor who had read the letter, asked his wife to go to Virmati's mother and inform her about what Virmati was going to do. This resulted in her father and uncle rushing in their car to Tarsikka and bringing Virmati back home.

The novelist gives a very realistic description of what happens in such a situation when the daughter of the family decides to run away from her house or to commit suicide:

The family was together again. There was no need for any more silence. Words broke forth in torrents as the sequence

of events was pieced together. United, the family talked. United, they raged and grieved, united, they questioned.

Why? Why had she done this thing? Why run away? And worst of all, why tell a stranger of her intention, and leave them to find out from an outsider what she was doing? And what about her relatives that-were-going-to-be? Didn't she owe them a moment's worth of consideration? Was this all her education had taught her? To put herself before others, and damn the rest? How could Bade Baoji bear it? How could anyone in their right senses bear the humiliation? (86)

Virmati came out with half-truths and excuses. She first said that she wanted to study, which bewildered everyone. Wasn't she educated enough? A suspicious Lajwanti was not convinced. Virmati, after all, was not the academic type, unlike Shakuntala. So the idea could not have been her own; somebody might be influencing her. This forced Virmati to say that she did not want to marry. This further bewildered others, and enraged Kasturi all the more. Finally, Virmati had to say that she did not want to marry the boy chosen for her. An enraged Kasturi began hitting her and Lajwanti had to stop her. Virmati could not give them the real reason, but she was resolute about her decision of not marrying the person who was coming that evening with the barat. Finally, they locked Virmati in the godown and arranged for Indumati to marry Inderjit.

In *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur has presented both the female and male attitudes towards women education, marriage and love - attitudes which have not changed substantially in past several decades, at least in most parts of rural and small-town India. The reactions to Virmati's desire for higher studies and, what is more, her refusal to marry the man selected by her family shows the typical mindset that a patriarchal society instills in its citizens – both male and female. During the time that she continued to be imprisoned in the house, Virmati could not meet Harish who had to leave that rented house and shift elsewhere. They, however, had found means to communicate through letters in which they

expressed their love for each other. In one of the letters, Harish mentions something which might be considered as the typical, practical male attitude towards such love affairs in Indian society:

We are both buffeted by the winds of opposition, my darling. Friends tell me in indirect ways to give you up. After the passionate ardour of romance dies down, wives are all the same. How does it matter who is managing the house and looking after the children. Keep her as a friend, they counsel in their infinite wisdom, but why do you want to marry her?

What can I say? I feel sorry for them, because they do not know what it is to feel united with what one holds dearest on this earth, they cannot be elevated above the practical and the convenient. (93-94)

Though Harish expresses these sentiments, he practically does nothing on his own to justify them. Had Virmati not taken the extreme step of committing suicide, she would have been married to Inderjit. During the days of her confinement inside the house, she even came to know that Ganga was pregnant. She was hurt and she communicated to him that their relationship must come to an end. Harish had his own explanation for what happened. He tells her that out of consideration for his family, he had tried to conceal from them his involvement with Virmati. But, after the incident of her attempted suicide, it became known to them. His wife made a hue and cry, and his mother also took her side. So to placate them he tried to make the situation normal and Ganga's pregnancy was the outcome of it. Harish concluded his defense with the assertion: "If I have sinned against you, it has never been in spirit, my darling, never that. My love and devotion has remained ever yours, it is that which gives my life its meaning." (106)

Virmati got admission into a Training College for Women in Lahore to do her BT. Her mother tried till the last moment to dissuade her from pursuing further studies and a career after that, because, as she reminded her, "A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings." (111) When she found

her adamant, she consoled herself with the thought that at least by going away from Amritsar her daughter would not remind her of their shame every day. Shakuntala was glad at finding Virmati in Lahore for further studies, but she was unhappy about the fact that this was so because marriage had not worked out for her. She herself was firm in her opinion that work was not the second best but a goal in itself worthy of pursuit. Before leaving her daughter in Lahore, Kasturi went to have a talk with the principal. Virmati had an inkling of what her mother might have been saying, and she was resentful- "She was to be supervised like a jailbird on parole. Marriage was acceptable to her family, but not independence." (115)

Virmati's relationship with Harish did not come to an end after she moved to Lahore, and this was because of Harish and not because of Virmati. He had a friend in Lahore, Syed Hussain, who was also married but unhappy with his marriage and having an affair with another woman. Similarity of their conditions made Syed sympathetic towards Harish's predicament and willing to help him. He offered him to come to Lahore and stay at his house. Harish at first started writing letters to Virmati in which he posed to be a woman friend, as he feared that the letters might be opened by the hostel authorities. When the letters remained unanswered, he called on her, posing as her brother. Virmati, however, refused to come, saying that she was unwell. The second time he sent Syed's woman friend to bring Virmati out, but she refused again. It was in his fourth visit that Harish was successful in meeting her. The first thing that they discussed was his newly born son. Her mother had informed Virmati about it, showing her happiness at the birth of a son. The birth of a son is regarded as the most desirable thing in a family in the patriarchal society. *Difficult Daughters* also makes a reference to it. Later on in the novel, when Virmati, now married to Harish, becomes pregnant, his mother desires for a son. This shows the fact that in the patriarchal society it is the women who carry forward the patriarchal values. Women, nonetheless, had a secondary position in the family and

society. This is reflected in this fact also that having two wives even in Hindu families was a norm. When Virmati says about their relationship ruining his family, Harish says, "Co-wives are part of our social traditions. If you refuse me, you will be changing nothing." (122)

In a subsequent meeting, Harish took an unwilling Virmati to Syed's house. Soon in the lonely guestroom of that house he made a physical relationship with her, even though she kept resisting. To console her he said: "Aren't you mine? And I yours? Body and soul, heart and mind?" (125) When Virmati asked him to marry her and declare it to the world, he said that he would but he needed time. Soon it became a regular affair in their meetings. A crisis developed when Virmati became pregnant before her examination. She went to Amritsar on the pretext of preparing for the examination but actually to meet Harish and tell him about it. Unfortunately, Harish had gone to his home town, Kanpur in the summer vacation. Without revealing anything to anyone in the family, she returned to Lahore. Her physical condition worsened and so she was forced to turn to Swarna Lata for help who went to Mohini Datta for it. At first, Mohini Datta said that abortion was illegal and no doctor at the government hospital would do it, but later on she managed a doctor for it. Virmati got rid of her pregnancy but at the cost of her deteriorating physical condition, and, what was more, failing in the examination. She had taken gold bangles from her father on the pretext of wearing it, but actually to pay the cost of abortion, which she finally did. At her return to Amritsar she told them that she had donated them to the war fund which gave them much anguish and displeasure.

Manju Kapur, in her very first novel, succeeded in depicting effectively the different shades of the mentality of urban women in the pre-Independence India. The canvas of the female characters ranges from illiterate Ganga, who is well-versed in household affairs, to Kasturi, who despite being educated, does not differ fundamentally from Ganga in her beliefs; from Shakuntala, who

has not submitted to a domestic life and has used her education to have an independent life through a job, to Swarna Lata who has utilized her education in the service of the country and, despite her marriage, has not given up her political and social activities. The central character of the novel, Virmati has features of both Ganga and Shakuntala, but lacks the commitment of Swarna Lata. Her education is driven not by her desire to seek her own path of life but is forced by circumstances. And these circumstances were born out of her love for Professor Harish. She was, as she admits herself, happy enough to be married to a man chosen by her family. She would perhaps have been married after doing her FA. had not deaths in her as well as her fiancé's family postponed her marriage. No doubt she was inspired by Shakuntala but she lacked Shakuntala's commitment to withhold the family pressure. She had expressed her desire to study further but it was really the death of Inderjit's father which postponed their marriage for a year and gave Virmati the opportunity to take admission into B. A., thus bringing Harish in her life.

After her BT, Virmati got an opportunity to become the principal in a girls' school in a small town of a princely state in Himachal Pradesh. Her experience of looking after her siblings had given her an experience of handling children and this proved helpful in her administration of the school. She loved her job and might have succeeded in giving her life a path as per her desire, but for Harish who pursued her even there. The novelist remarks: "He came to be the spectre that lay between her and her life as principal, so that she too began to look upon her stay there as a period of waiting rather than the beginning of a career." (184) Virmati lived in the principal's cottage which was adjacent to the school but secluded. It was in this cottage that Harish appeared one evening. Though she was happy to see him, she knew that he could not spend the night there. So she took him to the house of Diwan Sahib, the prime minister of the state who looked after the school as well. She told him that he was passing through and thought of meeting her. Diwan Sahib said that he could stay at

his house. Harish stayed one more day, but he did not find his stay enjoyable. He felt that Diwan Sahib was keeping an eye on him, and Virmati was also behaving in a guarded manner. So he left, thinking that he would visit again when she would secure a more established position there.

Harish had not yet put before Virmati a proposal of marriage though he was not tired of repeating how much he loved her. Meanwhile she got a letter from Swarna Lata informing her that she had got a job as a teacher in her old college and that she was involved in her political activities as before. Later on, she told her that she was going to be married and the groom had agreed to allow her to go on with her political and social activities after marriage. This made Virmati think about her situation. She wrote to Harish that she was tired of waiting for him. If he could not make up his mind to marry her, she might as well start thinking of a career and move to a more suitable place. In response, Harish came to her one day rather late in the evening, giving her no chance to put him up somewhere else. They spent the night together. There was no promise of any immediate marriage from him, but as the news of his spending the night with her could not remain a secret, Diwan Sahib called her and told her that a girls' school could not afford a scandal and so she would have to leave by the end of the term. After two months she left the school, giving the pretext that she was going for higher studies. Virmati had decided that she would not go to Amritsar, but to Shantiniketan to do her M. A.. On her way to Calcutta she stopped at Delhi from where she had to catch her train after seventeen hours. She decided to go to the house of Harish's friend who knew her and was acquainted with the whole affair. She told him that she was putting an end to her relation with Harish as he was unable to marry her even after five years of their relationship and she could no longer live in that untenable condition. Understanding the gravity of the situation, the friend asked Virmati to defer her plan of journey for three or four days and sent a telegram to Harish

to come to Delhi immediately. When Harish reached there, he unfolded the situation to him and asked him to marry Virmati immediately. Harish began to make the usual objections to this, but the friend forced the situation, saying he either married her or lost her. It was only thus pinned down that Harish married Virmati.

An altogether different phase of Virmati's life started after her marriage. Manju Kapur has brilliantly presented the condition of a woman married to a man who already has a wife. The difficult situation of Virmati's marriage has been presented by the novelist through a contrasted picture of her journey to her husband's house with that of her mother going to her husband's house for the first time. Kasturi had gone to the railway station accompanied by a large number of grieving relatives; Virmati had no one to accompany her except her husband who himself was rather apprehensive of their reception at his home. Virmati knew that neither her parents nor her grandfather would ever forgive her for this act. The process of rejection that had started earlier would now be complete. Kasturi had gone to her welcoming in-laws, Virmati now was going to a house full of hostile faces and sentiments. Harish was also uncomfortable. He dreaded facing his family and tried to embolden himself with the thought that he had done whatever he could do for his existing family. The novelist has given a very realistic description of Virmati's appearance at Harish's house as his second wife. The children stand bewildered, looking at a new woman standing beside her father and their own mother weeping and rushing inside the house. When Harish presented Virmati to his mother, Kishori Devi, as her 'new bahu', she turned her face away. She had no sympathy with this woman as she considered her responsible for all this – "All this was her fault. If she had not gone after him, he would not have strayed, the family would not be torn apart now." (208) Atypical product of the patriarchal society, Kishori Devi could find no fault with the man in such a situation. It was all a woman's fault that the man

had gone astray. She does confront her son with the question as to how he could do that to his wife. An irritated Harish replies that he could not go on living with a woman with whom he had nothing in common- "Who cannot even read. Who keeps a ghunghat in front of my friends." To this Kishori Devi retorts: "She is a wife, not a showpiece" (209). For her, as for Kasturi, a woman is not meant to be a companion of a man. She is her housekeeper whose existence is confined to looking after her husband and children, cooking food and maintaining the house. It is in this context that Kishori Devi considers Ganga to be an ideal wife who has come to this bitter situation because it has been so ordained by fate. A woman has to suffer meekly whatever life gives her. She says to Ganga:

In this life we can do nothing but our duty. Serve our elders, look after our children, walk along the path that has been marked for us, and not pine and yearn for those things we cannot have. Since our destiny is predetermined, that is the only way we can know any peace. Duty is our guide and strength. How can we control the things outside us? We can only control ourselves. (211)

Ganga is anguished. She cannot understand where she has gone wrong. She has always done what she had been taught by her elders was the duty of a woman. Kishori Devi gives her the reply which the traditional wisdom in India has taught everyone in such a situation. If she did not do anything wrong in this life, she must have done it in her previous life for which she was being punished now.

Virmati loved Harish and had always wanted to spend her life with him. It was this passion which had given her strength to reject the person selected for her by her family. But her marriage with Harish does not bring to her the kind of happiness that she had dreamt about. Vandita Mishra, in her review, says:

Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power or freedom. Because even as she breaks free from old prisons,

she is locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the professor, for instance. While it does provide an escape from a loveless arranged marriage, it is itself furtive and claustrophobic, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows.

