**ISSN-L 0537-1988** 

2020

### THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

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## **ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES OF INDIA**

**ISSN-L 0537-1988** 

# THE INDIAN JOURNAL OF **ENGLISH STUDIES**

## **VOL LVII**

## 2020

### FIFTY SEVENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION



# **ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES OF INDIA**

**VOL LVII** 

**INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES** 

2020

# ISSN-L 0537-1988

57

# THE INDIAN JOURNAL

# OF

# **ENGLISH STUDIES**

An Annual Peer-reviewed Journal

Vol. LVII

2020

**Cosmos Impact Factor 5.210** 



Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Chhote Lal Khatri Professor of English, T.P.S. College, Patna (Bihar)

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### 2020

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### ASSOCIATION FOR ENGLISH STUDIES OF INDIA

Price: ₹350 (for individuals) ₹600 (for institutions) £10 (for overseas)

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# Editorial

### Folklore and Folkloric Studies in English

Literature in English has witnessed a phenomenal change over the years widening its scope and ambit of studies. It has traversed and keeps traversing untrodden areas like tribal literature, orature, graphics, engravings, transnational narratives of migration, media, popular culture, film, theatre, adaptation, multilingual translation, folklores and folkloric studies; in fact, it tries to cover every linguistic and non-linguistic expression shedding lights on any facet of life, time and space. Folklores and folkloric studies have drawn the attention of academia and are being explored in English studies the world over.

Folkloric tradition in every great civilization has been older and richer than the classical literary tradition. Until about 4000 BC, before writing was developed in Egypt and China all literatures were basically folk literature due to their orality. Some anthropologists and literary critics believe that the classical tradition was essentially evolved out of the folk tradition and partly it was a process of Sanskritization of some folk elements. How far it is true is a matter of research but it is a well-acknowledged fact that folklore had been used as a staple material for the evolution of classical literature that in course of time distinguished itself from what was folk tradition and came to be recognized as a parallel but separate stream of thought, practice and literature. The classical stream distinguished itself by making its system stylized, well scripted and least flexible being practised by the elite class of society. Opposed to it, is the tradition of folklore that is the expression of folk life in both verbal and non-verbal medium and is carried forward orally or through performance from generation to generation. Neither the specific date of origin nor authorship of the folk art is available till date. Each region has its own folkloric practices.

Etymologically folklore is a compound of folk and lore. Folk stands for common, uneducated masses of the village and lore stands for the expression of all the facts and tradition about a particular subject that have accumulated over time through education or experience. The term folklore was coined in 1846 by William Thomas, a British antiquarian to replace labels such as 'popular antiquities' or popular literature under which folklore was usually branded. The Indian equivalent of folklore is Lokayana that signifies a way of life (yana) of a people (lok). Folklore has epistemological values as it tends to define natural and supernatural phenomena like the theory of genesis and growth of living and nonliving things, earth, rivers, forests, mountains etc. It also explains the development of the region and society, human behaviour, customs, beliefs, practices, linguistic expressions and covers every facet of life in the said region. Folklore is an umbrella expression that covers folk literature, dance, songs, paintings, art & craft, rituals, myths, tales, theatre, riddles and proverbs. Folklore is a dynamic form as it is transmitted from person to person, one age to another, one region to another and is exposed to various influences that somehow keep it evolving and changing. That's why folklore resurfaced prominently in public life and academic discourse despite the western onslaught of modernism. It has been preserved in our racial memory through both skilled and amateur practitioners and it is still "an integral, pervasive and vital part of our daily lives".

Documentation of folk tales and songs and other art forms is another method through which it has been preserved for example works like *Kathasaritsagar*, *Panchatantra*, *Jataka* tales and in recent time *Folktales from India* by A.K. Ramanujan and many other compilations of folktales and songs of different regions of India and of tribal languages have provided us with a rich heritage and have immensely influenced modern Indian literature.

In the post-modern age, it has led to the development of a scientific study of folklore that is called folkloric study and practitioners are called folklorists. Folklorists are studying the folklores and their relations with other streams the world over and have developed pedagogical tools for research in this area. In course of time academic institutions and universities in the country started opening departments on folklore in their respective regions, more so in south India to relocate themselves in their native tradition and to maintain their cultural identity through the study of folk literature, language and culture.

In the last twenty years or so a new interest has picked up in regional and native cultural expressions and folklore leading to the rediscovery and reevaluation of indigenous forms of literature and performing arts. Post-colonial movement neutralised Eurocentric and English- centric discourse and gave way to many marginalised areas of study without any colonial prejudice against them. Consequently, Dalit literature, tribal literature, popular literature, prison literature, slave literature and folkloric art and literature got into our academic discourse. Creative writers have been inventing, reinventing, re-appropriating and revising folktales in relation to their context. This flexibility and amenability of folklore and myth enables writers to experiment with them in their fictive medium and at the same time it holds possibility for new archetypes, objective correlatives, semiotic experiments and fresh insight into changing challenges of time.

The use of folkloric archetypes in Girish Karnad's plays immediately drew the attention of researchers and academia. He got into prominence by recontextualizing folk archetypes for echoing a contemporary issue, for making a universal appeal and even interrogating the folk belief system itself in plays like *Naga-Mandala, Hayavadana* and *Flowers*. The impact of folklore on dramatic text and theatre can be traced in the form of archetypes, dramatic art, theatrical devices and stagecraft as well as in linguistic expressions, particularly of cultural connotation.

A poet like A.K. Ramanujan not just goes back to his folk tradition and recreates it but adds to the dynamics of folklore. Folktales or songs are localised in a definite culture and dialect and carry the sign meaning for the viewers. In them, "the signifiers whether they are images or characters or episodes or even socalled structures are amenable to creative use" in different languages and can be abundantly traced in Indian English poetry.

If we turn to modern fiction, we realise that it owes a lot to folk narratives. Initially, Rudyard Kipling made brilliant use of Indian folk narratives in his works like Jungle Book and Just So Stories which are written in the manner of folktales. Ruskin Bond's Tales and Legends of India can be put into the category of folktale. However, his stories are greatly inspired by the folkloric tradition of Uttarakhand. R.K. Narayan's Malgudi presents a world pervaded by an atmosphere of folklore. Similarly, Raja Rao's Kanthapura is folkloric in its narrative style; its characters and settings are drawn from rural past that survives in folklore. Again Manoj Das in recent time is a prolific folklorist whose stories stand out as a class of folktales and deserve serious study. The overlapping reality and fantasy in some of his stories derive from the pervasive presence of folklore in Indian imagination. Amitav Ghosh uses the folklore of Bon Bibi from Sundarbans in The Hungry Tides.

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It can be assumed that a native writer inevitably turns to his folkloric background sooner or later even if he writes in an alien tongue as folk culture is not just a part of his subconscious but a part and parcel of his life or of his extended family. The natives are exposed to folk festivals—Chhath, Holi, Bihu, Onam, Pongal, rituals of birth, marriage, death or of other celebrations, folk songs like Baul in West Bengal, Kajari, Nirgunia, Barahmasa in U.P. and Bihar, Lavani in Maharashtra, Garba in Gujrat, folk theatre forms like Jatara, Tamasha, Bhavai, Yakshaganaetc paintings, art & craft or tales told by grannies or the proverbs, anecdotes, riddles used in everyday life that are most likely to get into their writings sometimes consciously and at others unconsciously. And that folklore is compatible with a flexible language like English.

It is true that Postcolonial critics like Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin, Homi Bhabha, Fanon, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak have paved the way for the so-called marginal literatures to come into the academic and public discourse. Folklorists like Jacob Grimm, Theodor Benfey in the West and Prof Manoj Das, Prof Harish Trivedi, Prof T.S. Satyanath and some others in India have contributed to the study of folklore. But folkloric influences in Indian English Creative writing are still unexplored despite immense possibility.