Harish, on his part, had always professed that he could not live without her. It was their mutual passion that had put them in that conflicting situation. However, after a few awkward days, Harish resumed his earlier routine and was contented in his life. This was not the situation with Virmati. When she had wanted to live with Harish, she had not thought that it would mean living with his first wife, children and his mother. She had not imagined the kind of life that would possibly be there for her. The house they lived in had just one bedroom which had been earlier shared by Harish, Ganga and their two children. Kishori Devi and her daughter, Guddiya who lived with them, slept on the adjacent veranda. Since the bedroom was in the middle of their house, it could not be given to Harish and his new wife. So, they started living in the dressing room and the rest of the family now occupied the bedroom. They all were so close that every sound that the newly-wed couple made while love making disconcerted Harish, as it could easily be heard on the other side.

Whenever Virmati went out of her house, she saw her old house where her parents, sisters and brothers lived and which was now out of reach for her. The sight of the house ached her heart, but she knew that she was not welcome there. Her mother had declared that she was dead for them and that was where she stood now in relation to her paternal family. She had once gone there after her marriage but her mother was so violently agitated to find her there that she had started abusing her. Because of her they had been defamed in the entire society and so she had no place in their family now. Finally, her mother had pushed her out of the house and she had decided that she would not go there again. However, she did go there after her father was murdered in a riot. This time also, when she herself was in grief, her mother refused

to tolerate her presence in the house. She blamed her for her father's death which obviously was not true. It is only towards the end of the novel, when Amritsar was engulfed in communal violence that ravaged the country at the time of Independence, and the Hindus tended to spend their nights together in safe houses, that Kasturi was reconciled with her daughter and asked her to come to live with them.

Though *Difficult Daughters* has throughout shown Manju Kapur's realistic descriptions of feminine sensibility, her description of the conflict between Virmati and Ganga for the control over their shared house is brilliant. On the very second morning in her new house, Virmati realized that she would not be welcome there. When she came across Ganga, the latter did not look at her and resolutely avoided any response. She quietly joined Harish in the garden. Tea was brought by the mother and silently put on the table beside them. Virmati was uneasy at being served by the mother whom in social order she herself should have been serving. Moreover, she was put off at finding that there was no glass of milk which she was in the habit of drinking every morning. When she pointed this out to Harish, he said that she might enjoy taking tea with him. And when Virmati insisted he simply said that she should bear it because he could not start with giving a list of what his wife wanted.

The most pressing problem with Virmati was how to pass her time when Harish went to college. In the beginning she made tentative attempts to help in the kitchen, but Ganga made such a hue and cry about it that she had to leave the kitchen entirely in the hands of Ganga. It was Ganga who used to wash and iron Harish's clothes, and she continued to do so. She also did not let her children come near Virmati. Her sister-in-law, guddiya also maintained a distance from Virmati. When Virmati asked Harish what she was supposed to do all day, he replied that she could read or visit her friends or family, even though he knew that her family did not wish to have any contact with her. To her query

if she could help in the kitchen or do some other household work, his reply was that she should not bother with those things. She was an educated woman and so she should leave the household works to others. Virmati spent the morning in the small dressing room, often reading. Harish came home at lunch time and both of them were served lunch in the dressing room. In this way, she was made to feel that she did not belong there. In the morning she could not use the washroom early as it was used by the mother, Ganga and children first as they had either to cook food or go to school or had some other household work. Giving the description of a day, the novelist writes:

The day passed, empty like the day before. Virmati had a bath, washed her own clothes – his, of course were already done – read, and waited. The room she was in was so small, she had to force herself to concentrate on the print of her book in order not to feel stifled. Once or twice she went out. Giridhar, sitting on the bed with his grandmother, fell silent when he saw her, and looked at her with his big, round eyes. Kishori Devi, her face blank, muttered under her breath, as though each word was an effort, ‘What do you want? (218)

It was only when Harish came home that Virmati felt free to move about in the house in the areas that were considered his. When Ganga saw her, she would turn her face away or at times would stare at her accusingly. Later on, Ganga began to pester her by putting either too much salt or too much sugar in her lassi. In the end she gave up drinking lassi or eating anything that her husband did not eat, because the food that only she took was too salty, too sweet, or too fried, and even stale.

When Virmati got a job as the principal of a primary school, she got a reprieve from her suffocating life at home. The school was something she could call her own. She harmonized with the atmosphere there and working there made her feel an existence of her own. At home, things continued as earlier. She was not accepted as a part of the household and if it rained her clothes

were left outside, or if she came late from the school, no food was left for her. The children were kept away from her. Moreover, the atmosphere at home was particularly hostile, and that too in subtle ways, without being obvious. She, therefore, could not even bring those things to Harish's notice. The novelist gives a graphic description of it:

Then the plaintive tone that Virmati had begun to hear in her dreams, 'Oh, why was I born? Surely I committed a terrible sin in my past life, that this should happen to me? Please God, take me away quickly so this disgrace can end. Then she can have all of them.'

At this point the children would begin to cry, and Kishori Devi would scold 'Why are you talking in this useless manner, Bahu? If you talk of dying, what will the little ones do?'

Renewed sobs, by which time Virmati invariably started to feel like a murtheress. (231-32)

So cornered, Virmati began to plan her revenge. Her only weapon was her husband and she began to use that. She began to needle Harish against Ganga in subtle ways. She often asked him to bring sweets and other delicacies for her and then, with a show of magnanimity, made him share those things with others. She would make a show of dressing up to go out with him. She would often smile seductively at Harish in full view of others. These things had desired results, but they also made her feel small. She was not bad at heart, and what she simply desired was a happy and harmonious life in her husband's house. This Ganga had made impossible for her.

It was Virmati's pregnancy that changed the equation in the house. Kishori Devi became solicitous about her health. She began to bring healthy and delicious food to her. She told Harish that Hindu scriptures laid down that a woman carrying a child must be governed by pure thoughts, and so she wanted Virmati to sleep with her so that she could make her listen to her recitals from holy

scriptures. Virmati, though repulsed by the idea, had no option but to submit to it. But, even this could not continue for long. In the third month of her pregnancy, Virmati aborted. Once she had aborted the child herself as she did not want it, now, as it seemed to her, she was being denied the child as a punishment. Ganga felt happy at this turn of the event as she wanted her children to be the only children in the house. Virmati, on her part, became more alienated from her house.

That Virmati got an opportunity of doing her M. A. in philosophy from Lahore was an offshoot of her miserable condition after her abortion. She had grown silent and suffering, and all Harish's efforts to bring her back to her normal condition became futile. Ultimately, he thought that sending her away for higher education could salvage the situation. Thus it was not Virmati's desire for higher education but her circumstances that led to her obtaining a Master's degree. Ganga was happy at this turn of events. The novelist remarks:

Ganga rejoiced. He was sending her away. True, she was going to study, and was not being returned to her mother's, which would have been a clearer statement, but still, the house would be all hers. Just like it used to be. Poor Virmati. What woman would want to exchange a home for a classroom. (248)

Soon Ganga's happiness turned into resentment. She was illiterate and Virmati had gone to do her M. A. Had her parents paid attention to her education, she would not have been in that miserable condition. Her other abilities had not earned any merit in her husband's eyes. She had done her duties as a wife devotedly, looked after her husband, her children and also her in-laws, but this had gained no recognition for her from her husband. Later, Ganga took advantage of Virmati's absence from her house and succeeded to some extent in drawing the attention of her husband. Had the situation of the country after the Partition not taken her away from Amritsar to Kanpur, never to be united again with her

husband, she might have succeeded in turning the situation in her favour.

If the Partition took Ganga away from her husband, it brought Virmati once again close to Harish. The communal violence in Lahore had forced Virmati to come back to Amritsar. When she came home, the first thing that she did was to shift everything that belonged to Ganga to the dressing room, thus reversing the situation. Now the dressing room was Ganga's and the main bedroom belonged to her. This gave Virmati a sense of triumph. Ganga had kept an almirah locked in which she had kept her costly clothes. Virmati got it opened and sent those clothes to refugee centres. She got pregnant and in due course gave birth to her daughter, Ida. The violence in the city reconciled her to her mother also. Later, when Harish had to leave Amritsar, she accompanied him to Delhi where he had got a job in a college. Gajendra Kumar has aptly summed up *Difficult Daughters*:

The novelist scrutinizes a pertinent and persuasive subject like self-affirmation, man-woman relationship, and family feud and above all the mother-daughter conflict and contradiction. The novel without any literary snobbery deals with a daughter's reorganization of her fractured and fragmentary past hinging on her mother's story. (197)

Difficult Daughters, thus, presents a very realistic account of feminine sensibility in India. It is true that the novel is set in the first half of the 20th century but the picture of women presented in it is more or less true in the 21st century as well. The novel shows how education of women had begun to impact the lives of women in India. It had opened the doors of economic independence for them. Marriage was still considered the ultimate goal for women, but educated women had started taking up jobs. This gave them their independence. This in a way had helped in stopping early marriages also. The novel also shows how women themselves had become the carriers of patriarchal values that went against women. Kasturi is an example of it. Moreover, *Difficult Daughters*

is one of the few novels written by women novelists, which shows the dark side of bigamy. In the novel, Ganga suffers a lot without any fault of her own.

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Understanding Female Writer's Journey of Resistance, Struggle & Assertion in the Male Bastion in the 20th-21st Century

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Abstract

The construction of gender occupies centre-stage in the literary circle as well. The existing stereotypes limit the range and scope of the women writers. Religion, politics, and sex are considered taboo subjects for the women writers. The female writers, already put under the umbrella of feminist writers, do not only have to adhere to the 'certain' norms set to them under the literary realms but also prove doubly hard their worth as a 'female' writer. Years of struggle against the established male bastion makes the journey very difficult for female writers all over the world. Women's writings, then, have to be studied in terms of the resistance it offers to the established social and literary norms. Resistance, then becomes an important trope in women's writings. Impersonality is another weapon that the female writers need to use for writing with a purpose. Women have been fighting all odds to be recognized as authors and have even managed to do so in some cases. However, the journey is still arduous and long.

Keywords: Feminist writings, Stereotypes, Resistance, Struggle, Norms, Impersonality.

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The literary market is impacted greatly and conservatively by the construction of gender. It reaffirms and celebrates the existing stereotypes. This stereotype further limits the range and the scope of women writers. Women writers have been unnecessarily pushed into 'created' zones, such as romantic novels and short stories which do not get included in the literary canon but have simple commercial value. The male canon has aimed to create a political space for the conventional 'women-only' genres. Stereotypes of feminism that see feminist critiques being "obsessed with phallus" and "obsessed with destroying male artists" are always foregrounded. And then, these are things that the male bastion continuously accuses the female writers of. Women's writings, then, have to be studied in terms of the resistance it offers to the established social and literary norms. Resistance, then becomes an important trope in women's writings.

Female writing has always been sensitive to social oppressions of all kinds. It aims to focus attention on not only the manifestation of female sensibility but also on its significance as a means of bringing about an awareness of this reality. The female as a writer in India has always been conscious as the double 'Other', as a woman and a subordinate and a triple 'Other', as a woman, a subordinate and also a colonized person, before independence, even in her own vision. Nevertheless, females do question their 'assigned' role as a woman and their limitations in the biological category, with the 'female' as a social construct. Indian female writers down the ages, forced to be on the 'margin' have always been seen united by vicissitudes of life as well as the concept of the woman space that evolves due to the emotional bonding between women across class and generation attributing largely to the homogeneity of their thoughts. The various material and non-material hierarchies and inequalities that have affected women's lives across time and space are limited not just to gender and class but caste, race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, education, age, and health as well. Religion, myth, and social praxis have also

played a major role in inflicting submissiveness unto the female. With the waves of feminism and female empowerment hitting the globe, voices did begin to be raised against the inequalities through different types of politics and activism in the 'public sphere' while the pen became a mighty weapon in inducing resistance and individual action in the 'private sphere'. Women needed to write their experiences, to express and to share what it meant to be a woman in a patriarchal society. The women's writings, in fact, slowly but steadily began also to discuss the discourse of power, powerlessness and the women's right to power on their own life. Noted Irish feminist writer Linda Anderson astutely opines that women who write about themselves are bound within fictional constructs. These constructs are deeply impacted by the writers' (the female writers in particular) limitations within a sexual code. Anderson talks about the "silent and unrecorded areas of experience; areas that have never been dealt with in print and the important and creative act of fictionalising gaps in history and tradition: for example, Woolf's creation of Shakespeare's sister". (Kumar 89)

Celebrated writer and a strong pillar of the feminist movement, Virginia Woolf opines that men can lock up all the libraries but there is no gate or lock that can control the freedom of hers, or for that matter, any woman's mind. This statement becomes a very powerful resistance against the codes that have been stamped on the female by the patriarchal structure. Woolf advocates the idea that women are supposed to be very calm, but a woman feels just as a man feels and she also needs exercise for her faculties and a field for her efforts just as her brothers do. Her words seem to echo the sentiments of all the female writers who have borne the brunt of marginalisation and the consequent subjugation in one way or the other. She remains very vocal about the unequal and unfair treatment meted out to all women, down the passage of time, the women writers in particular. In her essay, 'Shakespeare's Sister', she creates Judith, an imaginary character, who is the sister of celebrated dramatist William Shakespeare. Woolf then

questions the average reader that even if Judith would have been equally (if not more) gifted and talented than Shakespeare, would she have been given the opportunities and advantages that were provided to her brother. Furthermore, Woolf questions acidly whether the reader and the public would have actually believed that the plays were written by Judith herself; that is, if they believe that Judith was somehow able to write. This sarcastic query is based on the observation that the male bastion very conveniently surmises that the women, possessing only imbalance of temperament and a frivolous nature were incapable of producing any thought-provoking, readable stuff. That is why important and relevant female writings in forms of letters, journals and even diary entries were considered insignificant and mere personal observation by the male canon. As a result, a lot of important and significant female writing was overlooked and discarded as well. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita have brought out the writings of Women in India in two volumes, concentrating on regional literature, studying the works in the terms of oppositional politics. The main issue Tharu and Lalita foregrounded was how these women could manage to write in the first place: battling all adversities. Furthermore, how could they write such transgressive stuff notwithstanding their socio-political status and their limited accessibility? Woolf was able to pragmatically ascertain androgyny as a desirable condition for writers. She did so because she realized that the problem of gender association and values were based on the qualities being considered masculine or feminine. She realized the importance of gender to the act of writing. She also “considered that as long as women writers were underprivileged people, as valued in the terms of their own society, their work was, and is bound to suffer”. (87) Woolf wrote novels as well as critical works and she desires for ‘integrity’, she aims for the concept of wholeness, of completeness. And most importantly, the desire of acceptance in the social system.