The fifty-seventh volume of the *Indian Journal of English Studies* has given space to multiple voices coming from different parts of India, both young and experienced scholars and teachers, and all genres of literature with a predominance of papers presented at 63<sup>rd</sup> All India English Teachers' Conference held at Tirupati. Besides research papers on Indian Writing in English, it includes papers on American, African, Subaltern, Caribbean, Diaspora, Black and Bhasha literatures and ELT. As usual, it features a short story, poems and book-reviews. I express my thanks to all contributors for their valued contributions and editorial team for making it a success. At the same time, I am conscious of the human limitations in impeccable production of the journal

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and solicit the readers' feedback for further improvement in the journal. Recommendations from some of the universities for including this journal in the CARE list have been sent to the respective CARE universities; and some more are in the process. If we are able to send more such recommendations, it would certainly be included in the CARE list.

Wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year-2020!

C.L. Khatri

### IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Indian English Literature (Sixty-Third All India English Teachers' Conference Presidential Address)

### \*Prof. V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad

I am very happy that Sri Venkateswara University is organizing the Sixty-third All India English Teachers' Conference. Exactly twenty years ago, that is on 7 January 1999 this time, we were busy organizing the 43<sup>rd</sup> All India English Teachers' Conference at Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur. I didn't know, didn't even imagine, then that 20 years hence I would be President of the 63<sup>rd</sup> All India English Teachers' Conference. I feel honoured and I am grateful to the organizers, especially Local Secretary Prof. V. Ravi Naidu.

Let me begin by quoting Kiran Desai, who says, "If you write a lovely story about India, you're criticized for selling an exotic version of India. And if you write critically about India, you're seen as portraying it in a negative light—it also seems to be a popular way to present India, sort of mangoes and beggars."

Indian literature reveals greater complexity, depth, and resonance than the polarity Kiran Desai refers to, when we consider the range of fiction published in the subcontinent and the incredible diversity of India that it reflects. When people refer to

<sup>\*</sup>**Prof. V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad,** President of the Conference, Former Vice-chancellor of Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, presently working as Visiting Professor, Department of English, Central University of Andhra Pradesh, Ananthapuramu.

"Indian English Literature," I sometimes get a doubt whether it is "Indian Literature in English" or "Literature in Indian English." In this context I am reminded of what Dr. Manmohan Singh said at Oxford University on 08 July 2005 in an address for which he was unfortunately railed at for being a colonialist:

Of all the legacies of the Raj, none is more important than the English language and the modern school system. That is, if you leave out cricket! Of course, people here may not recognise the language we speak, but let me assure you that it is English! In indigenising English, as so many people have done in so many nations across the world, we have made the language our own. Our choice of prepositions may not always be the Queen's English; we might occasionally split the infinitive; and we may drop an article here and add an extra one there....Today, English in India is seen as just another Indian language.

Peter Childs in *Modernism* makes a very valid observation about the changes taking place in all walks of life in the twentieth century:

...modes of literary discourse blur... or overwrite... the ones before. Hence, there is an undeniable inter-relationship between life, literature, thought and language. The everchanging paradigms of the global world have given literature not only an opportunity to revisit its own theories and practices but chartered a course for new ones to emerge. The issues of society, culture, politics, gender, etc. need to be oriented and explored with reference to the changing necessities of the society. Moreover, the rise of a global world has made the medium of imitation a complex phenomenon as the linguistic diversities have paved the way for a multilingualism that co-exists with the ever-increasing territory of a single Global Language, English, which in turn comes with its own set of adaptations and "englishes".

It is observed that language has a dual character: both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. A particular language is a mirror of a particular culture. When we use the word "culture" here we use it in an anthropological sense to mean all aspects of human life as are determined by life in a society or community. Brown describes the relation between language and culture as follows: "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." Language as communication envisages society which is inevitably characterized by a certain culture. Man, language, and culture are thus indispensable to one another and are vital attributes of society. Some people consider culture the fifth skill of language, "software of the mind." However, quite interestingly, English has become a global language without a global culture because in each setting it acquires a different hue or shade. In the postcolonial context, the English language has been a medium that has expressed a complex process of adaptation and contestation, a grappling with the West in complex indigenous ways.

India's significant contribution to world literature is mainly due to the admirable creative works by Indian writers, especially novelists, in English. It is a little more than one and a half centuries since the first English novel written by an Indian was published— Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864). The Indian English novelists focus on a varied range of issues such as nationalism, freedom struggle, social realism, individual consciousness and diaspora. The Indian English novel has found its niche in world fiction. This achievement is due to the novelists' seeking to prove their inner creative urges in English language, which they have acclimatized to their native soil. Raja Rao, in the preface to his novel *Kanthapura*, says how he used English, but English adapted to Indian conditions:

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.

Raja Rao's fictional dialectics consists of an intertwining of English and the European past it invokes and the Indian present and a blending of this with the hoary Indian past. Through this he brings into his narratives the whole Indian collective unconscious. This is what Menakshi Mukherjee refers to in her *Perishable Empire* as "pollination," the planting of the English language in a "textual soil" memory, myth, fable, oral tales, and even gossip to create in his fiction a texture of life that is typically south Indian.

#### R.K. Narayan, in his *English in India*, states:

English has proved that if a language has flexibility and experience can be communicated through it, even if it has to be paraphrased sometimes rather than conveyed, and even if the factual detail is partially understood... We are still experimentalists. It may straight way explain what we do not attempt to do. We are not attempting to write Anglo-Saxon English. The English Language, through sheer residence and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization in the same manner as adapted.... All that I am able to confirm, after nearly thirty years of writing, is that it has served my purpose admirably, of conveying unambiguously the thoughts and acts of a set of personalities who flourish in a small town located in a corner of South India.

In "An Introduction," Kamala Das writes:

I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,

I speak three languages, write in

Two, dream in one.

Don't write in English, they said, English is Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins, Every one of you? Why not let me speak in Any language I like? The language I speak, Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest, It is as human as I am human, don't You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and Is aware. Here let me quote K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar: When an Indian writer of fiction uses a learnt second

When an Indian writer of fiction uses a learnt second language like English, he is actually recording a kind of halfconscious translation (from mother tongue into English) that has taken place in the mind. Most of our writers are bi-lingual, some equally proficient in English and the mother tongue, and some more in one than in the other. The background and the situations are usually Indian but the characters may often be drawn from bilingual milieus. The need for expressing the values, verities and heartbeats of one culture in the language of another poses its own problems and there is doubtless the inner urge to render in English the rhythms, idiosyncrasies, images, idioms and proverbs of the local speech.

That is where the Indian writer in English partakes of the process of and also resists what may be called "the empire writes back."

Speaking of the Big Three — Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao — Walsh says:

It is these three writers who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established its assumptions; they sketched its main themes, freed the first models of its characters and elaborated its particular logic. Each of them used an easy, natural idiom which was unaffected by the opacity of a British inheritance. Their language has been freed of the foggy taste of Britain and transferred to a wholly new setting of brutal heat and brilliant light.

Thus one of the most outstanding characteristics of Indian English writing is that the background is Indian and the language, though foreign, has acclimatized itself to the Indian soil. In other words, Indian English Literature refers to the body of works by authors who write in English and whose mother tongue could be one of the numerous languages of India. It includes the works of members of the Indian diaspora whose writing reflects "the homeland alien land dialectics." The adjective "Indian" in the case of the Indian English writer gives rise to certain ambiguities. He may be Indian but living abroad and writing from there about his homeland with which he aligns himself psychologically or which he traverses with his mind's eye. In terms of the postcolonial aesthetic, this gives rise to a "double vision," which is an important feature of Indian writing. Amitav Ghosh's Shadow Lines, postmodernist and postcolonialist as it is, places before us an action that shuttles between time past and time present, thereby giving us a perspective on time and events that bring people together and tear them apart. It is a narrative that builds up a web of relations through memory that reflects, as in a mirror, differing shades of the same image. The lines of demarcation among past, present, and future get subtly eclipsed in the narrative and they cast their shadows across the frequently shuffling events.

The next question is, to what extent can any of these novels be described as "Indian"? According to Amit Chaudhuri, the "Indian" novel is necessarily written in English. He makes a point here when he says that the qualifier "in English" is unnecessary, because no regional literature, such as Telugu or Bengali, can claim to be considered the fiction of the "postcolonial totality called India." This is a typical statement expressing the postcolonial condition. Postcolonial writers use detailed accounts of indigenous people, places, and practices to counteract or "resist" the stereotypes, which the colonizers circulated, but it involves an appropriation of the colonizer's language. Although many colonized countries are home to multiple indigenous languages, many postcolonial writers choose to write in the colonizers' "tongue."