The concept of the shared Womanspace looms large in most of the selected pieces in the anthology by Susie and Tharu. Woolf’s

later ideas in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) includes a very famous and relevant statement that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 40). This idea helps her shape Judith as a tragic heroine. Judith is William Shakespeare's imaginary sister. She is as talented as her brother; if not more. But her talents are tragically wasted due to the wretched living conditions that the women purportedly experienced during the Elizabethan period. This clearly highlights the need for economic independence for the holistic growth of a female; an idea which is very explicitly interwoven in most of the revived texts in the two volumes by Susie and Tharu. Moreover, this clearly reflects the homogeneity of ideas that transcend boundaries of age, space, and class.

The male bastion discourages the female from talking about three things: Religion, Politics and Sex. These are taboo subjects for the female which censors the majority of female writers. But this forced censorship could never restrict the immense possibilities the female writer contained within herself. After all, the spirit is indomitable; it can never be conquered. *Radhika Santwanam*, a set of poems composed by a courtesan called Muddupalani, in the mid-eighteenth century, celebrated Radhika's (Radha's) sexuality in her work. Muddupalani reversed the classical Krishna-Radha story – Radha was the passive lover in the original tale. But this Radha was the dominant lover, initiating passionate love and it is Krishna who is trying to please Radha, as the passive lover. It is interesting to note that the 18th Century Thantavur kings provided patronage to this kind of ‘liberated’ literature composed by a female but the British government, aided by ardent social ‘reformers’ attacked it for its ‘explicitness’ and ultimately banned it. The work could be retrieved later with great difficulty in 1910. Nagrathmna, a patron of arts and a courtesan herself, played a vital role in its revival. The ban on this particular piece was lifted only in 1947, in an independent India. But even then, the text was still criticized and ostracized on the ground of obscenity. It was assumed to have

little or no merit. But Tharu and Lalita consider *Radhika Santwanam* as a really transgressive and path breaking text till date as it focuses primarily on the sexual assertiveness of a woman. The imposition of Victorian morality in India by the over-zealous British and their deliberate attempts to deify the nation as a 'woman' resulted in writings such as *Radhika Santwanam*, that too by a woman, not just challenging but also dangerous. Thus, not just 'tradition' or 'ignorance' put constraints on women; notions of nationhood and preservation of culture have also greatly harmed women's writings.

Elaine Showalter, the American feminist who propounded the theory of Gynocritics, herself explains, "[I]n contrast to an angry or loving fixation to male literature, the program of Gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt to male models and theories." (URL: ugcenglish.com/literary-theory/feminist-criticism-in-the-wilderness-elaine-showalter/895/. 14.11.2022.)

Showalter makes it clear that Gynocritics does not desire to erase the difference between male and female literature. Its prime concern is to present the women as the producer of textual meaning. Gynocritics studies women's writing as a fundamental aspect of female reality. Once the female is in control of not just reading, but also writing and deciphering the text, she would naturally have greater power which would lead to decline in her subordination and subsequent weightage in her discourse she delivers. Gynocritics begins at the point when the female deliberately frees herself from the linear absolutes of male culture and stops trying to fit or adjust oneself between the lines of male culture. It totally abdicates the idea of adopting and supporting male theories and aims to construct a female framework to analyse women literature which will develop new models based on the study of female experience. The re-reading of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, of the female characters in particular by

woman writers like Nabaneeta Deb Sen clearly follow this theory, deconstructing the text with new connotations and interpretations. Sen shows interactions between Sita and Suparnakha which point the masculine conventions and the patriarchal concern: encompassing both females; one who is protected and the one who digressed.

In the world of Black women writers, Alice Walker has coined the term 'Womanism' which emphasised on the self-determination of the Black Women. She writes about her African journey, encompassing within its ambit, landscape, people, animals, attitudes and reactions. Her work focussed on celebrating womanhood in general and established a link between women and all the other movements taking place all around the world, which included the literary movements too. Her poems subtly bring out the reality which appears to be veiled: the spark of hope witnessed turns out to be deceptive, exposing the harshness.

"How bright the little /Girl's/Eyes were! /A first sign of / Glaucoma". (Walker 22)

Besides, Walker traces the origin of writing to humble homely chores that black women performed. For her, quilt-making, cooking, knitting and gardening were also 'creative' arts and the black women engaged in these arts were actually 'artists' who were giving expression to their creativity in different ways. Walker thus elevates the status of these marginalised women as she clearly deviates from the established canons of artistry; that too for the female, establishing that writing is not the only stamp for being an artist. Since these women did not get an opportunity to either read or write or to get involved in any other literary activity, they preferred to channelize their talents in various other available ways instead of letting it remain submerged and go to waste. These 'artists', according to Walker are the actual progenitors of black women's writings and not the white male writers who constitute the Anglo-American canon. Thus, Alice Walker offers a completely different contrast by juxtaposing the non-academic artistic activities of the black woman 'writer' against the established

intellect of the white male writer who dominate the literary canons.

The freedom of thought has definitely facilitated a deep interrogation into the unequal differences based on gender and sexualities and the hierarchies of race, class, and ethnicities. The dominant literary canon, controlled by the Western world always ignored the lived experiences of the Third World apart from having a complete lack of awareness of the issues of the third world. There remains an unfulfilled need for more concrete, substantial and effective representation of those marginalised by race and class- even more for the female of the Third World who occupies a triply marginalised position in the patriarchal system.

French feminist Helen Cixous has worked on the psychoanalytic theory propounded by Freud and Lacan and has tried to create a liberated space for women's voice and bodies within these universally acclaimed theories. Cixous tries to move beyond the centralization of the text in the phallogocentric desires and tries to create plural spaces for women from where they can not only voice themselves but also be heard. Cixous, in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa (1975) asserts that "...woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies". (Sarkar 35)

Indian literary critic and a strong voice for the marginalised, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, on the other hand, essays the use of 'Strategic Essentialism' in the study of the subaltern women of the Third World. But she also emphasises on the temporal nature of this strategy. This means that in order to highlight the real issues of the subaltern, the present condition of the female, which is also, the actual base of the transformation, has to be used to the hilt to reach an advantageous position. This would help focus on the main point. In any case, this essentialism should not result in the permanent nature of this short-term strategy. Through her readings and interpretations of the texts of writer and social activist Mahashweta Devi, Spivak is able to bring into focus the condition

of the triply oppressed female in India, the Dalit women in particular. Spivak's work has a global presence. Thus, the penetration is deeper and more effective. She uses English as her preferred language, and this helps her reach both the coloniser and the colonised. The similarities between the Black Feminism and Dalit Feminism help maintain the fluid interaction and total support within the feminist framework; this also helps the text travel further and deeper. Bama and Baby Haldar, two strong female Dalit literary voices have only helped reaffirm the theories and optimism of Spivak, and of Walker as well.

Despite the continuous efforts of the Third World as well as the First World female writers, the market does not encourage the works of the female writers who present the feminist vision of society. The market is more interested in the books that the women can be persuaded to buy. Domestic novels, popular romances and chick literature are examples of such books that stress on the women's role as a homemaker, or the passive partner or as the acquiescent wife, sweetheart, daughter, or sister. Interestingly most of this supposed 'feminine' writing is being done by the male writers under the female pseudonym. This chick and romantic literature, even when written by females is not given any importance, let alone any academic value; the term given to them is "pulp-fiction". This kind of literature is branded escapist literature, totally unfit for any scholarly treatment. But what critics forget is that branding this literature as 'woman specific escapist literature', a particular space has been inadvertently provided to the female. Janice A. Radway correctly surmises that this popular romance is actually a form of 'reading catharsis' experienced by many middle class and middle-aged female readers to come to terms with the neglect and the violence they suffered at the hands of their male partners. The reading helps the female to hope for the magical transformation of the hero from a callous brute to a tender, loving partner. The Utopian construction of such romances is a dream world that offers substitute satisfaction to the women

that makes them feel worthy and alive. The Cindrellaesque experience is a much needed one. One should not forget that it was Cinderella, Rapunzel, and Snow-White who needed rescuing, not their paramours. While the clear condemnation and revolt against the continuous discrimination and exploitation is seemingly impossible on a general scale, the very act of reading such romances is a blatant declaration of independence by the women. After all, the mind is free to fabricate and dream and this genre or literature thus has its own importance and value. The readership that this romantic genre enjoys (considered to be the copyright of female writers and thus “inferior”), coupled with the profit that the publishers make bears testimony that female readership is definitely making waves in the literary arena.

The term ‘woman writer’ is, however, both liberating and constricting. This is so because now the woman writer is free to write and express about anything that is important to her. This liberation is seen through the use of the personal space which was hitherto neglected as the burning topic and can now include issues like drudgery of household work, need for education, personal experiences, the trap of marriage and motherhood, and even sexual abuse. But care has to be taken to ensure that the woman writer does not get restricted writing about just the ‘woman’ issues. By doing so, she will not be including the women in the total hegemonic social structure that enables to understand her situations and problems in a better manner. Furthermore, once the woman writer is branded so, the path becomes more difficult as her claim as a universal writer is thereby forfeited and there would be constant expectation and also the limitation that the women writers, as a woman, could write only about ‘certain’ subjects.

Modern Indian literature also concerns itself with the concept of this constructed ‘certain’. Female discourse occupies an important and predominant position in modern Indian literature. Women have been contributing largely to literature and culture since ancient times in India. Still, their independent identity, or their

centrality in literary space is a post-independence phenomenon (still suppressed under the set colonial narratives) and still limited or forced to remain limited under this 'certain'. Women have played an active role during the freedom struggle in India. They have made their mark on the social, political, economic, cultural, and literary fronts. Women's issues were a part of social awakening and reform; often expressed through their writing: Rokeya Hosain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905) being one of the finest examples of the Utopian dream of a happy and prosperous land, bereft of the male community. Feminism, in India, emerged as a powerful movement after independence, deeply influenced by the Western feminist literary theories. The worshipping of women, and the insults and atrocities committed upon them, were both polarities and both were condemned. Both were viewed by Indian feminists as the patriarchal ways to control and suppress the women. Thus, a more acceptable, pragmatic and progressive feminist representation was needed, and this was seen in the writings of Rajam Krishnan, Sivakami, Anuradha Ramanan and Indumati in Tamil; Olga a.k.a. Lalita Kumari in Telegu; Lalithambika Antharjanam, Madhavi Kutty a.k.a. Kamala Das, Gracy, Sara Joseph, P. Vatsala and Sugat Kumari in Malayalam; Rajlaxmi N. Rao, N.V. Bhagyalakshmi and Vaidehi in Kannada; Shanta Gokhale, Kavita Mahajan, Usha Mehta, Urmila Pawar and Pradnya Lokhande in Marathi, Lily Ray in Maithili, Aashapoorna Debi in Bengali; Sarojini Sahu in Oriya; Shivani, Mridula Garg, Chitra Mudgal, Krishna Sobti, Mannu Bhandari and Maitreyi Pushpa in Hindi are few of the names that have been continuously writing in protest against the set 'certain' norms and literary constructs. Majority of these books have been translated into English, Hindi as well as other regional Indian languages to facilitate deeper outreach and readership. As a part of Indian English Literature, female novelist such as Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, and Kavita Kane have made similar significant contributions.

Toril Moi, thus, rightly stresses on the impersonality of the female writers to maintain their position in the academic arena and

in the literary market. No male writer is ever under constraint to point out that he is a writer and not a 'male' writer. This kind of sexism is extended only to the female. A female writer, having contributed largely to the feminist agenda should not be considered a deviant if she moves to larger, more general issues. She needs to do this to claim more central space. She could also be deliberating herself from a certain kind of writing by women that is saleable precisely because it is by women. *The Mill On The Floss* (1860) was written by Mary Ann Evans during the Victorian age under the pseudonym of George Eliot. Evans did this because it was the need of the hour; so sure she was of the fact that her work would face outright rejection if the writer was a woman. The pen name was used also to ensure that her works were taken seriously in an era when women writers were usually associated with romantic novels. She had to choose between not being published because she was a female writer, or to let her work reach the readers even if under a male banner. She chose the second option, and the book came to be a major success, a cult classic which remains one of the most popular books till date; written by a woman but not having a totally women-centric plot, as expected by the male canon.

Women's writing, at present has relevance and validity for reasons more than one. Besides projecting and highlighting the observations, situations, responses and struggles of women within the gambit of kinship, marriage, and procreation, it also questions values and structures which were hitherto axiomatic. Furthermore, it tries to redefine freedom and creativity, attempting to free it from the clutches of the male canon, and puts up queries related to oppression and colonization, at the same time. However, it is also seen that, in order to carve out their space in public sphere, women have often had to abide by tacit rules that only recognize them as creative beings insofar as what they create is comparable to standards imposed by a male-oriented tradition. Women's strategies have been to improvise with what was available. This needs to

be taken care of. Celebrated feminist writer from India, Mridula Garg, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award (2013), speaking about freedom of expression in a 'free' nation, opines:

“As a woman, I know doubly well, how difficult it is to be free in a free nation. I wonder sometimes, why my mother's generation felt freer than mine? Is it because the affluent world has gained a greater hold on us, with the explosion in the demonstration effect? Is it because, having tasted the larger freedom, we expect everything to follow, automatically? Are we content to indulge our freedom of expression, when we feel shackled, instead of struggling to break free? Freedom of choice is a hard taskmaster. It is never easy to be free but it sure is exhilarating. I am glad to be kept on my toes by the competition around me”. (Jain 47, emphasis mine)

The competition that Garg talks about is not within her own circle, but the one outside it. The continuous struggle that a woman writer has to face as she writes: establishing herself as a writer of meaningful content, something worth a read and contemplation becomes more difficult than the art of honest expression itself.

With painstaking effort, women throughout history have fought to be recognized as authors, and in many cases have also managed to be recognized as such. The words of celebrated American poet, Robert Frost become relevant for the ongoing female struggle in the contemporary world:

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.”

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Classroom Techniques and Strategies for Promoting Learner Autonomy in ELT

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Abstract

The traditional Instructive Approach has long since given way to Constructive Approach in language learning and the classrooms have become learner centered in ELT. The major and novel approaches to teaching language and the new theories on learning styles and multiple intelligences inform the pedagogy of the new English teacher as (s)he embarks on cultivating an interactive classroom which aims at learner autonomy. The ability to chart out one's own learning program based on learner needs help on learner autonomy. This requires a teacher or facilitator who supports the student with real-time activities and scaffolding so as to ensure the Gradual Release of Responsibility from the teacher to the student. Theories ranging from Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to the Multiple Intelligences of the learner by Howard Gardner are under discussion in this article in order to bring forth certain essential techniques and strategies that can be used by all facilitators in ELT classrooms in order to ensure learner autonomy.

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Each learner of language is a mix of capabilities, possibilities and learning styles which have to be appropriately tapped by the ELT practitioner. The decision or strategies adopted by the language trainer should involve promoting individual autonomy as well as equity in the classroom. Learning content is primarily to acquire knowledge and develop language skills. Here the student should situate themselves as learners, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses or qualities as a learner and reach the level of self-directed learnership to become involved in learning life-long. This leads to grooming the student as autonomous learners and thus further student growth. Learner autonomy is thus the learner's own ability to be in control of their own learning. Autonomous learners plan their own learning since they recognize their needs, abilities and interests, and choose their learning time, material and mode of learning based on their needs.

Different Approaches to Learning

As different from the traditional classrooms which are teacher-centered, the present scenario considers teachers as the facilitator who observe, guide and direct rather than control the learning process. In this traditional situation, in learning a language, the focus was on explaining the language features rather than the language use, by memorizing and with repeated drills – a linear approach to language teaching, where the teacher is supposedly the source of knowledge and the learner is a receiver. In the 1960s and 70s, the humanist approach to language teaching emerged which focused on the learner's intellectual and emotional development. Another approach was the Communicative Language Teaching Approach based on teaching communication skills- this approach was based on TBLT (task – based language teaching); which focuses on learning by doing. Here activity-oriented classes are conducted. The teacher moves to the background and advises and monitors the progress of the students. They are assigned group

and collaborative work, keeping them motivated in learning the language. Therefore, the learners have more initiative and responsibility and are in control of the learning process (Boyadzhieva, 2016).

Different approaches to teaching- learning emerged from 1950s onwards. The early traditional approaches began with the theory of Behaviourism, which studied observable behaviour and a person learns by changing their behaviour to achieve the outcome. Here praise and feedback are used as reward. eg: choral practice, drills, dictation etc. Cognitivism of the 1960s shifted teaching/learning to the study of the mind, rather than behaviour. Here, the role of memory to promote learning is focused on and learners actively learn by structuring their learning process. eg: problem solving, evaluating own learning. Constructivism emerged in the 1980s by which learners create own knowledge based on their experiences and interactions. eg: critical thinking, synthesizing etc (Schneider). A recent (2005) approach is the theory of Connectivism which projects the idea that learning develops best on creating connections. Experiences and interpersonal communication can lead to connectivist learning in the classroom. Connectivism is also a strategy that allows the learning to be interesting and exciting, particularly in the modern scenario where the digital media creates live experiences for the students and can also motivate them forward in learning.

The teacher centered classroom is built on the Instructive Approach in which the students are told how to learn; whereas the learner centered Constructive Approach encourages active learning, problem solving, participation and critical thinking from the part of the student.

Instructivist (Teacher-Centered) Approach

Constructivist (Learner-Centered) Approach

Traditional Classroom	Constructivist Classroom
Curriculum begins with the parts of the whole. Emphasizes basic skills.	Curriculum emphasizes big concepts, beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts.
Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.	Pursuit of student questions and interests is valued.
Materials are primarily textbooks and workbooks.	Materials include primary sources of material and manipulative materials.
Learning is based on repetition.	Learning is interactive, building on what the student already knows.
Teachers disseminate information to students; students are recipients of knowledge.	Teachers have a dialogue with students, helping students construct their own knowledge.
Teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority.	Teacher's role is interactive, rooted in negotiation.
Assessment is through testing, correct answers.	Assessment includes student works, observations, and points of view, as well as tests. Process is as important as product.
Knowledge is seen as inert.	Knowledge is seen as dynamic, ever changing with our experiences.
Students work primarily alone.	Students work primarily in groups.

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In the instructivist classroom the curriculum is content based, the students are passive and the teacher is the instructor, whereas, in constructivist classroom the curriculum is student driven(they can choose topics);the students are active and the teacher is the facilitator and guide;In instructivism, the teacher presents knowledge and the students work individually on a content based structure, which the instructor evaluates in the end whereas in constructivism the students construct knowledge by working in groups based on a process based study material and finally they evaluate their own learning as well as their peer, alongside their facilitator. The traditional mode of classroom was based on Behaviorist theory of learning whereas constructivism is based on cognitivist theory.

Learner Centered Classroom

The modern CLT-Communicative Language Teaching approach is based on constructivist theory and focuses on language for

communication. Learners develop language skills by interacting with others in different contexts like school, community etc. The teaching techniques include- describing people, events, expressing likes/dislikes etc. Such CLT methods are used in learner -centered classrooms. According to Richard and Bohlke (2011), learner centered teaching accrues many benefits such as being sensitive to individual needs and performances based on constructing knowledge and meaning by giving prominence to students' life experiences. This promotes learning both in and out of classroom and takes into account their learning preferences, styles and motivational factors. Above all, the learner has ultimate responsibility of their own learning (26).

Learner centered classroom focuses on the students and their goals, and addresses their needs. An active learning community is formed taking care to create student collaboration and group work. The 3 pronged technique of 'Access-Voice- Action' comes to play here. The learners access the materials to further their studies. They interact with each other and the materials and express their ideas and gain confidence in language skills. The autonomous learners also are able to solve problems and have decision making skills to act in a given situation. Stein(2000).

Ultimately, the teacher, though in the background, has a prominent role in language teaching, as guides and facilitators who provide support on demand, and encourage students to control their own learning and supporting them by creating a real world, authentic learning experiences and also resorts to technology to personalize their learning. A learner centered teaching strategy should include the teacher to present an overview of the topic initially, with its objective and the relevance of the topic. The teacher can begin by starting on what the learners already know and encourage independent learning by active and discovery based activities. The teacher should acknowledge and accommodate student diversity in ability, gender, age, culture etc. He/she should encourage discussing and interactive techniques; give timely feedback and align objectives, strategies as well as assessment.

The learner has at the same time, their own roles such as communicating in a variety of ways to different people; talking and listening to others; solving problems in different context; use reasoning skills by synthesizing information; transferring information to new contexts, in order to solve new problems (Carlile et al, Doyle n.d).

Learning Style Types

If the teacher matches their instruction with the students' learning preferences, then the learner's performance, motivation and achievement can increase. The 3 basic different learning styles are: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic/Tactile

Visual (V)-learners who learn best through visual objects. Here, learning can be done through charts, diagrams etc. The teaching strategies could include: asking students to highlight texts and color-code their notes; draw pictures of new concepts and ask students to do the same; give maps and charts to teach new material; have students use different fonts, colors and sizes on the computer.

Aural/Auditory (A) - learners who learn best by listening. Learning can be done through discussions or by reading aloud/ recorders. The teaching strategies could include: Discussing new topics and subjects, as a group and ask students to do it with partners. Students can record lectures and their own presentations which can be reviewed by themselves later; students can read aloud and voice concepts and ideas to them; creating tunes and rhythms when learning new material can also be done by the learners.

Kinaesthetic (K)/Tactile (T) -learners who learn through their body movements or by their sense of touch. Learning is best done through 'learning by doing', collecting, fitting things etc. The teaching strategies could include: Using role play to act out concepts and ideas taught in your course; Students can be asked to take notes while listening to lectures or reading; have students

spell new words in teams using their bodies etc (Reid, Dunn & Dunn). There are certain teaching techniques recommended by Sarvenaz Hatami for all the 3 learning styles:

Visual:

The learners with prominently visual learning styles are day-dreamers and need to have their attention arrested. So recommended teaching techniques would be;

- Flash cards
- Colour coding information
- Encouraging highlighting of key points in texts
- Using diagrams, photographs, charts, maps etc.
- Having them write down notes during lectures
- Using acronyms, mnemonics or mind maps

Auditory:

Auditory learners require background noise or rhythm to further their learning, as it helps them focus and concentrate. Recommended teaching techniques would be;

- Videos or podcasts
- Having them read aloud
- Using songs, rhymes or poems
- Group discussions or debates
- Teaching concepts using rhythmic sounds
- Using word associations or aural word games

Kinaesthetic:

Kinaesthetic students learn best by 'doing'. They often struggle with memorising texts and have difficulty spelling. Recommended teaching techniques would be;

- Experiments and Labs
- Gamification
- Field trips

- Role-playing or Scenarios
- Problem-solving; case studies, simulations (Hatami 2019)

Multiple Intelligences

Multiple Intelligence theory by Howard Gardner, posits that children are multidimensional subjects and that not only their cognitive abilities, but also their physical, spiritual, and artistic capabilities should be developed. Language learning tasks can be created keeping this in mind if the educators recognize and nurture the broad range of talents and skills that the learners possess. The learner centered classroom should also focus on the dominant intelligence style of the learner.

There are 8 major intelligences, according to Gardner (1993):

1. Linguistic intelligence (“word smart”) 2. Logical-mathematical intelligence (“number/reasoning smart”) 3. Spatial intelligence (“picture smart”) 4. Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence (“body smart”) 5. Musical intelligence (“music smart”) 6. Interpersonal intelligence (“people smart”) 7. Intrapersonal intelligence (“self smart”) 8. Naturalist intelligence (“nature smart”)

Linguistic Intelligence is the ability for verbal communication and language games can be used to develop the skills of this set of learners. Word games and jigsaw puzzles can be given.

Logical Mathematical- they can use numbers effectively and problem-solving capabilities can be nurtured. These students, can upon re-reading the text, solve questions and language structures.

Spatial Intelligence- the ability to perceive the form, shape, colour etc and thus they can create mental images; hence charts, pictures, videos, slides can be used as classroom strategies.

Bodily Kinesthetic- ability to use the body to express themselves. Classrooms can use roleplays, games and activities that involve group dynamics.

Musical-ability to appreciate rhythm, melody etc. They can be given audio and recorded tapes and musical games to collaborate in the activities.

Interpersonal-ability to co-operate with others and understand others' opinions and attitudes. Group work and pair work can be given as tasks to them.

Intrapersonal- ability to understand oneself and own strengths and weaknesses. Tasks that reflect on their beliefs, opinions on a particular issue or problem can be given.

Naturalist-Loves nature and can relate to it. Lessons related to nature will be appreciated by them and picture cards, nature related games, plays and story games can be given to them. (Armstrong 2009)

The teacher has to sort out the students' learning styles, mindset and help them interact and encourage them to learn. These learners will be motivated, with a positive perception of themselves and will be able to make further choices to enhance their motivation and autonomy and emerge as lifelong learners.

Learner Autonomy

The term "learner autonomy" was first coined in 1981 by Henri Holec. Learner autonomy is the students' ability to set targets for oneself and take control of their own learning. The student will be an active learning partner and the process of learning will be one of autonomous discovery and decisions-the how, what, when and why they learn will be based on the learner's interest and passions and thus they evolve into a life-long student with intellectual curiosity. In a proper learner centered classroom, the students work independently without too much control from the teacher- the teacher only guides the student forward in the activity. The teacher has to start off from the knowledge the students already have gained. This mode of teaching / learning promotes learner autonomy and has been taken up by many theorists. Some of the significant ones are:

Zone of Proximal Development by Lev Vygotsky (1978):

According to Vygotsky, "what a child is able to do in collaboration today, he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (1987, p

211). Here, in group work, the students use each others' knowledge to facilitate more meaning and knowledge, under the guidance of the teacher

What the students know → ZPD → What students don't know

The learner gets involved in active learning by showing what they can do. The beginning part is that in which the teacher should understand the cognitive point or the previous level of understanding or knowledge of the student from which the learning should start off. The ZPD is the point at which alone the teacher should give guidance to the next level, i.e., it is the part of the learning process or the area where the skills may be difficult for the student to capture on their own. The guidance and encouragement from the instructor can give the support they need. This is the scaffolding technique which was later developed by Bruner.