Chinua Achebe in his "The African Writer and the English Language" says:

A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory. In other words, a literature that is written in the national language. An ethnic literature is one which is available only to one ethnic group within the nation.

He also says, "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but al-tered to suit its new African surroundings."

Since publishing *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi) has spoken from "the self-questioning heights of 1986" as a vigorous advocate of full decolonization not only of the visible political and economic sphere but of the mind as well. Since then, he has written all his novels and plays in his native Gikuyu, only using English (and sometimes Kiswahili) for essays and polemics. The paradox of Ngugi's situation is that while he may be the world's foremost advocate for writing literature in African languages, his novels have won acclaim and gained international recognition through the medium of English. In this context it is apt to remember what U.R. Ananthamurthy says in defence of the Indian writer who in the postcolonial condition cannot but appropriate the colonizer's language and forms of expression: "We all write in the Indian languages, and this fact has a profound consequence on what we actually do in our languages. However much we expose ourselves to the west in search of ideas and forms... If the ideas that are still not of my language are embodied in my language creatively, then they become a part of the living tradition of my language."As stated earlier, the irony here is that although many colonized countries are home to multiple indigenous languages, many postcolonial writers choose to write in the colonizers' "tongue." A.K. Ramanujan, for example, has his deepest roots in his Kannada and Tamil past but he has re-possessed that past for creative writing and translation in English.

Therefore we can say that Indian English Literature is Indian Literature, and any work in, for instance, Telugu or Bengali may be considered part of Indian literature, for Radhakrishnan said that all Indian literatures are one though written in different languages. And that is why from now onwards I use the phrase "Indian Literature" instead of "Indian English Literature." Indian Literature has attained an independent status in the realm of world literature. While this literature continues to reflect Indian culture, tradition, social values, and even Indian history through the depiction of life in India and Indians living elsewhere, recent Indian fiction has been giving vibrant expression to Indian life and Indian experience in the context of globalization and its consequent deterritorialization.

The great proliferation of the Indian novel owes itself partly to the sudden increase of interest in the new literature of postcolonial nations by the west. By the 1980s, the Indian novel in English became a global phenomenon, with India becoming the third largest publisher of English-language books. The Indian novel is, as Priya Joshi observes, "seen as the form most capable of consolidating anticolonial sentiment, of resisting orthodoxy, and of promoting social change." Dr. A.V. Krishna Rao rightly remarks about the novel of post-Independence era: "The post-Independence novel clearly marks out a new phase of emotional and intellectual growth in Indian literature. The dislocation, the distemper and disenchantment of the post-war and the post-Independence India have had their impact on the Indo-Anglian novel too."

Now we live in the age of fiction, with the "Indo-Anglian" seizing the limelight. Thanks to the prizes given exclusively to fiction (such as The Man Booker prize), researchers and critics have turned to fiction and espouse its cause at the cost of other genres of literature. Poetry enjoyed the centre stage in the nineteen-seventies and early eighties, when R. Parthasarathy as Editor of Oxford University Press, issued a series called "New Poetry from India," in which poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Jayanta Mahapatra, Shiv K. Kumar, A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Keki N. Daruwalla published their collections of poems. Since the late eighties fiction has enjoyed the centre stage. Salman Rushdie rightly observes about Indian writers thus: "One important dimension of literature is that it is a means of holding a conversation with the world. These writers are ensuring that India, or rather, Indian voices (for they are too good to fall into the trap of writing 'nationalistically') will henceforth be confident, indispensable, participants in that literary conversation."

One significant feature of creative writing in the eighties is its sense of awareness of the plurality of the nation. It goes beyond the east-west encounter and portrays the new postcolonial India with its evolving outlook, which is a blend of the traditional and the modern. It reveals the cosmopolitan outlook of the new generation which strives to strike a balance between the inherited traditional values and the assimilated foreign culture. The themes and techniques are transnational and transcontinental. The works of novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Upamanyu Chatterjee delve into the hurdles faced by the new independent nation, which at times requires a harsh depiction of reality. These writers have made bold attempts to recapture the altered perceptions of postcolonial India and their use of revolutionary narrative techniques has given them their place of eminence in world literature. Their most impressive feat, as postcolonial writers, is to take dominant western discourses and transform them into "local" manifestations of subjectivity. That is how the process of "glocalization" works. Authors such as Arundhati Roy deliberately play with English. They refashion it to reflect the rhythms and syntax of indigenous languages. It is this process of chutnification that Salman Rushdie refers to whereby colonial/European artforms have been made to reflect indigenous modes of invention and creation. The result of working on binaries of this kind is that postcolonial texts reveal some kind of a parodic relationship with the imperial textuality.

Thus the 1980s witnessed a second coming for the Indian novel both in terms of its visibility and profusion in terms of output and variety. Many of the novels successfully manipulated western forms like the fabulist mode with local legends and popular fables used as a means of mythicizing contemporary reality. This new trend seems to have been pioneered by Salman Rushdie. Midnight's Children, published in 1981, brought about a renaissance in Indian writing with its use of postmodern playfulness, new exuberance of language, reinvention of allegory, and such other features. We find Midnight's Children a challenging of the assumptions about language, nation, history, and narrative. We may boldly say that this has contributed to the reversal of the centre-periphery paradigm in English literary culture. Novelists like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Chandra, Manju Kapur, and several others came to limelight in the last twenty-five years following Salman Rushdie's instant success and fame with his Midnight's Children winning the Booker Prize in 1981.

In his foreword to *The Five-Dollar Smile*, Shashi Tharoor supports M.K. Naik's view that the litmus test ought to be "could this have been written only by an Indian?" Such a test makes Tharoor belong only to Indian literature, though he has spent his entire adult life abroad, first studying in the USA, then working

for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel, which won the award for the Eurasia region of the 1990 Commonwealth Writers Prize, is a contemporized narrative that harks back to the Mahabharata. It is a fictionalized version of the Mahabharata which blends contemporary Indian history and myth to narrate the Indian struggle for independence beginning with the nationalist movement in the early twentieth century and leading to the declaration of the Emergency in the 1970s using the tools of hilarious comedy and satire. Shashi Tharoor says that he chose the Mahabharata because it is an epic that "resonates with great relevance" to contemporary India. The Five-Dollar Smile contains fourteen stories published in Indian magazines when he was in his teens. In these short stories, he deals with the sections of Indian society he knows best. He therefore leaves out the familiar stereotypes of poor peasants, godmen, maharajahs, and so on, for, as he puts it in his foreword, "Why should the rural peasant or the small-town school teacher be considered more quintessentially 'Indian' than the pun-dropping collegian or the Bombay socialite who is as much a part of the Indian reality? India is a vast and complex country; in Whitman's phrase, it 'contains multitudes.'" Chetan Bhagat expresses a similar view when he says, "The real middle class India that has always been looking for a voice that is its very own. I write about it because I belong to it."

Women novelists have played a crucial and momentous role in enhancing the quality and quantity of the Indian Fiction and in their grappling with the ideas of the nation, narrative address, and the socio-cultural milieu. It must be said that in the twentieth century, women's writing came to be considered a powerful source of the expression of modernist and postmodernist impulses and feminist concerns. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian literature. During the 1990s India became a popular literary nation as a number of women authors made their debut in this era. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Suniti Namjoshi, and Anuradha Marwah Roy use realism as the main theme of their novels. The novels of authors like Namita Gokhale or Shobha De are known for their outspokenness. Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things exemplifies in its creative configurations postmodernism and identity politics. It examines issues of nationalism and culture in the context of insights derived from subaltern studies and social exclusion. Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss shows characters trapped between their modernity and their native histories and thus it illustrates hybrid identities and blurring of the boundaries. It is a novel of shifting points of view where Kiran Desai takes a skeptical view of the West's consumer-driven multiculturalism. Writers like Kiran Desai seek to recreate national identity by redefining cultural identity. Today's generation of women writers have mostly western education and their novels describe the world of women with stunning frankness. Their explorations of the female psyche in a hide-bound society have great value for the revelations they make. Most of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife. According to critics, "These women writers have given literary work in India an unmistakable edge. Their women characters are real flesh-and-blood protagonists who, with their relationships with their surroundings, their society, their men, their children, their families, and their mental make-up, make the reader look at them in awe." They have absorbed and assimilated the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own, Kate Millets's Sexual Politics, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Mad Woman in the Attic and present women's resistance to social constraint in terms of a theory of the anxiety of patriarchal influence. Their treatment of patriarchal society's assumptions that a woman is a womb and a receptacle for male domination and further that women are caught up in the prison-house of language that is male specific makes for their uniqueness and distinction. As already mentioned, contemporary postcolonial writers like

Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, and Jhumpa Lahiri have initiated the process of decolonizing "Colonial English" and using it as a medium to express Indian thoughts and sensibilities but with a contemporary, postmodern accent. Many of the recent Indian novels register a marked shift. Instead of informing a typical Indian cultural background and traditional Indian cultural ethos, their works exhibit global concerns through the presentation of the multi-cultural reality.