Scaffolding by Jerome Bruner (1976):

Jerome Bruner explained that learners can solve problems and achieve goals which may be challenging with the help of supports. Here scaffolding is a metaphor which denotes the temporary supports for workers to climb tall buildings. As the learning progresses, the scaffolding is removed. This removal/release can occur over a day/week/ semester as the case may be. Different methods to scaffold like- written and spoken prompts, written guidelines, models, graphic organizers etc. eg: sentence frames to help speaking exercises: My ambition is _____

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model by Pearson and Gallagher (1983):

Here the responsibility moves from the teacher to the student in 4 stages:

1. I do it (teacher models instructions)
2. We do it (both teacher and student complete instructions together)

3. You try to do it (students complete the task while the teacher watches and helps)
4. You do it alone (students complete the instruction on their own)



This gradual removing of scaffolding creates a pathway for learner autonomy. Here collaborative effort among teachers and learners are alike needed for successful classroom transaction.

A class room situation following these 3 methods can be explained:

A situation in which an elementary teacher can face can given as an example: Students can be asked about their role model. They can be asked to pinpoint a person who can act as their role mode in life, by connecting to what they know already.

- a. Zone of Proximal Development: Teacher connects to previous knowledge an develop on it. Teacher asks the simple question as to, whom they admire and why do they do so.
- b. Scaffolding: When students have difficulty expressing, the teacher can give sentence frames on the classroom board, such as—My role model in life is..... because.....
- c. Gradual Release of Responsibility Model: When the students learn the sentence stem/structure, the teacher

removes the sentence frame from the board and asks the students to frame the sentence on their own.

Classroom Strategies

The cooperative learning environment in a learner – centered classroom structure would involve group activities. Hence certain grouping strategies also need to be focused on. According to Rance Roney(2010), grouping can be done keeping in mind the different aspects of the students in the class.

Mode of Grouping—

- A mixture of personalities in a group can make the learning easier. Stronger personalities can be leaders and others can take roles like time keeper, notetaker etc. so that all can participate.
- If students of different language background are present, those of the same L1 can be grouped together.
- Learners can also be grouped based on their learning styles/ intelligences.
- Students of the same interests, knowledge level, skills etc can be grouped into homogeneous or heterogenous groups based on the requirement of the activity.
- On the other hand, the students can be grouped at random or based on the learner inclinations.

The classroom culture should be regulated by the teacher, who should promote interaction by asking and prompting more advanced questions. They should encourage students to analyse their own learning process. Ideas should be shared among both facilitators and students, thus encouraging cooperative learning techniques. Thus, a collaborative problem-solving method should evolve in the classroom.

Strategies in Group work

While engaging in activities, certain techniques can be used to promote smooth and efficient conduct of the activities. Certain

strategies in language classrooms can include arranging the classroom before class begins to avoid disturbance in class; form pairs / small groups – so that there will be active involvement; collect students' personal data beforehand so that they can be grouped based on the information and creating group cards with information on the members so that it will not be repeated often.

1. Clock partners- Each period the learner will have a partner of different kind: e.g., 1st hour partner of same proficiency, 2nd hour partner with similar interest, 3rd hour partner of higher / lower proficiency etc
2. Day of the Week groups- Specific activity each day :eg- Monday-vocabulary partner, Tuesday-writing partner etc.
3. 'I know', 'I need help' cards-give them cards of different colour, so that if they are comfortable with continuing with the activity, they can show green card and if they need help, they can show yellow cards.

The teacher in a learner centered classroom should take note that all four language skills are integrated in the CLT activities. Also, their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities of the students should be worked out. Efficient methods to assess the learning outcome of the student also should be made. The increasing potency of language classrooms with TBLT and CLT techniques involve the need to create new and varied strategies to instigate learner autonomy. Each teacher should appropriate new techniques depending on the cultural and linguistic classroom contexts they are involved in. Meeting the specific objective in language classrooms is the goal to be worked towards with careful planning and motivation.

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Silence in the Development of Stephen's Character in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile and cunning.

(James Joyce 1916: 269)

The intellectual, theoretical and philosophical *topoi* of the great chain of being, the order of things and the constitution of realities, self and identity have been a matter of great philosophical and critical enquiry. There have been two prominent paradigms namely the paradigm of pure ontology which believes in the ideas of pre given, divine, and essentialist nature of human self and identity. The second paradigm of social ontology has believed in the idea that identities, self, being and subject are constituted by the phenomena of historical determinism and cultural relativism. The essentialist model believes in the metaphysical, transcendental

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and the pre given reality of life and identity of human beings. It further believes in the ideas of sovereign self and autonomous identity as have been explained by Immanuel Kant in his "What is Enlightenment" (1784). The philosophical plenitudes of the social ontology contextualise the critical thoughts of the technologies of self, governmentality, biopolitics, contextual determinism, geopolitics as have been explained by Michel Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *The Order of Things* (1966). Michel Foucault like Frederic Nietzsche, Alain Badiou, Emily Durkheim etcetera has believed that the reality or truth is highly historical and is constituted by several socio-pragmatic realities which involve social, political, cultural, economic, anthropological, linguistic, religious and other forms of realities.

What one is and how one becomes are the central questions of the critical plenitudes of the western metaphysics and Indian systems of knowledge particularly philosophy, poetics, politics and aesthetics. The history of western metaphysics expounds the entire journey of the constitution of human beings into a subject. Unless the advent of theological philosophy of St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, the being has always been represented as universal, objective, eternal, absolute and complete in itself and therefore it is beyond the realm of critical enquiry, scientific procedures of observation, classification and falsification.

Gradually with the advent of philosophy in the forms of Francis Bacon, Giambattista Vico, John Locke, David Hume, George Berkeley, Rene Descartes, Pierre Byle, J.S. Mill, Immanuel Kant and many others questioned the basic postulations of transcendental idealism and the philosophy of absolute self. The critical ideas of these philosophers have underlined the role of mind and the socio pragmatic realities in the constitution of self. The transformation of being into self or the ontology into epistemology has brought what Thomas Kuhn calls the reality of 'paradigm shift'. Thomas Kuhn in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962) has enunciated the basic ideas of the formation of self into a

subjectivised self. Later, Michel Foucault with his philosophical ideas of biopower, biopolitics, governmentality, disciplines, sexuality, body, sanity and insanity, disease and illness, subjectivity, care for the self, etcetera has underlined the idea that it is the philosophy of social constructivism that constitutes the self and identity of a person. The ideas of being, self, subjectivity, subjectivisation and objectification of the self have been debated, discussed, interrogated and yet there are no conclusive answers to those phenomena.

The philosophical and intellectual plenitudes of empiricism, cognitivism and pragmatism have explained that the constitution of self and identity is the consequence of the interplay of power and knowledge and their relationship with discourse. The discourses are deeply embedded within the models of philosophical ideas which may include socio-pragmatic and aesthetico spiritual forms of discourses. The socio-pragmatic form of discourse primarily engages itself with social, economic, political, cultural, intellectual, linguistic, scientific and anthropological realities. However, the aesthetico-spiritual form of discourse encapsulates the realities of art, beauty, sublime, aesthetics and silence.

Bernard P. Dauenhauer in *Silence, The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance: Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (1980), proposes the idea that to understand how a being is created, it is important to discover the elements that constitute the being. The constitution of being is deeply embedded within the rubric of language. It is the symbolic order which constructs and encodes the epistemic structure of a being. It is through language that the being perceives the world. Cognitivist thinkers have brought the mind to the focus. Lacan through his psychoanalytic theory as explained in *Ecrits: A Selection* (1977) asserts, “unconscious is structured like a language” (163). It means that deepest layer of the mind is the reservoir constituted by repressed thoughts, feelings, desires and memories. Mind with its layers of unconscious, subconscious and conscious is where Lacanian matrix of imaginary, symbolic and real, frame

the fabric of subject and subjectivity. The process of signification of language is what leads to perpetual process of the constitution of self and subjectivity.

The process of becoming and eventually unbecoming, takes place in and through language. When a character moves into the world of language or the symbolic order, the character experiences the process of its becoming. However, with the experience of epiphany, moments of being and the spot of time, the character moves into the world of silence. It is in the moments of silences that the self-reflection happens. It is in this 'moment of being' that the disruption happens and the healing begins. The unsaid things accumulated over the time in the unconscious, 'real' register show up from a momentary reflex of these epiphanies into the symbolic order represented by silence as explained by Martin Heidegger in *Poetry, Language, and Thought* (1971). He locates the process of epistemological construction in the complicated texture of linguistic realities, stating that one takes birth in the world of language. Hans-George Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (1960) establishes the fact that one does not only take birth in language but is also brought about because of language. Further, he articulates that language is where our understanding, our mode of being in the world comes to realisation.

Bernard P. Dauenhauer's (1980) has explained that "silence is a complex positive phenomenon" (Preface). Twentieth century philosophy predominantly has represented silence either in positive lens or in complex structure. Over the past century, there has been a dramatic increase in the acceptance of silence as a positive phenomenon. Carl Gustav Jung, Martin Heidegger, John Cage, Ronald Barthes and many other philosophers and critical thinkers have talked about silence and its role in the self-consciousness. Awareness, thought and consciousness lead to the development of a being into a subject.

Since time immemorial the growth and development of human beings depend upon acquiring knowledge or experiencing

epistemological experiences and central to all knowledge is reflection, recollection and awareness which occurs within the spectrum of silence. It does not mean absence of sound. It is widening the horizon of elevated sounds. The growth and development of a being takes place on the foundation of silence. It is therefore integral to the process of becoming and the journey from ontology to epistemology.

Bernard P. Dauenhauer's (1980) presents a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of silence. To understand the phenomena of silence better, the research uses the bifurcation of epistemology and ontology and the three schools of knowledge formation namely Empiricism, Cognitivism and Pragmatism. The silence comes into existence with the amalgamation of both the immanent silence and the transcendental silence. A pure ontological primordial conception of silence is that of a pure ontological essential sense that exists in the way Indian and western philosophers have defined it. Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Schelling and Schopenhauer argue that silence by no means mean as an absence but the structural and post structural paradigms represent that it is a destination and a process both. Pure ontological silence being the destination and the process of experiencing it, rationalising it and comprehending it in our lives it is processed by the epistemic texture. To gain awareness and to be elevated to a higher consciousness one needs to undergo the dialectical process of becoming and unbecoming of pure self into subject into a transcending self. Dauenhauer explains both phenomenological and ontological approaches to silence. He has explored and theorised silence profoundly and systematically taking insights from various thinkers and philosophers. He establishes the background of silence and its relationship with discourse. Silence here is not restricted to the silence of the lips but silence of the mind. As one progresses in one's life and becomes a subject it is observed that one gets accustomed to the realities of governmentalities. In order to think clearly one needs to quiet those noises and listen to oneself.

Therefore, this research would try to cater to the silences of the thoughts. The disruption between the self and the subject provides the space to think.

Dauenhauer in his 1980 examines the philosophical underpinnings in Soren Kierkegard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843) investigating the nature of silence and the complex conduits of it. Dauenhauer investigates and concludes on Kierkegard's perspective as an inextricable relationship between discourse and silence. He explicates on the relationship between them that there is an "irreducible polyvalency and ambiguity both of discourse and silence and of the intrinsic connection between them" (Dauenhauer 115). To explicate this ambiguous relation between these two it is important to reflect on language, speech and its relation with silence. Marleau Ponty presents the awareness towards pervasive involvement of silence in discourse. In his *The Prose of the World* (1973) Ponty elaborates "We should consider speech before it has been pronounced, against the ground of the silence which precedes it, which never ceases to accompany it, and without which it would say nothing. Moreover, we should be sensitive to the thread of silence from which the tissue of speech is woven" (45-46). Ponty establishes a dialogic relation between speech and silence. He states that silence is not only a retreat into privacy but it also has a bearing between the self and the world.

Fred Dallmayr in "Nothingness And Sunyata: A Comparison of Heidegger and Nishitani" (1992) restated Heidegger's persistent theme of, "Antisubjectivism (as a gateway to nonbeing)" (43). According to Heidegger the pathway to 'authentic existence' is intentional 'hearing' of 'the call of conscience' which takes place in the 'genuine speech' of silence. The call of conscience interrupts the chatter of 'idle talk' which absorbs the being into the world as inauthentic existence. The character walks towards the 'being for itself' to 'being in itself'. Further, Heidegger provides a systematic study of hermeneutic phenomenology in order to understand the being of things. According to him

experiences are coded in inherited symbolic structure. He separates speech from language. Speech is the articulation of one's conception of the entities of the world. The genuineness is decided on the basis of direct and indirect acquaintance with the subject matter. Language is the combination of discovery of entity/content along with expression or spoken-out-ness of active articulation(speech). It is not an optional accretion but the 'flower of the mouth' developed and acquired organically by *dasien* while coexisting with the other beings. 'Flower of the mouth' is a phrase originally used by German philosopher Frederick Holderlin but reintroduced by Martin Heidegger while discussing his philosophy of language in relation to *dasien* signifying power of language as a transformative mean of understanding and expressing truth in the world. He divides language into two types, 'idle' and 'genuine'. Idle is the shared, average, presupposed, trans individual sense of the world that gets exchanged on an everyday basis. This idle talk may or may not have a direct acquaintance amongst the interlocutors. It is a common form of speech which absorbs away the being from genuine speech. Genuine speech is the counter to idle talk because it goes through the process of verification in which the matter of discussion, in words of Brandon Absher's "Speaking of Being: Language, Speech and Silence in Being and Time" (2016) "is exhibited and allowed to show itself from itself" (225). Further Absher elaborates that, it is a speech involving the self which is "a kind of silence in which one hearkens to the call of conscience, a call that reveals the ab-sent self- the open space of possibilities through which the world is disclosed as such" (226). Fundamental ontology orients the discovery of being in the silent listening of the logos. Here he propagates his idea of unhiddenness through the recovery of silence which is less understood or avoided in idle chat. *Dasien* conceives and covers itself as a flight to survive in the world. Steven Bindeman in his *Silence in Philosophy, Literature, and Art* (2017) delineates Heidegger's notion of silence as a primary ontological condition of language. Heidegger's long

reflection on language can be inferred through *dasien*. He believed that language always has a truth, an unconcealed quality within it called *aletheia*. He distinguishes the act of speaking with the matter that is being spoken. Heidegger in his *Being and Time* (1927) elaborates that conscience is defined as a call which has an appeal to it. It asks *dasien* to be its unique self with its fullest potentiality. Conscience is a discourse which is constant and “discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent” forcing “the *Dasien* which has been appealed to and summoned, into reticence of itself” (318). Heidegger has differentiated between hearing and listening. He associates listening with the act of absorption in the external outside world and its idle talk. It is the genuine speech of silence that *dasien* hears itself. The call of conscience, he says is heard in the silence. Genuine speech designates ontology which is speaking grounded in silent listening.

Seamus Deane in the introduction to *A Portrait of The Artist as A Young Man* (POYM) 1992 writes, Stephen

“[l]earns the techniques of individuation, although it is by a process of inversion that he achieves his ambition to be self-born. Stephen, as a child, as boy, and as a young man, is seduced time and again by siren voices- parental, political, religious, sexual, literary- but concedes ultimately only to his own voice, or to the ventriloquial version of his own voice that he assigns to his ‘soul’. That spiritual voicing, although it is the product of a closely exercised discipline of isolation” (Deane vii)

The quotation clarifies that the steady stream of perpetual external stimuli of noises that keeps a being from focusing inwards which plays an important role in streamlining the thoughts, reflect and understand oneself and the world better is the external noise. Stephen Daedalus is portrayed in the Daedalian labyrinth of agencies that transforms him into a subject. The way out is conceding to the voice within, which is the product of disciplined isolation from the outer world.

Stephen Daedalus is a character who experiences growth and development throughout the novel *A Portrait of The Artist as A Young Man* (1916). There is a constant dialectical process of becoming and unbecoming which ruptures his self and the constitution of his subjectivity. Through, the interplay of two agencies/ apparatuses, 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs) and 'Repressive State Apparatuses' (RSAs) as explained by Louis Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1971) his pure self is interpellated by the 'idle talk' which 'listens him away' from hearing the 'genuine speech' of his 'call of conscience'. He becomes reticent. The aforesaid discourse has explicated that silence is a dialogic reality because it involves certain strategies of concealment and certain strategies of revelation. It ranges from treatment of death to epiphanies. Fritz Senn's "Active Silences" in *James Joyce's Silences* (2018) edited by Jolanta Wawrzycka and Serenella Zanotti writes "The most efficient and incisive silences are where the word itself does not occur, nor any references to the absence of sound or speech" (30). The juxtaposed montage of different disjunct parts in the novel present philosophical arguments and acquisitions of the author. Joyce has focused on capturing the intensity of mind instead of linear progression of the story. The narrative through words paints the *bricoleur* Stephen Dedalus' life and his dialectical growth and development. The intensity of mind is captured through the gradual progression of Stephen's unconsciousness and its systematic maturity. This maturity of the cognitive realities of Stephen helps him in explicating the truth of his being thus the 'stream of consciousness' technique expounded by William James records, Daedalus' life and his dialectical growth. Daedalus' growth is systematically represented by Joyce as he in the outset of the novel through the gradual intrusion of Daedalus into the empirical world through the structure of symbolic model. Stream of consciousness technique by Joyce is the evidence of cognitive realities leading to creation of his truth. The various sensory experiences presented

in the first two pages of the novel provide the perception towards the empirical realities leading to his gradual progression into the world of physical realities. The pragmatists amalgamation of both socio-pragmatic and aesthetico spiritual integration leads to the realities of the self and subject. Stephen is seen becoming the subject in the hands of agencies of culture, nationality, language and religion. Further in the chapter four when Stephen gradually negotiates with the realities of the world, he realises that language, nationality, politics and religion are the complex snarls which control his subjectivity. "When a man is born...there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets." (POYM 169). Chapter five of the novel marks the birth of an artist who still is a work in progress but with a sense of exit from the binaries of the material world "to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile and cunning" (POYM 268-269). This three-prong armour; Silence, exile and cunning, is most famous syntagm of the novel which he is going to use as an arm of defence for a future life of an artist.

The current study deals with silence which is a paradoxical coexistent of language through the lens of Heidegger's 'idle' and 'genuine' speech. To analyse the instances, the strategy has been picked from Fritz Senn's "Active voices" where the two aspects are: the absence of noise and the absence of speech when speech is expected, or as a lull in conversation. It is important to note that in fiction, silence is not analysed merely on the stylistic level of lexical representation of morpheme "silence" but through its deeper hermeneutic and phenomenological level of metaphor. Sometimes silence or any shade of the word is not even present but silence is present on the level of thought. Sometimes the silence is not viewed as an interaction between the interlocutors but it is the conversation within oneself. This conversation between inner structure of self is possible through the realisation of epiphany. The

epiphany is an example of monologue or soliloquy when there is no presence of absent words and just realisations that were circumscribed in language. This epiphany which is the medium of within and without language constitutes the reality of silence which plays an important role in the development of a character. This realisation of epiphany has been represented by Heidegger through his ideas of 'genuine speech' and 'call of conscience'. This facilitates the moment of conversation between the being in itself and being for itself. Dasien disrupts and reconnects with its being. This study of silence is phenomenological in nature and hence the understanding has been borrowed from Heidegger and his work *Being and Time* (1927).

Joyce recognized its power and has hence deliberately and methodically constructed silence as a narrative device. Chapter one can be seen in four parts. The first part of the novel is a selection of the memorable phases of infancy centring upon a sensory experience suggesting his future. One such example is the Christmas dinner scene where the conversation gets heated to an extent of rage and tears. He paints the entire scene before the reader's eyes in detail and ends it with Stephen. Here the focus is on Stephen hence here we see how politics and religion through the mouthpieces of only female voice in the text Dante and Mr. Casey begins the interpellation on the poor kid." Dante shoved her chair violently aside...Stephen, raising his terrorstricken face, saw that his father's eyes were full of tears" (POYM 39). Here we see the mute Stephen realises the grandeur of effect the two agencies have over people. For the first time in his life in the novel he comes to face the power of politics and religion over the people he knows so dearly of. The becoming of Stephen begins here. Further, silence has been explained through the ideas of muteness and reticence as proposed by Thomas Gould. Gould in *Silence in Modern Literature and Philosophy* (2018), has introduced the idea of muteness and reticence. Joyce represents it through the incapability of Stephen to have an opinion vs the reticence of the

interpellated selves of Dante and Mr. Casey. The second part of chapter one is an intricate pattern of memory and childhood where he is physically present in the playground but psychologically being with his parents. His mind wanders with the way of words all sitting in silence. The mind is at the cross section of sensation, memory and thought foregrounding the idea of stream of consciousness. Part three and part four deal, with his movement from outer life to inner, and from present to past. However, they might seem disassociated but they are very important to trace the growth and development of Dedalus as a character. Further Joyce designs it to record the progression of his character beginning from a sensory perception to taking a stand for himself by complaining to the rector. "Stephen swallowed down the thing in his throat..." (POYM 58). Silence here is repeatedly evoked, a silence which never fails to make the already vulnerable Stephen even more vulnerable. Here as Fritz Senn categorises the silence of the environment intensifies the effect of speech. The function of silence is to erect the speech against the background. The silence here is working its effect upon the reader to realise the development of a mute Stephen from the Christmas dinner to a comparatively vocal Stephen by the end of chapter one. The chapter marks the beginning of the process of Stephen's self. Further the novel, in chapter two traces the Stephen's adolescence from earliest streams of sexuality to his first experience of a physical relationship with the prostitute. Gradually he starts being alienated from his family especially his father. Stephen begins to appreciate beauty but something as illicit and mysterious. He starts appreciating literature which stimulates his mind and senses. His appreciation of lord Byron who is a poet of love, sexuality, social disharmony provokes a heated argument amongst his classmates. This chapter deals with his adolescent romanticism, especially an idealisation of sexuality and shattering upsurge of a raw and brutal sexual appetite. In the entire chapter two Stephen encounters the upsurge of libidinal bodily experiences that adolescence comes to terms with. The corrosion of father figure, the universal monstrosity of

adolescence, the realisation of the corruption, the uprootedness from his homeland pushes him into a sinful escape. The curious Stephen who has silently in the various episodes of chapter two observed and absorbed the social realities that construe him is in the nascent stage of realising his universality. He has just begun to become and hence he absorbs everything like a sponge from the external stimuli of linguistic, political, religious and sexual snarls. The cognition of his sins is yet to happen until the last epiphany of the chapter. Joyce has employed the stream of consciousness technique in order to narrate Stephen's personal narrative and hence there is no linear progression of thoughts or the plot. It is the perpetual stream of episodes of the rhapsody of life of Irish people busy in their idle talks and amidst them is an artist who evades time and again into the cognition of the real world. Evasion leads him to hearken his call of conscience. He deciphers the larger meaning behind the words. He wanders within himself in the universality of things. "How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interest and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless. From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole" (POYM 104). He realised the uniqueness of life. The unpredictability of life humbled him down curating his philosophy of life. The chapter ends with the win of sin over morals since nascent Stephen is still incapable to rationale over sensory experience. It is only with development that one is able to deflect and use the energy in right manner. The overpowering external noise of the rush wins over all the other agencies that constructed him. This distance led to a turning point in his life where he was no more just a subjectivised Stephen. These are the moments when he acted upon his inner desires paving his path to recognise the power, he himself had. Struggle for metamorphosis begins." It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind,

conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour" (POYM 108). Chapter three is about fire sermon dominated by the theme of sin and purgation. It is here that he delves into the conflict between his personal desire and religion. This chapter deals with the catholic Jesuit Stephen vs sinful act he has been committing. Here Stephen realises the graveness of the sin because of the Father's sermon. Is the fear or is it true realisation of becoming distant with god and how the purity of soul is lost and soul gets maligned. The sermon provided the window to Stephen to recognise the ineffability of his unethical misdoing. Bindeman's (2017) argues, "Key here is not really the decision given, but the opening of the conscious mind into self-consciousness that takes place in the face of disruptive silence. Here we find the beginning of existentialist philosophy—in the moment outside of time when we need to take a stand and then do so" (40). And Stephen crossed the boundary of the unsayable and confessed. We see a metamorphic transition from an expectation to "shun all loud unseemly pleasure" (POYM 118) to "he wept for the innocence he had lost" (150) to "pale flames of the candles among the white flowers were clear and silent as his own soul" (158). The chapter of the novel ends with Stephen's journey towards transcendence. He heard his call of conscience and confessed. The chatter of the idle world was shunned by the sermon and the genuine speech was heard by now a purgated Stephen. In "Speaking of Being: Language, Speech, and Silence in *Being and Time*" (2016). Brandon Absher writes, "Genuine silence, then, is a mode of speaking/listening in which one hearkens to what Heidegger calls the "call of conscience"—the disruptive address in which Dasein summons itself to itself. Heidegger is explicit that the call of conscience is a kind of speech (Rede) and that this speech calls from authentic Dasein to inauthentic Dasein" (222). And therefore, this experience has brought Stephen to see

his authentic self. Chapter four deals with Stephen's spiritual awakening, the Marxist control of religion, understanding of morality and ethics and the difference between spiritual and opium living. With the culmination of this chapter his consciousness finally breaks through the clutches of religion. His everyday life tiptoed around the specific days dedicated to respective religious practice. An ascetic life which he practiced blocked all the noises of the sensory needs. He lead a simple life just when he was offered priesthood which brought his attention towards the power it would give him. He in the words of Heidegger 'hearkens' his need for freedom and how power would politicise him and decides to refrain himself from this snarl of the world. "at the frail hold which so many years of order and obedience had of him when once a definite and irrevocable act of his threatened to end for ever, in time and in eternity, his freedom" (POYM 175). Absher's (2016) writes, "Dasein primarily understands itself in relation to public possibilities that articulate a normative self-conception". Heidegger writes, "Dasein has in view [meinen] the entity which, in every case, it is itself" (220-221). Joyce says, "His soul was not there to hear and greet it and he knew now that the exhortation he had listened to had already fallen into an idle formal tale. ... He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (POYM 175). The chapter ends with a major epiphany which changed the discourse of now an aware Dedalus's life. The sight of the mortal girl on the beach as a soul and not body made him realise the universality of being as another being. He made a crossover from a boy to an artist.

crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him. Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open

before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on! He halted suddenly and heard his heart in the silence. (POYM 186).