At present, there is a new class of globe-trotting, often diasporic, international writers. In one sense, they can be described in terms of their new mobility and homelessness as those who have made their denationalization their defining feature. They include Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, I. Alan Sealy, Vikram Chandra, and Amit Choudhury. Then there are the stay-at-home who nonetheless made it big: Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Githa Hariharan, and so on. In other words, Indian fiction writers can be classified into Resident Indian Writers and Non-Resident Indian Writers. All these have not only achieved varying degrees of international recognition, but have entered the canon. The present Indian fiction is not an imitation of the English literary pattern or tradition but highly original and intensely Indian in both theme and spirit. Indian writers have given a new dimension to their literature in the same way as the Australians and Americans have evolved their own literatures in their respective countries.

However, Indian Literature is incomplete without a reference to regional Indian literature. A significant trend in the field of Indian literature is the translation of regional literatures into English. For example, almost the entire works of Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Subramania Bharathi, Vijay Tendulkar, and Vasudevan Nair are available in English. Takazhi Sivasankarapillai's *Chemmeen*, Kesava Reddy's *He Conquered the Jungle*, Sundara Ramasamy's *Tale of a Tamarind Tree*, U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*, and many regional novels are great contributions to Indian literature. Of these translated texts, we have a unique trend of women writers emerging on the national scene. A case in point is Mahasweta Devi of West Bengal. She championed the cause of the marginalized tribal people in West Bengal in such works as "Draupadi."

Another very significant trend is the emergence of writers from the Dalit and other marginalized sections of the society. A remarkable work of international standing is Bama's Karukku. Another work in this category is Ompuri Valmiki's Joothan. Bama's works in Tamil, Karakku and Sangati, have brought to focus the experience of the Dalit Christian community, pushed to the margins of Indian society. The Dalit Christian status is a highly contested space in India's social structure. Karukku, considered to be the first Dalit autobiography in Tamil, has been variously described as a confession, manifesto, and autobiography. Disadvantaged histories of nations, races, communities, and people are part of the ideological discourse of modernity that postcolonial theory touches upon. Autobiography is the term used for the personal narratives of Dalit writers like Omprakash Valmiki and Sharan Kumar Limbale and they centre round an articulation of they record the pain, humiliation, and exclusion. Further, the shocking plays of Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan belong to a different strand of margin, away from the mainstream literature.

Yet another significant trend is the publication of motivational and autobiographical works of prominent personalities such as Dr. Abdul Kalam. *Wings of Fire* and *Turning Points* describe the response of a visionary scientist to the dream of a new India and the challenges one has to face in realizing that dream. Both speak about challenges and triumphs and principles of participatory management.

An overview of contemporary Indian fiction reveals a remarkable use of the Indian literary and mythical traditions in their interrogation of both tradition and the western canon. It is true that many of the contemporary Indian novelists are either foreignreturned or divide their time between India and other places, but India is part of their imaginary, an imaginary that reveals cultural amphibianism. It is also true that marketers of the Indian novel have also shown great astuteness and there has developed, over the past few years, a sense that India sells abroad.

I once again thank the organizers for giving me an opportunity to participate in the AIETC.

Let me conclude with a quote about teachers, "Teachers have three loves: love of learning, love of learners, and the love of bringing the first two loves together" (Scott Hayden). IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Karnad's *Boiled Beans on Toast*: An Exploration into the Dynamics of Emergent Indian Society

\*Prof. R.N. Rai

### Abstract

Girish Karnad, a very powerful and internationally renowned contemporary playwright, reshaped Post-Independence Indian drama and theatre by providing a new dimension to it. His thought provoking play *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014) draws our attention to the rapid growth of urbanisation and changing pattern of human relationships in 21<sup>st</sup> century Indian metropolitan city-Bengaluru. The emerging trends of urbanisation and people's compulsive mad rush to the metropolitan cities like Bengaluru are presenting a disheartening reality regarding the future prospects of human society.

The play powerfully depicts the aspirations of underprivileged village migrants and rich urban elites. It makes subtle exploration of several burning issues of the changing society such as rural aspiration, urban migration, youth unemployment, environmental pollution, narrow individualism, gross consumerism, family conflicts, blind goring, follies and foibles of human nature. Even in this phase of serious cultural crisis, our society remains just a passive, indifferent spectator.

**Keywords:** Exploration, Conflicting, Humongous, Cosmopolitan, Saga, Caricature

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Girish Karnad, an internationally renowned and amazing contemporary Indian English playwright, a highly talented film maker, a public spirited intellctual, a versatile actor, a competent commentator, an eloquent orator and the author of great Indian classics like *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*, originally wrote his plays in Kannada and then translated them into English. He has had the privilege of being a Rhodes Scholar (1960-63) at Oxford, Director of Film and Television Institute, Pune (1974-75), Visiting Professor and Fulbright - Playwright - in - Residence at the University of Chicago (1987-88), Chairman of Sangeet Natak Akademi (1988-93), Director of Nehru Centre, London (2000-03) and UNESCO World Theatre Ambassador of International Theatre Institute, Paris. He has been honoured with *Padma Shree* (1974), *Padma Bhushan* (1992), *Sahitya Akademi Award* (1994) and the prestigious *Jnanpith Award* (1998).

Karnad is rightly regarded as the renaissance figure whose significance lies in his continued, consistent and prolific literary output. He has reshaped post-Independence Indian drama and theatre and given them a new dimension. In the 70s he filled up the gap between B.V. Karanth and Sri Rangacharya in Karnataka's theatre movement and, says Vivek Shanbhag in *The Hindu Magazine* (June 16, 2019), "came like a breath of fresh air with his new kind of writing structure and modern thoughts" (12). He has been rightly placed in the galaxy of such litterateurs whose works have been regarded as the best and most translated works of world literature.

After highlighting the civilizational contradictions in *Yayati*, *Hayavadana* and *Nagamandala*, historical misreading in *Tughlaq* and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* and the anxiety of soul in *A Heap of Broken Images*, Karnad wrote his thought provoking play *A Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014) in which he presents a disparate but interrelated set of people trying to cope with the frightening situation of the process of urbanisation in 21<sup>st</sup> century Indian metropolitan city-Bengaluru. Bengaluru's explosive growth in the last few decades has led to the emergence of enormous city with conflicting individuals preying upon each other, confronting their soaring aspirations, hasty decisions and endless frustrations. The play draws our attention to the patterns of changing human relationships and tries to assess whether it is a frightening situation or a desirable natural process in the growth of human society. The confession of Western and Indian cuisine in the title of the play, says British theatre critic, Howard Loxton in *Theatre Review* (10 May, 2015), "is a reminder of the mix of Western and Indian values in the busy life of the modern city, with its complex confusion of poverty and wealth, simplicity and sophistication which Karnad suggests through those living in one household and their connections" (2).

The title of the play centres round the founding myth of the city of Bengaluru which is now-a-days known as the 'Silicon Valley of India'. It is derived from an apocryphal story of 11<sup>th</sup> century Hoyasala King, Vira Ballala who, during a hunting expedition, lost his way in the forest and finally arrived exhausted at a lonely hut where an old woman saved his life by offering him a handful of boiled beans (benda kalu in Kannada). As a mark of gratitude the king named the place (Bendakaaluru-the place of boiled beans) which in due course of time got corrupted into 'Bengaluru' and was in turn anglicized by Britishers into 'Bengalore'. The boiled beans from Bengaluru symbolise hospitality and warm welcome to a weary traveller. The toast is strictly Western import into our Indian cooking system and symbolically refers to the Western impact visible in our day-to-day life and our socio-cultural patterns of living and thinking in present-day Bengalore. It is a very powerful play based on the stories of intertwining lives of many people coming from different sociocultural backgrounds and trying to co-exist in rapidly changing Indian metropolitan society.