Further Absher (2016) continues to explore the realities of silence and its contribution in the gradual progression of character, he writes, "In silence one heeds the call of conscience, in the sense and to the degree that one hearkens to this ab-sent original self and to everyday existence as a kind of absence—a presencing (an-wesen) or being-forth that can only be experienced as being-away from oneself. For Heidegger, the silent listening that hearkens to the ab-sent self is onto-logy—a speaking of being" (222). The penultimate chapter of the novel presents before the reader the development of Stephen's being. The becoming of Stephen to unbecoming of Daedalus is being observed. Veerendra Kumar Mishra's (2014) *Modern Novels and Poetics of Self: Reading Modernist Bildungsroman* notes, "The homoerotic atmosphere, together with his aestheticization of the bird girl immediately following, underscores the distanced Stephen has travelled from the compulsory heterosexuality subtly insisted upon in most classical Bildungsromane. The complex rubric of either classical or the modernist Bildungsromane divulges the fact that the heterosexual desire and the relationship of the male Bildungsheld with the female have been proved quite instrumental in the process of becoming and unbecoming of an aesthete" (162). Further, the philosophical structure of silence has also been explored when he deals with aesthetic vocation and its role in the development of Stephen. He clarifies that he wants to fly away from burdens of language, religion and politics through silence, exile and cunning. "The soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (POYM 220). Furthermore, Stephen says, "I will try to express

myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning” (POYM 269). By silence here it is no more a process but a destination of evolved self and a higher consciousness. The way to experience this silence is aesthetics wherein he discusses Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas to create art. Beauty and sublime; whatness, brightness and harmony respectively help in realising silence. This silence is absolute, completely reposed state of mind where art emanates. This silence is about the complete surrender of thought.

Significance of silence and art has been discussed by many twentieth century thinkers and philosophers. Susan Sontag’s “The Aesthetics of Silence” (1967) outlined contribution of silence in modern art as a spiritual force in a secular culture. For her art is the direct expression of feelings and silence can act as a purely reflective medium of communication. The chapter ends with an awakened man moving into the world of art. All the socio-pragmatic realities dissolve into the aesthetico-spiritual world of Stephen Dedalus. Martin Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1981) explains “..art presumably has to do with the beautiful and with truth, aletheia. Beauty is one way in which truth essentially occurs as concealment and hence art is a becoming and happening of truth” (127). Joyce’s *Portrait* articulates that “the object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful” (201). Silence is the germinator of beauty, it evokes contemplation, stillness, and a deeper sense of meaning.

It has been observed through the above investigation that the western metaphysics addresses, ‘homecoming’ in the words of Heidegger or evolution of self towards higher and universal consciousness through the process of going inwards. This process here is dealt through the process of realising the nothingness of being and association with the ‘Being’. The medium with which this happens is through language and silence. The text in scrutiny is POYM which according to Jolanta Wawrzycka and Serenella

Zanotti has used the term silence for close to ninety seven times in the book bringing in attention towards the various effects and the narrative that Joyce wanted readers to experience.

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CREATIVE SECTION

POEMS

I. Passing

***Shelly Narang**

For now, the train has
begun to move,
rumbling on the tracks
with tonnes of luggage,
slowly it chugs along,
where voiceless time
is a single witness
to the departing platform.
The sun unfleshes itself
on the dark frontiers,
hiding to brush dreams away.
The hot tea spills
on the awkward tray
the wheels moving rapidly,
through channels of grass
where consumptive thoughts kneel,
like those empty days
That only fill gaps
between life and death.
Rapidly striding through

cities , miles, fields
rushing and disappearing
like there is no one
you really knew in this world .

II. The Ether of Disappointment

Dingy damp morning,
not sure if this was a
route to work ,
or testimonies of those
wishing to go beyond the end of the world.
The rain is falling with a secret code
uncovering things buried deep,
that we pretend to have not seen,
but our bodies remember,
our neurotic states remember.
My little girl who looks at me
questioningly everyday ,
when I don't embrace her.
accumulations of a long week,
now gathered in the veins
though the face is rolled up,
each day at work
away from eyes looking for an answer,
never unfolds too much,
or tells the whole story.
Today this rain hews the body ,

unburies every look of despair and hope,
somewhere between swamp and hills,
somewhere between fear and desire ,
sifting between the schoolgirl face
of my first born
and the nebulised old woman
Who asks, 'When will I go home?'.
the rain has rip open ventricles
and the tales that drowned in it.

***Shelly Narang** has been teaching English Literature in a College
Affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh. She frequently
writes poetry in English and has contributed to poetry journals
like Atrium, The Poet Magazine, The Red Wolf Journal,
Sahitya, Muse, Thrush, The Yale Review etc.

Shipwrecked

***Soma Chakraborty**

Lost in a sea of light
Encircled by obscurity
Sleepy skeleton looking for a shore
But those eyes are blinded by dust particles
Moon can't penetrate the mist
Darkness is only visible, Where's the light?
Perplexed on their way back
Am I invisible?
Or am I blind unable to see the luminous around me
This fever is burning my soul
Chewing every part of me

Those mist is still encompassing
Engulfing my soul like a tornado
My skeleton is all that left
Lost in a sea of darkness
Storm is behind me
No way to escape
My existence is like a sandcastle
Scattered all

***Soma Chakraborty**, Bahiri, Bolpur, West Bengal, Email
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Three Poems

***Susheel Kumar Sharma**

To Martin Luther King

You are the light of the earth
And also, the salt – not me!

You fought for our freedom,
For our rights, our power,
Our strength, our welfare,
We got guns to save us.

While walking on the pavement
One Halloween evening my 11-year
Old friend dared me to aim at my
18-year old room-mate; I triggered.

The opportunities are all mine,
In this great country far away
From the land of my ancestors
Where they could be enslaved
For losing a war and a village.

My master supports some who wish to
Be hyperactive. I help him by maintaining
The chain. This way I have been earning
Enough to keep my body and soul together.

For a fortnight, I was with her, the
White baby from the stony South.
When she announced, "We'll be three soon,"
Said I, "Thankfully, we're in Baltimore."

The baby can be left at the police station
And we may live and go where we wish to;
Luckily, Aunt Sally isn't there to keep a watch.
And, one doesn't need to hide in a quagmire.

Love thy neighbour; I don't hate my
Brethren. But, why is God white
And, me, his son, black? How will my
Child be raised in the orphanage?

Should I plan for my own funeral?
The tunnel to Heaven is narrow, bleak,
Dark and deep. Where is the promised light?
Why shouldn't I create my own h(e)aven?

Expectations

She was a chaplain and a poet.
She was exuding love in her words.
She spoke of love and wrote of love.

At the dinner table she was asking for
Chicken and tuna! She also shouted
At the cook for not choosing the chicken
That was not soft enough. The child
Did not love its life nor did the hen
Bereave it. Likewise, the fish had no
Father to miss it. They were put to
Good use and saved overcrowding.

She was deliberating on God's love
And Jesus' sacrifice and how Dalila
Cheated Samson and Job's offerings.

The Terror of War: Ukraine 2022

I

I had been waiting to listen to key sentence
From the priest, "You may now kiss the bride."
We had practised it though in the room for we
desired the ceremony to be perfect to the core
Like it is in the cinema hall, without any retakes.
Your lips were extraordinarily warm and supple
I had been waiting to suck as much love as I could

Before the pulpit; the mother was waiting with
Arms open to engulf me and you when suddenly
People were talking in hushing tones restlessly
And wanted us to be quick. Some just left the scene
Without any chai but some tucked their snacks
With them. The lights were switched off. The tanks
Rolled on the roads and the sky was full with
Blazes. You pressed my lips as if saying goodbye
And ran to catch your Kalashnikov saying “See you
Soon”. I and my mother boarded the train to the
Border. There in the sky a dream/missile was chasing us.
We stood there near the fences for seven hours
Before getting an entry into a camp opened for us,
The homeless, the rudderless, the loveless lasses.
Love had dried in the eyes while looking at the sky;
Maybe they make the career of some McCurry.
Suddenly I felt naked like Kim Phúc amid other
Fleeing villagers. Thankfully there is no Huónh Công
Út nearby to get a Pulitzer Prize. Maybe I am
declared a “The Struggling Girl” by some Carter.
How long will the memory of the rapturous kiss
Delight you and me? I shut my eyes and look above.

II

One kills oneself before killing others.
The dream to change the boundaries of
A nation first changes the geography
And history of mind. When the ghosts sit

across the tables to sort out differences
They pretend to be humans speaking
Soft language where harsh words and
Terse language is needed. My God has
Been watching and so does yours. Are
We just flies to the wanton boys?

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BOOK REVIEWS

Ramesh K. Srivastava's *My Best Twenty Stories*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2023. ISBN 978-93-5529-652-8, pp. 226, ₹ 495.

My Best Twenty Stories (2023) is a literary collection that transcends the boundaries of time and genre, offering readers a compelling and diverse array of stories touching the heart and stimulating the mind. In this collection, Ramesh K. Srivastava showcases his storytelling prowess through twenty short stories, each with unique charm and depth. The versatility of Srivastava keeps the reader engaged and eager to turn the page, never quite knowing what to expect next. The diversity of themes explored in these stories mirrors the rich tapestry of life itself. The characters in each story are finely drawn, making it easy for readers to connect with them on a personal level. Beginning with a young man's adventurous journey from the United States to discover his family's history in India to a maturing person reflecting on his life's achievements, each character is relatable and leaves an indelible impression. Srivastava's skilful character development is a testament to his deep understanding of human nature. Every story is dexterously crafted, filled with vivid descriptions transporting readers to different times and places. The pacing is well-judged, allowing for both quiet introspection and thrilling action sequences as the situation demands. Among the twenty stories, some shine more brightly than others, quite common in a collection of this size and variety. While a few stories leave a stronger impression, there are no weak links in the chain. Each story has its own merits, and

individual preferences will determine which ones resonate most with the reader.

Srivastava's *My Best Twenty Stories* invites readers to embark on a journey through the intricate web of human emotions, experiences, and relationships. The collection is a testament to Srivastava's storytelling technique to craft tales entertaining readers from all walks of life. Opening with a poignant narrative, setting the tone for the anthology, Srivastava's stories are vivid, evocative, and filled with keen observations of human nature. He delves into the complexities of everyday life, unveiling the intricacies of "love, loss, hope, friendship, and redemption". Each story in this collection offers a unique and engaging perspective on the world, making it easy for readers to connect with the characters and their predicaments. One of the highlights of "My Best Twenty Stories" is the author's skilful use of storytelling techniques through the use of startling puns, corrupt practices, sharp wit, and funny characterisation. Srivastava masterfully blends rollicking humour and stinging pathos, providing a well-balanced reading experience that keeps readers engaged from start to end. From the beginning of the story "Hospitality," Srivastava's wit shines brightly, offering a delightful portrayal of the chaos that ensues when an overly enthusiastic host tries to impress his guest. The quirky characters and humorous mishaps are bound to bring a smile to readers' faces, showcasing the author's knack for injecting light-heartedness into his narratives. The ability to seamlessly traverse between humor and poignant drama showcases the author's remarkable talent for tailoring narratives inscribed on a deep emotional level offering a diverse and thoroughly engaging experience for all who pick it up. Most of his characters are well-drawn and relatable. They come to life on the pages, and their dilemmas and triumphs resonate with the reader. The writer's descriptive prose adds depth to the storytelling, vividly painting the settings and enhancing the reader's ability to visualize the scenes. Srivastava's "Untold Story" is a remarkable narrative recording a moving tale of the

character Sundari's relentless struggle for a better life. Her courage in the face of domestic abuse, and her unwavering dedication to her son is exemplary. This story highlights the darkest corners of human existence while celebrating the enduring spirit of the human soul. Another story of Srivastava's "A Man of Gold" is a beautifully crafted narrative that delves into the profound bond of friendship between two characters, Vipul Asthana and Ghasi Ram Swarnakar. The story is set against the backdrop of stark educational disparities and societal expectations, making it a truly heartwarming and thought-provoking read. Srivastava skillfully portrays how Vipul and Ghasi's friendship is built on trust, mutual respect, and shared experiences. Their relationship is a testament to the idea that true friendship knows no bounds and can thrive in the most unlikely circumstances. The last story, "Clipping The Wings," delves deep into the human experience, evoking a profound sense of empathy and reflection. This story's heart-wrenching drama explores themes of love, loss, and the enduring human spirit. Srivastava's ability to tug at the reader's heart strings is on full display as he delves into the complex emotional landscape of the characters, making it impossible not to be moved by their trials and tribulations.

While many stories of this collection are a part of his previous collections, *My Best Twenty Stories* is Srivastava's judicious selection ready to be savoured, making it perfect for those looking for short but meaningful reads. Though the stories may not break new ground in terms of themes, Srivastava's engaging narratives and memorable characters make this anthology a worthwhile addition to any reader's collection. What sets this collection apart is the author's ability to tap into the universal aspects of the human experience. Notwithstanding the themes being familiar, Srivastava imbues them with a fresh perspective, offering insightful and thought-provoking reflections on life, love, and human connections. These stories, with their relatable characters and evocative storytelling, provide a sense of literary comfort and a mirror to our

lives. Readers whether an aficionado or ordinary ones looking for a dose of literary solace will find *My Best Twenty Stories* an enjoyable and emotionally resonant experience prompting them to ponder over the intricacies of human existence and relishing even after finishing the final page.

Reviewers: Ghulam Rabani & Dr. Binod Mishra, Department of HSS, IIT Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India.

'Sana', Prof. Vikas Sharma, Diamond Books, New Delhi (2023) p. 184. ₹ 250 (P.B) ISBN 978-93-5684-596-1

Women have been given a marginal status because of their physical appearance. Society expects from them to do a role of being obedient daughter and good wife. The women who rebelled against the patriarchal culture/laws are treated as protagonists.