*Boiled Beans on Toast* is a play of ideas written in the style of Ibsen, Chekhov and Shaw with minimalistic settings and actions

on the stage. It is an outstanding contemporary Chekovian drama which examines the multiple aspects of changing contemporary Indian society in the metropolitan city of our country. Unlike Aristotle who emphasized action in the play and regarded plot as the soul of tragedy, Karnad like Chekhov puts emphasis on the situation, mood and internal psychological states of human life. Unlike Aristotle Karnad wrote neither pure comedies nor pure tragedies but tragic and comic situations are inextricably intertwined in his plays. In the period of rapid technological and environmental changes, his characters have to pass through personal, social, political, historical and cultural transitions of human life.

Like Chekhov Karnad realises that since there is no resolution in human life, there should be no point of resolution in the drama also. Unlike Shakespearean tragedies Karnad's plays do not present either heroes or villains. He rather creates such characters who are neither essentially good nor entirely bad. He does not focus his attention on the momentous events but on the characters' reaction to the events and conveys more precisely the effects of such events on the lives of characters. Like realists and naturalists, Karnad presents the world exactly as it is-just as complicated or as simple as it is in real life. He does not provide any moral judgement; any sort of solution or resolution, tragic or comic, is always deferred. His characters reveal their dissatisfaction with the present condition but at the same time express their inability to change themselves or their surroundings. They cannot get rid of the legacy of the past nor can they ignore the prospects of the future.

*Boiled Beans on Toast* does not have a linear narrative with beginning, middle and end. It does not have a well-structured story with the normal theme of love or friendship or marital relationship. The characters bump into each other, argue, contradict, assert, regret or express their views frankly and fearlessly. It shows Karnad's intelligent and insightful handling of the existing state of human relationship in society. In the "Foreword" to the play Shanta Gokhale rightly comments: "Karnad observes these characters with a sense of irony,maintaining a remarkably objective viewpoint devoid of nostalgia. The play is neither loaded with memories of a golden past nor does it take a moralistic stand against development. It looks at the reality of the present with unblinking eyes" (vii).

The play may be regarded as a realistic play on the ground that its characters are drawn with great attention to the sociopsychological truths of the society. However, it deviates from the pattern of realistic drama in the sense that it does not show the normal pattern of exposition, complication and resolution. It belongs, says Shanta Ghokale in his "Foreword" to the play, to "a world of multiple misalignments. If its purpose is to encompass the heterogeneity of the lives and dreams that make the organism work, it has no choice but to discard linearity and the idea of satisfying resolution" (viii). If we look at the play from structural point of view, it works as a prose symphony, the dominant theme configuring through short and long movements.

*Boiled Beans on Toast* brings forth the awesome, horrible reality of contemporary life. It successfully echoes the hopes and aspirations, pangs and separations of many types of people who are trying their best to survive and prosper in a cosmopolitan metropolis. It powerfully depicts the aspiratons of underprivileged village migrants and rich urban elites. It makes subtle exploration of several burning issues of the changing society such as rural aspiration, urban migration, youth unemployment, environmental pollution, narrow individualism, gross consumerism, family comflicts, blind groping, follies and foibles of human nature. Even in the phase of serious cultural crisis our society remains just a passive, indifferent spectator. It fails to discharge its duty as an active and effective catalyst in the socio-cultural transformation of the existing human relationships.

The emerging trends of urbanisation and people's compulsive mad rush to the metropolitan cities like Bengaluru are presenting a disheartening reality regarding the future prospects of human society. We find such cities full of alienated distrustful people indulged in mad rush of gross materialism and consumerism in this phase of the postmodernist twenty first century. Karnad's play Boiled Beans on Toast, like his earlier play Wedding Album has a modern genealogy. If Wedding Album is related to the tradition of Ibsenian urban realism, Boiled Beans on Toast is written in the tradition of modernist fiction or non-fiction which picks up individual or post-industrial city as its subject like Dublin in James Joyce's work or Kolkata in Satyajit Ray's Mahanagar (1963) or Mumbai in Mira Nair's Salaam Bombay (1988), or Rohinton Mistri's Family Matters (2000) or Suketu Mehta's Maximum City (2005). Even in the genre of drama we have Mahesh Dattani's edited collection of three City Plays (2004)-Mahesh Elkunchwar's Party, Shanta Gokhale's Avinash and Manjula Padmanabham's Lights Out. Mahesh Dattani's own theatrical performance on Mumbai The Big Fat City (2013) may also be placed in the same category. Therefore Shanta Gokhale in his "Foreword" to the play has rightly observed:

The chief protagonist of *Boiled Beans on Toast* is the city of Banglore, a throbbing organism spawned by globalisation. The play holds a mirror to the fractured lives of its floating population which occupies a broad social spectrum from the struggler to the street smart survivor, from the small town aspirant to the elite. This is a city of wild hopes and dashed dreams, of disappointment and despair, of environmental destruction and rapid development. (vii)

The play is a powerful satire on city's reckless growth and apathy among the people where people belonging to the lower strata of society are making untiring efforts to ensure their social and financial security and rich elites are trying their best to become richer and richer. People's sweet dreams and wild aspirations are very often shattered into pieces and they are unable to find out even their broken fragments.

Whenever the image of Bengaluru city comes to our mind, we are reminded of its massive cosmopolitan populace, I.T. professionals, cheap bear, pleasant weather and heavy traffic on the road. However, we have seldom heard the stories of common Bengaluru residents-labourers, housewives, senior citizens, non-I.T. professionals, alienated and disenchanted family members living under a single roof. The play revolves around the untold tales of common Bengaluru people and their endless struggles, trials and tribulations. It is a direct and realistic gaze at the humongous growth of cosmopolitan cities in contemporary India depicting the lives of lower middle class strugglers who are desperate to climb the corporate ladder, privileged rich kids rebelling against their parents, prosperous, alienated conniving housewives leading their own secluded lives, maid servants at the jobs with secret and complicated life styles. They are the searing saga of a modern conflicting metropolis.

Girish Karnad draws our attention to the weaknesses and inner contradictions of this phony culture which is attracting the people of all sections of society and forcing them to rush to Bengaluru for their better survival. The play reveals Karnad's intelligent and insightful handling of the existing state of human relationships in society. It is a brilliant portrayal of more than a dozen characters picked up from various sections of society and through them focuses its attention on several burning issues of the developing cities-urban migration, ecological imbalance, consumerist outlook and apathy towards the poor and marginalized people of the society. Karnad's characters seem to have been locked in moral, psychological and philosophical conflict and perplexing inner turmoil. Some prominent characters of the play are governed by their own compulsive obsessions-Anjana Padabidri, a rich, idle housewife finds consolation by undertaking charity work and by visiting Karunashraya for the care of advanced stage cancer patients, Anjana's husband who is just reported and never appears on the stage, Anjana's friend Dolly, a lady of leisure, spends her time in befooling people with her false promises and finds pleasure in their frustration and failure, Prabhakar, a young aspirant from the village devoted to his family, is suddenly mesmerized by the prospects of a better future in Wipro's office in Singapore and finally fails miserably in fulfilling his dreams, Anjana's son Kunaal who is in the process of finding himself, rebels against his father and acts against his wishes, Anjana's mother-in-law Anusuya develops a passion for horse racing and spends her time in betting in horse races. She is so unscrupulous that she is not opposed to cheating her own family members. Anjana's trustworthy maid servant Vimala survives through her wicked devices and is found floating homeless in the nightmarish streets of Bengaluru.