'Sana' is a novel written by Prof. Vikas Sharma, which seems to be an humble attempt to develop positive thinking among the readers. The story and the structure is quite simple. Sana is a protagonist of the novel. She is the eponymous character. Naveen Nischal and Kavya are Sana's parents. She got married to Pandit Brij Vrat ten years ago but since then she has been childless. Pandit Revati Prasad is a regular visitor to Pandit Brij Vrat's house. One day Pandit Revati Prasad visits unexpectedly while Sana's husband Pandit Brij is away to Agra on a religious business. Sana falls a victim to her strong carnal desire and surrenders herself to Pt. Revati Prasad. This episode leads to her pregnancy. Pt. Brij is a very much delighted through Sana knows very well who fathered the child.

The novel narrates various incidents in Sana's life. Prof. Vikas Desai has drawn all the characters in the novel with amazing objectivity as if he knew them whether they belong to lower or

higher class of India. He depicts their aspirations, their desire for self glorification. He presents the crisis of modern life, the loss of identity. Prof. Sharma describes the experience of both the rich, the educated and the poor, the uneducated with a equal ease and comfort.

The novelist expects that there is a need of a cultured life as the people in the modern society lead the life of luxury, immorality and chasing the unsatisfied desires. 'Sana' is a gripping novel. Prof. Vikas Sharma has written the novel in the captivating colloquial style. The style is lucid, elegant, excellent and above all fluent devoid of grandiloquent phrases.

The central character Sana manages the schools very well. She is a fearless, undaunted and moreover happy-go-lucky type of protagonist. She fearlessly faces the inveterate criminals like Chandan (once her college classmate lover with whom she had made love) and his friend Akash. She doesn't worry about the consequences after killing both with her private pistol.

The novelty of this novel resides in the novelist's approach of the theme from a realistic perspective. It presents the corporate world as well as the world of 'Have-nots' Basically 'Sana' is a passionate story of the protagonist describing the inner conflicts of the people living in corporate world. At the same time it reflects the feelings of the writer on the current issues like Russia-Ukraine War. It is an unpleasant phase in the lives of the people of the countries involved in war.

The style of the novelist depicts unusual mood of the protagonist as well as other characters. In short 'Sana' is unputdownable.

Reviewer: Suresh Dhoke, Ex faculty, Nehru Arts, Commerce and Science College, Nerparsopant, District-Yavatmal Maharashtra.

Voices at the Door: Critical Responses to Susheel Kumar Sharma's *The Door is Half Open*, Ed. Pradip Kumar Patra, Delhi: Upanayan Publications, 2023, Pages: xxv + 270, ₹ 599, \$25, • 25, ISBN: 978-93-91467-00-5.

Prof. P.K. Patra from Bodoland University (Assam) has taken a very voluminous and hard work of compiling 57 reviewers' reviews of Prof. Susheel Kumar Sharma's second collection of poems *The Door is Half Open* along with one interview. Very rarely a book will have 57 reviews both from India and abroad. For this, Prof. Sharma should have taken immense interest which is unimaginable for any other poet. The compilation has been dedicated to Prof. Brahma Dutta Sharma (Prof. SKS's father) and Prof Prafulla C. Kar of former American Studies Research Centre. They both deserve this honour, for, both were stalwarts in their own way. One appreciable fact is the reviewers name alphabetically selected and their reviews appear in this rare book, for which Prof. P.K. Patra deserves all our encomiums and for his introduction running to 13 pages (which I may call Foreword). Poetry is no doubt, a poet's personality. About SKS, PKP comments, "he is a man of less complaints and he just doesn't write poetry, he rather practises it." (p. XI) So SKS is a practising poet or a practical poet! In the introduction PKP mentions, "Reading his poems is a journey by itself." (p. XIII) Journey of any sort, is expected to give realization i.e., experiences of his life — deep and sensitive area mental feast.

To Abha Iyengar this collection of 52 poems is "an eclectic mix. There is grief & spirituality; a desire to be one with God, for peace." (p. 1) Ann Rogers comments, "The author displays a sympathetic understanding of sensitive matters such as grief,

poverty, struggle and certainly a good social awareness.” (p. 5) Ashok Kumar Sinha writes, the poet “successfully recollects his powerful emotions in tranquillity and provides snapshots of the trials and tribulations of the modern man.” (p. 8). Awadhesh Kumar Sinha notes, though “the title is amusing...it is the outcome of the wisdom and deep insight of the poet.” (p. 20) Barbara Wühr feels that “the poet gives us the image of multi-coloured patterns in his poems.” (p. 39) Carol Abrahms finds, “Every line of Susheel’s poems tells a story and you have to read with concentration ... His work is very picturesque.” (p. 46) G.L. Gautam opines that his poems “give voice to the innermost sufferings of our souls.” (p. 47) Gagana B Purohit remarks, “Close-knit cultural and mythological base seems to be Sharma’s favourite domain of operation.” (p. 53) Gavriel Navarro compliments, that his book contains, “Complete command of language, engaging wit, breadth of detail and scope, touching familiarity.” (p. 59) Georgia Eva Xanthopoulos appreciates, “I strongly recommend everyone to add *The Door is Half Open* to the list of books one should read before they die.” (p. 60) Gurrapu Damodar lauds, “You employ the technique with dexterity and perfection to mirror your feelings, ideas and observations in life.” (p. 61) H.C. Gupta observes, “The poems in the collection mostly confessional, autobiographical, devotional ... are a well-calculated conscious flow of ideas.” (p. 63) Jai Shankar Jha approbates, “the poems written at different reflective moments, embraces multiple facets of life – cultural, social, personal and emotional, political to spiritual.” (p. 65) Jasvinder Singh admires, “The poet has done remarkably well to express his finer feelings on every aspect of life. He has put forth the manifestations of poetry meticulously.” (p. 70) Jordan Clary clarifies, “the words [in his poems] transport me so far away... makes me more aware of my own landscape.” (p. 74) Jyostna Prabhakar proclaims, “The poet in him is highly creative and he uses blank verse artistically to convey his innate and strong feelings.” (p. 76)

K. Balachandran briefs, "Susheel Kumar Sharma's, *The Door is Half open* is totally readable and understandable poems even by a common reader – but his poems are full open." (p. 80) K.K. Mishra declares, "It is indeed a pleasure to go through the poems. The poet has a complete command over the language and is very lucid in his expression." (p. 83) K. Rajamouly codifies, "The title *The Door is Half open* is suggestive of the opinion that he is shutting the door from the back with a view to allowing no evil to enter or he is opening it wide to welcome all values and virtues to his home land for the revival of wonders and splendours of the past." (p. 96) Kamala K suggests, "if the poet could gain access to so much wisdom and spirituality through *the door half open*, of course it is going to be a much higher level of enlightenment when *the door is fully open*." Kenneth Lumpkin elaborates, "Sharma does not let us forget that the immensities of this world do not have to mean the large chasms between humans. This is common ground with a warm, welcome to feel it, which indeed, leads us to a door that much more than half open." (p. 101)

Krishna Gopal Srivastava subscribes, "*The Door is Half Open* is a wholesome work. It is laudable in all respects. I welcome it as a land mark of experimental poetry in the history of Indian Writing in English." (p. 106) Kulwant Singh Gill gallops, "Susheel is young, enthusiastic, and energetic. He has miles to go. He has learnt the ropes. There is therefore now a greater need to sharpen his tools ... He should avoid the traps. Grammar and syntax are important for the tone and tenor of good poetry." (p. 108) Leela Kanak loves this collection because of "the inclusion of six *Afterwards* at the end by people belonging to different countries and different walks of life, but with the passion of writing and reading poetry uniting them." (p. 111) M.R. Joshi jerks, "*The Door is Half Open* has poems of many shades which draw us to peep into the enlightened mind of the poet. The poet has an alert mind which keenly observes inside and out, life on the earth and life beyond the earth." (pp. 114-115.)

Madhumita Ghosh multiplies, "The language is fluent, rich in vocabulary with imagery drawn from epics and mythologies to literature and everyday life, that bears a clear testimony to the poet's command over the language and his learning of literature and life." (p. 116) Mary Mohanty glorifies, "The poet has appended a 'Glossary' which is essential for the understanding of the poems by those who are not well versed in Sanskrit, Indian / Hindu mythology and culture... a brilliant contribution to Indian Writing in English." (p. 121) Mithilesh Kumar Pandey and Shankhadeep Chattopadhyay adjudicate that Sharma is allusive and metaphorical in approach. "He retains a strong hold on that very ground of communication which leads to open the doors of perception to his readers." (p. 126) Maxim Demchenko demonstrates, "Poetry has the ennobling power of redemption and after reading S.K. Sharma one is sure to find one's sensibility refined." (p. 142)

PCK Prem pronounces, "it looks he wants to weave a strong filament of words that come to his mind without caring for the message or perhaps, he loves to conceive profound rigmarole sans coherent meaning and yet wishes, people understand his philosophic undertones." (p. 145) Patricia Prime points out, "The poems have a political purpose - simply to insist on their experience and coerce the reader to share that experience." (p. 155) Pradip Kumar Patra promises, "Sharma's goal is the reader. The intensity and purity with which he shares his ideas with readers gives the impression that he is not just in terrestrial level, he rather transcends it and comforts himself in mythical and spiritual world." (p. 156) Pragya Mishra mesmerizes. "The Door is Half Open" is a great contribution to Indian Poetry in English. It is embellished in a language which can easily be understood with the help of the glossary." (p. 67) Prakash Chandra Pradhan patronizes, "Sharma does not mask merely in the glory and mystery of our culture. He also delineates our weaknesses and inability to resolve the problems of the marginalized with robust solutions by proper

planning and vision.” (p. 173) Pritam Bhattacharya picturizes, “A fine and honest work. The technical aspect of the work has been tough considering overlap of multiple languages and one of them being Sanskrit.” (p. 175)

Rabindra Kumar Verma reaches out, “This book will certainly provoke a fresh debate about Indian sensibility in Indian Poetry in English and will compel the critics to rethink their claims to have found Indian sensibility in Susheel’s predecessors (poets).” (p. 182) Radhika P Menon ranks, “Sharma’s half open poetic door invites readers into different perpetually changing facets of many worlds, both internal and external.” (p. 183) Rashmi Jain radiates, “The book contains various ‘colours’ of life which will definitely be appreciated by the readers of different hues and tastes. The poet has put his heart and soul to present a new variety of poems whose purpose is not only to delight but to instruct as well.” (p. 190) Reena Sanasam regards, “Sharma’s poems are replete with soul searching themes, in a world shattered and poverty stricken with multitudes of shacks and shanties and pollutions, the Ganga becomes his succour and he relives it with all its splendour and vitality.” (p. 191) Ritika Singh reads, “The poems are not mere fragments of a poet’s brilliance but take the reader on a journey to many realms of his inner self and the social, political and the public!” (p. 203) Roy Robert De Vos rains, “Sharma’s latest collection is in equal parts a deeply personal odyssey and a beseeching lament of the current state of India.” (p. 204)

Sandeep Kumar Gupta sanctions, “Sharma’s view of life is existential and religious. His work has the wonderful capacity of immediacy. He has a good narrative technique. There is a beauty along with tragedy.” (p. 211) Shamenaz Bano showers, “The 52 poems in the volume are based on many themes like religious, social, cultural and political and economic and personal history.” (p. 212) Shanti Rajaraman shampoos, “The poems deconstruct his love for awakening a sense of righteousness, truth and values. With a depth of awareness the poet rings a clarion call to uphold

the ethical values of the nation to redeem the society.” (p. 217) Shubha Dwivedi dividends, “The poet adopts different personas through the collection as he sometimes seems to have acquired the role of a hermit, on other occasions it is that of the thwarted artist, a social conscience keeper, a lover, an observer and a philanthropist.” (p. 221) Stuti Khare starlights, “Sharma’s poems have the energy to engross the reader, even though his poetic impulse becomes restless with multiple thematic strands. The poet has a perspective eye which renders his poems precise and neat.” (p. 228) Sudhir K Arora submits, “The book makes the reader thirstier than it quenches his thirst. The reader enters through half open door to know what lies inside but comes out with marks of interrogation which disturb him and make him ponder over the present scenario dotted with problems.” (p. 231) Suresh Chandra supplements, “This volume, second by sequence, is both unusual and a trend setter.” (p. 232) Suresh Chandra Dubey swears, “Sharma is not a trendy poet but those of us who seek eternal bliss, happiness, sweetness and light will find these values in his poetry in abundance.” (p. 238) Suresh Chandra Dwivedi summarizes, “The book must be read by all those readers who wish to master Hindu mythology, Indianness and enjoy beautiful and memorable descriptions of Ganga.” (p. 242) Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi says, “The poetic vision of Sharma is humanistic and his writing confirms his faith in the spiritual unity of the world demolishing all barriers of caste, class, gender, religion, race and nationality.” (p. 254) T.S Chandra Mouli scans, “Poet Susheel Kumar Sharma scans the soul of India through various sources and means to communicate with people within the land and outside too.” (p. 258)

The book ends with an interview by Pradip Kumar Patra where Sharma opens his heart to him. Sharma’s love of poetry dates to his childhood days which he inherited from his father who was also a writer. “A reader / listener and an intelligent critic are the two eyes that a poet desires.” (p. 261) He focuses on memory

and Indian ethos in his poetry. Poetry has a transforming power. The pandemic and the war between Russia and Ukraine influenced him—he got hurt because they “caused a dent to humanity.” (p. 266) About ecology and climate change, “man is not a separate entity to control Nature.” (p. 269) The poet wishes “to see life in a holistic way and lead it in a holistic manner.” (p. 220) *Voices at the Door* is a book for every poet, critic and one interested in literature and criticism; which should find its place in every library for enlightenment and literary pleasure. Kudos to the poet, reviewers, editor and the publisher for this great effort, for, this great book.

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