Karnad's attention is focussed on the inner contradictions and bitter relationships among the members of the privileged Padabidri family which consists of the following members-Anjana (the central character), her husband (an awefully busy business tycoon), her son, Kunaal (who is busy in himself), her mother-inlaw, Anusuya (who passes her time by betting in horse races). They are all suffering from serious generation gap, though they live together in the same house under the same roof. After marriage Anjana Padabidri is moved to Bengaluru along with her husband when her son was just two years old. Since her husband was not able to give much time to her, she gradually started feeling crazy and came in contact with a Bengali young man who started visiting her house regularly. She became so intimate to him that they started singing Hindi songs together. She learnt Rabindra Sangeet from him and sang the compositions of a reputed saint. She often used to spend her time with him, as she was not having very cordial relationship with her husband. It is evident from her own confession: "All I can say is I'm glad his job keeps him away from India. It keeps me sane" (20). Her life had become just like the life of Bernard Shaw's Candida who felt attracted towards her lover, March banks and was disillusioned with the busy life of her husband, Morell. However, whereas Candida decided to leave the company of her lover and stick to her husband, Anjana tried to kill herself and her son by eating sleeping pills when she came to know that her Bengali friend had left her forever. She was shocked by the note of her lover which had been tacked on her door: 'I don't wish to be trapped into a relationship with a married woman' (78). The word 'trapped' used by the lover was so shocking to her that she ground some sleeping pills in milk and fed them to Kunaal. She swallowed the rest, prayed to the gods, clasped Kunaal and went to sleep-never to wake up again but Death had cheated both of them and they were alive. Miraculously she survived but stopped singing, as she herself has stated: "I would never sing again after that. I'd lost my voice" (78). Her singing was revived when she had to sing after repeated requests from a cancer patient in Karunashraya-'abode of compassion'. In order to get rid of her boredom and keep herself busy she used to go to Karunashraya for the care of advanced stage cancer patients. This is how Anjana used to pass her time in the service of suffering humanity.

Anjana's life is also upset by the attitude of the city Corporation. Corporation people don't have any time to think over the 'greenery and environment' of the city. They are cutting the green plants and trees for constructing overbridges and making road diversions. She is shocked to see the fate of her magnificent 'rain tree' which is "lying there looking so helpless. Like a baby. Just the trunk and the roots. I can't bear it" (58). Tears start coming up and she wipes them. In fact, Anjana had built her house there simply on account of the presence of that 'rain tree' which is now to be chopped down for the construction of the underpass. While talking to Prabhakar about the recent structural changes taking place in her locality, Anjana expresses her special sentiments for that 'rain tree':

You know the main reason for this house being here is that tree outside. Kunaal and I were scouting around Bangalore for a suitable area in which to build our house... We saw this magnificent tree along the wide road-you know with its foliage spreading like an umbrella-and I said to Kunaal, 'Look, Kunaal, that is a rain tree. It has bipinnate leaveslike feathers-they open up in the sun so you've shade under it during the day, and they fold in at night, so moonlight filters through. He was absolutely delighted and we immediately decided to build our house there. We planned the whole layout, standing right there, so that the terrace would be under its spreading branches, and we could have regular dinner parties on it. (15)

Ironically the policy of city Corporation has changed the entire scenario and the space for that magnificent 'rain tree' is being converted into a ring road. The daily experience has become so unpleasant and disgusting that Anjana feels her dreams have been shattered into pieces:

That was the end of their dinner parties. The traffic was deafening. You couldn't hear a word of what the next person said... Kunaal and I-we love that rain tree, and I swear to you the day that tree goes I'm getting out of this house. (15)

Anjana is not only worried with heavy traffic jam and population explosion in the city but also perplexed to see the unplanned and unhygienic growth of the suburbs of Banglore. It is evident from the statement of Kunaal who, along with Vimala and two constables, visits Vimala's room in new residential extension in Uttarhalli in connection with the theft of a thick gold chain of Saroja:

It simply was not the Bangalore we know. No sign of any modern civic amenities there. An absolute nightmare from which there was no way of waking up. Of course the road had no pavement. In fact, there was no solid ground anywhere to step on-only potholes. Dirt, plastic bags, piles of garbage on which dogs were tearing at blood-sodden bits of menstrual rags. No way could you drive a car through.... And the houses! oh god! They were like the cardboard containers.... I somehow managed to navigate the car through this mess. (41)

The situation of the locality was just pathetic and horrifying. We thus realise that the new extension of the city is nothing but just "a virtually random arrangement of shapeless blocks of flats" (49). When Kunaal asks the constable to arrest Vimala, constable laughs and says: "Our prisons have no spare capacity, Sir. Banglore is bursting with women like her.... Impossible to pin them down. Like scorpions you know. They only have to see a slab of stone and they'll crawl under it and set up house" (44).

Anjana's husband who is awfully busy in earning money through his international business, has little time for his wife or son. He is perplexed to see the Credit Card statement as his son Kunaal had purchased 'a new, expensive guitar' without taking him into confidence. Kunaal is a Veena player but plays guitar against the wishes of his parents. When they express their worries about his future, he categorically says that he cann't wait till he is "bent and old and thirty five" (20). He wants to become a musician and is "struggling to make a name" for himself. He is trying to fulfil his own dream but we find that ultimately he is leading the life of an ambitious professional who is wrecked with brutal casualness. His father is worried to know that Kunaal's drummer is 'gay' and the pad or the club where they play has a reputation for 'rave parties and drugs'.

Anjana's son Kunaal is an ambitious young man of independent temperament. He is a budding guitarist, well versed in Veena and dreams to perform with the band. He rebels against his parents and spends some nights with his girl friend, Nandita against their advice. One day when Kunaal says, "Mummy, if it gets very late, I may not come home for dinner. I'll sleep over at Nandita's" (18), his mother reacts very strongly, "I wish you two (Kunaal and his father) would leave me out of it. I can't stand it any longer" (20). Even Kunaal's grandmother, Anusuya is worried to know who that Nandita is. How is Kunaal staying with Nandita at night without the proper consent of his grandmother? Here Karnad is showing an existential conflict between two or three generations. Kunaal's parents, it is quite natural, want him to lead a successful settled life, whereas Kunaal aspires for the satisfaction of the urges of his soul. He, like Purandara Dasa, wants to compose his own songs. He wants to 'break away from traditional music'. He never wants to play in the royal courts. He wants to take the music to the streets. For him music is his 'god'. It is not the source of money or status for him.

When Kunaal comes to know about his own miraculous survival through his mother, he starts contemplating over the existence of his own life. While talking to his own beloved Nandita on his mobile, he reveals his own realisation of life:

Nandita, I've just realised something I'd never thought of before. I might not have been here at all now. I may never have existed, and yet the world would've continued to be, exactly as it is now. I mean. This world, this city, Banglore, my friends, family, you-everything would have existed, but not me. I could be inside some black hole! I wouldn't be existing. What an utlerly horrible thought! But if I didn't exist, whether the rest of the universe existed or not, that wouldn't have mattered in the least, would it? (79).

Kunaal puts aside his mobile, takes out his guitar from its case and starts strumming it as he continues to speak to her: "That's going to be my new composition-yes-my paean to Banglore that might never have existed. You know what's the first line? 'Big Bang Banglore is a Big Black Hole!'" (80) The above statements of Kunaal who represents the youth in the play, reveal the individualistic concerns of society and the parents's lack of responsibility towards their children. Karnad here brilliantly presents the maladies of urban population and depicts the faceless crowd where individualistic aspirations melt into an amorphous non-caring urban society.

The last character of Anjana's family i.e. her mother-in-law Anasuya is an interesting amoral presence in the family. She has only one pastime-betting in horse races which, in her opinion, 'opens up visions of power'. She studies the Pedigree of each horse before placing a bet and gradually pawns her jewellery to get 2.5 lacs for betting. She is interested neither in visiting the temples nor shops, as in her opinion all "the shops seem to sell the same things" (17). She is keen to visit the race course in Bangalore. She has read in the newspaper that government is "going to close it down and move it out of the city" (18). Anusuya, along with Sundara Rajan, is found sitting in the gallery of Bangalore Race Course. Though She has lost the last rupee she had brought, she is still willing to bet on the horses. When Sundara Rajan advises her to place smaller bets, she loses her temper and asks: "stop advising me. We must look for some more money. Isn't there anyone we could borrow from"? (22). She contacts Dolly Iver's husband, Brigadier Iver and borrows four thousand rupees from him and promises to return it to him immediately after the race is over. Anusuya is wasting money on horse races without the knowledge of her son or daughter-in-law. She openly tells Brigadier Iyer: "please, please, don't say anything to my son or daughter-in-law about it. I shall be most thankful if you mentioned absolutely nothing to them. I shall return the amount the moment the race's over" (24). As soon as Anusuya gets the money, she asks Rajan to hurry up and bet "three thousand on Silver stallion for a win. God, I'm excited!" (24). Brigadier Iyer is bemused to watch the anxiety and interest of Anusuya in horse races. Along with Rajan Anusuya visits the Race course on another day and asks him to hurry up and bet twenty thousand for a Win on Flash Past. When Rajan advises her not to bet twenty thousand but a smaller amount, Anusuya is annoved and asks Rajan: "Don't argue with me for god's sake. This is the last race of the season. Our last chance. Go. Run. Number Four. Flash Past. Twenty thousand". (60) Anusuya is highly excited about its result, as she is confident about her victory. She goes on saying: "He's overtaken the rest. He is leading. That's it! Four ! Four! Hurrah...." (61) and suddenly when she comes to know that Flash Past lost the race at the last moment, she faints and falls down on the ground. If this is the situation of the grandmother, what kind of discipline and good conduct can we expect in the family set up?

Outside the family circle of Anjana, there are two other important characters in the play-Dolly Iyer and Prabhakar. Dolly Iyer is the symbol of urban hypocrisy, where as Prabhakar is the symbol of aspiration of the contemporary youth. Dolly Iyer, a lady of leisure, is a villain in the play. She is a school teacher, as she has nothing better to do in life. She spends most of her time in Anjana's house. She is fond of interfering at will in the lives of others without any serious concern for its disastrous consequences. She makes people realise that they are very close to achieving their goals and fulfilling their aspirations but eventually shatters their dreams into pieces. Prabhakar becomes a glaring victim of Dolly Iyer's deceptive devices. In order to counter boredom and abuse from her often absent husband who often beats her, she makes Prabhakar believe that she can manage a better job in Singapore for him on account of her close contact with Azeem and Yasmean, but ultimately Prabhakar gets no job in Singapore. At the same time, he loses his job in Bangalore also. She thus destroys Prabhakar's professional as well as family life under the illusion of a better job.

Karnad represents contemporary youth's insatiable ambition through the character of Prabhakar. Prabhakar is initially happy with his life in Bangalore. He is leading a satisfactory life with his family in a small rented room. He goes to Anjana's house in order to meet her husband but unfortunately he meets Dolly Iyer who sows the seeds of vaulting ambition in him. She lashes onto him and befools him miserably. Dolly tells Prabhakar that there is serious competition everywhere in the contemporary era. Her advice to Prabhakar how to live in the present world is symptomatic of the craze of the present generation: "....Wake up, Prabhakar! The era in which you are expected to spend your entire life time serving a simple firm is gone. In this age of globalisation you must move quickly, from job to job and upwards." (30)

Prabhakar was initially happy with his life in Bangalore but when he was offered a better prospect to serve in Wipro in Singapore (a dream company for him), he frankly tells his wife: No, Sumitra. I'm rotting in this place. I must thank Dolly for making me realise I'm wasted here. I deserve a better job. I can't go forever with this grind. And you deserve something much better. I'll see to it that you get the best in the world. I shall make you a queen. (34)

Whereas Prabhakar feels highly obliged to Dolly for providing him a job with Wipro, Sumitra is annoyed with her proposal and bitterly comments: "I hate her. I don't know in which past birth I harmed her, that she should come back again as my tormentor" (35). Now the question is why does Sumitra feel tormented with this promising proposal? She feels tormented simply because so long as Prabhakar is not able to settle in Singapore, she will have to stay back with her son in the town with her parents or parentsin-law which is like a curse to her.

Girish Karnad, through this episode, has tried to draw our attention to the changing patterns of human relationship in contemporary society. Women of younger generation have become so modern in outlook and so self centred in habits that they don't want to stay or adjust with their parents or parents-in-law even for a short duration. It is quite evident from the following statement of Sumitra:

I was so happy when you got a job here. Our own house. Our own life. No parents or parents-in-law to breath down our necks. No interfering relatives. We were so happy. What more do you want?

... I just hate the thought of going back to that cesspit. (34)

Prabhakar does not work under the pressure of his wife. He submits his resignation and leaves the family at his home in the village. He blindly believes in what is stated to him by Dolly regarding the future prospects of his career. It is quite evident from his own statement to the receptionist:

I have already been selected for the post of a Regional Manager in Singapore.... This is an important matter, a matter of life and death, you could say. I have resigned from my permanent job, paid the penalty of two months' salary, vacated my house, sent my family back to the village.... Look, it's not just a matter of my job. It's my whole life. I have taken a loan of seventy thousand. My entire future-everything hinges on this-this one meeting. (53) Prabhakar is ultimately cheated by Dolly and he could not get the job with Wipro at Singapore. He is now jobless. He comes back to express his grievance to Dolly and asks her:

Why did you do it? Was it really necessary?.... My wife's refusing to come back to Bangalore. She says what humiliation she's suffered will last her a lifetime. I'm penniless. Why did you do it? (63)

Prabhakar was seriously contemplating over the act of committing suicide but did not go ahead. He kept on asking himself:

What keeps things working at all in this city? What drives these crowds? Hope. Ambition. Whatever. It's our version of the American dream, which would have horrified my parents, but has brought me to Bangalore. It seemed poised to lead me on to Singapore. But no matter. Despite the lesson you have taught me, Dolly, I promise you, I shall pursue that dream. (64)

Prabhakar's innocence and folly have been caricatured through this episode in the play.

In comparison to Karnad's earlier plays, *Boiled Beans on Toast* has a distinct feature of its own. Here sufficient importance has been given to the characters of the servants. Two female servants-Vimala and Muttu receive as much attention in the play as their employers. Vimala is unscrupulous, unmoved, defiant and determined to exploit any occasion in order to feather her own nest. For quite some time she has created the impression of an efficient, indispensable servant till she is exposed as a thief and a damned liar. She is so adept at lying that it is not easy to find out where she lives. The anonymity that the city offers, provides a convenient cover to her safety. At one point of time Kunaal was so 'flabbergasted' and 'stunned' with the witty responses and cunning devices of Vimala that he could not just believe that "every sentence she uttered to the police and to me was a lie. A bright, white, brazen lie.... And what courage? What invention!" (44). The episode of Vimala reveals the fact that it is very difficult to keep the servant for domestic work without the risk of losing something very valuable for your family. Vimala who was once the most reliable servant of the family had lent two gas cylinders, microwave and mixer to Prof. Menon's family without even the knowledge of Anjana. When Anjana comes to know about it, she is shocked and exclaims in the following manner: "Heavens! And all this under my very nose.... And all this has been going on for four months." (58). Through this episode Karnad wants to highlight the problem of domestic servants in big cities like Bangalore. Muttu, another junior maid servant on the other hand, is younger, honest, committed and submissive to her employer's family. She silently seizes the opportunity and replaces her rival Vimala in the family of her master.

In the opening of the play the altercation between Muttu and her brother Shankara may be regarded as the overture, but it introduces and explores various themes of changing human relationships in contemporary society-village versus city, human relations guided by family and community ties versus human relation controlled by pragmatic worldly considerations; the idea of home-ancestral versus self-made. Like contemporary music we can easily perceive more dissonant than consonant notes in human relationships: a vindictive brother Shankara forces her sister Muttu to break off family ties in due course of time.

Girish Karnad, through the episode of Muttu and Shankara, has tried to depict how human life (family life) is governed by petty concerns of human existence. When people from villages get employment in the city and get accustomed to urban way of living, they gradually prefer to forget their village relations especially when they have to celebrate the auspicious occasion like the marriage ceremony. Financial aspects of the celebration play a very important role on such occasions. Regarding the marriage ceremony of Muttu's daughter, Kalpana there is a good deal of debate among the family members as to where the marriage ceremony should take place-in the home town or in Bangalore. Since Shankara is rooted to the town life only, he wants that all marriage rituals should be performed in his home town, as most of our relatives live in the nearby locality. We can ensure their active participation. They cannot come so far to Bangalore to attend the marriage ceremony. His sister Muttu and her husband, on the other hand, are governed by financial and practical considerations. The dialogue among the family members is quite interesting and insightful:

Muttu: Husband said Karimangala would mean expense. The remotest relatives will turn up. In Bangalore, we can have a smaller affair. More compact.

Shankara: That is what happens when people move to the city. The family back home, relatives, connections-they all become dispensable, don't they? They can be put aside. Ignored. Forgotten.

Muttu: I don't know what to say. You talk to husband.

Shankara: I don't have time now to go searching for Brother-in-law.... Should we not celebrate it in our ancestral home in our own town?.... You and I-we grew up in Karimangala. Our family gods are there.... Let us invite all the family members-elders, cousins, aunts, uncles and perform the rites properly. (7-8)

Shankara even goes to the extent of saying that if they are afraid of expenses in the marriage of Kalpana, he will handle it himself. Finally it is decided that marriage rituals would be performed in the town, Karimangala. The Second Act of the play begins with Kalpana sitting on a plank decorated with alpanas. A Tamil ritual song is being sung. Muttu's mother asks her son Shankara to pick up Kalpana and place her back on the plank just to begin the auspicious ceremony. Shankara, however, does not move and continues to ignore her request. When Muttu requests Shankara to begin the process, he reveals his real selfish motive. Shankara was not at all interested in the marriage of Kalpana, he was simply exploiting the situation in order to grind his own axe. It is quite evident from the following dialogue:

Shankara: No, I would not come. I would not pick her up. What's she to me? What am I to you? Nothing. No relation. Don't you know that?

Mother: Don't say such inauspicious things, Son. Come. Shankara (snarling): Why should not I? Look at Kalpana. Decorated. Decked out like a bride.... But if it was my daughter sitting there instead of Kalpana,—if it was my daughter-would you have splurged like this?

Mother: Why do you say that, Shankara? Your daughter's my granddaughter too. She's as—

Shankara: Oh, is she now? So you have at long lost remembered that, have you? And what have you done for these granddaughters, eh? They're rotting in this village. Do you even think of them in Bangalore? Do you ever remember that they exist? What have you done for my daughter? Tell me. (45-6)

Shankara seems to be deeply aggrieved with his mother for her negligence of his entire family whereas the fact was that his mother had been struggling very hard for her own survival. After the early death of Shankara's father, Shankara's mother, being considered an inauspicious woman, had been forced by her fatherin- law to get out of the house with her daughter Muttu. She had no option but to leave the town at the earliest. Her only son, Shankara was allowed to stay with the grandparents but not the mother and her daughter. Hence, the mother had no option but to rush to Bangalore for her own survival. She, along with her daughter Muttu, had to live "like beggars, like roofless orphans, in that monster city" (47) Bangalore and work very hard to feed her daughter. Here we find a significant similarity between Karnad's *Boiled Beans on Toast* and Arundhati Roy's popular novel, *The God Of Small Things* regarding patriarchal approach towards the female child. Just as Ammu was asked to leave the house with her daughter Rahel but Ammu's son Estha was being taken care of by Ammu's mother and brother, similarly Shankara's mother was asked to leave the house with her daughter Muttu but her son Shankara was allowed to stay with the grandparents. It is a glaring case of gender discrimination. We have to change the mindset of the public in order to ensure gender equality in society.

Shankara has his own reasons for his grievances against his mother, as he believes that his mother had been still supporting Muttu's family in Bangalore for better education of her children. Whereas Muttu's daughter is learning in English medium school in Bangalore, Shankara's daughters are doomed to Tamil Schools. Hence he is using very harsh words for his mother:" Are you my mother? No, you are not... You are the mother of Bengaluru Muttu. You've been no grandmother to my children. Have you ever fondled them? caressed them? You're a demon. If we'd let you, you would even drink their blood" (48).

Shankara loses his temper, attacks his mother and starts beating her. Muttu's husband Ravi grabs his hand and somehow manages to push him into a corner. There was pandemonium in the room. Women, gathered for this auspicious occasion, somehow manage to leave the place hurriedly along with their children. The situation became so pathetic and shocking that Muttu had no option but to leave the town, never to return: "Let's go, mother. We've had enough of this home. Let's go back to Bangalore. I'm never going to step into this cursed town again. I'm done with it. Forever." (48)

This is how their family relationship crumbled down and came to an end. In the contemporary society warmth of family relationship is crumbling very fast and joint family system has become a system of the past. In the postmodernist era individualism and materialism are the guiding factors of human relationship. The rural-urban divide has further aggravated the situation end generated a serious rift in human relationships.

Since the play contains several scenes and incidents of misalignments, it is characterized by the qualities of dystopia which are unpleasant, frightening and dehumanising. Anjana has strained relationship with her husband as well as her son. She wants both of them to be away from home, as only in their absence she can retain the sanity of her mind. She has sufficient time to talk about Vimala's troubles with the police, but very little time to talk about her son's activities for his strained relationship with his absent father. Kunaal cannot share his feelings and emotions either with his mother or father; he can share them only with his girlfriend, Nandita. The nuclear family of young and innocent Prabhakar is ruined by the end of the play; the relationship between Prabhakar and his wife becomes very bitter and disgusting. The relationship of Shankara with his sister Muttu suffers irreversible damage, and Muttu's bond with her village comes to the disastrous end. Shankara is lying injured in a Bangalore hospital, but his sister Muttu has no means of locating him.

The Irreversible loss that is visible in Bangalore is the gradual loss of ecological balance. The loss of 'rain tree' in front of Anjana's house for the 'development' of the city is the symbolic loss of 'real home' to Anjana. However the attitude of the people coming from villages and towns puts the entire issue on a new perspective. Prabhakar complicates the issue of ecological balance by offering an opposite viewpoint. For people like him who have passed through the suffocation of small town life, the cement and concrete jungle of the city stands for the 'solidity' of human life, the polluted environment looks like an 'oxygen chamber' and waves of traffic in the city look like waves in the ocean:

...waves after waves after waves and then water, right up to the horizon. Our traffic too is like that. Waves after waves of scooters, auto rickshaws, buses, cars, every conceivable kind of vehicle, including bullock carts, tractors and earth movers. It is magical.(25)

If he had been mesmerized to see the sea waves, he was mesmerized to see the busy traffic of Bangalore also. People migrating to the metropolitan cities have different dreams and aspirations. If rich people are aspiring for beautiful natural surroundings and nice front of their house, new poor migrants pouring into the city are lamenting over the size of their room. If Dolly aspires for a comfortable apartment, Prabhakar laments over the size of his flat: "you should see our flat. It's the size of a handkerchief" (16). But the question that Prabhakar raises, is who should be blamed for it? Who has asked us to come to Bangalore? Had we stayed back in our villages, we might have been rotten. Hence instead of "rotting in Mundgod' he was fortunate to be in Bangalore. "This itself is", says Prabhakar, "release" (27) for him and the people like him as it holds endless promise of untold prospects. These are the salient features of dystopian perceptions, as they believe in the evolution (devolution) of new emerging urban society which finds life affirming qualities in what is really sterile and inert.

We thus find that the city of Bangalore has metamorphosed from a place of hospitality, natural beauty and healthy climate into an uncontainable, inhospitable organism. Bangalore, as the city of information technology, has witnessed unprecedented growth in population, as people from backward areas are pouring into the city for their proper survival. This kind of uncontrolled urban growth and population explosion in Bangalore have become widespread symptoms of neo-liberal expansion and globalization in India and it can very well be applied to a large number of emerging metropolis around the country. We cannot shut our eyes to the new residential extension in Uttarhali which is nothing but an 'absolute' nightmare from which there is no way of waking up? We now realise how true is the statement of Kunaal who rightly said: "Big Bang Bangalore is a Big Black Hole"! (80) Girish Karnad is not one of those playwrights who are fond of moral preaching at the end of the play. He draws our attention to the burning issues of the day and leaves the conflicting issues stay unresolved. There is no point of resolution at the end of the play, as in his opinion no radical social change is possible on the basis of any one's moral preaching. He believes in the norms of Brechtian tradition which provokes the audience to think why it happened? how it happened? and what can be done to prevent it from happening again? Hence he leaves loose and untied ends so that people may feel provoked to act effectively. We do not finally know what happens to Vimala? We do not know the secret of Dolly's mode of functioning-is she making grandiose promises to innocent people just to show her superiority or mock at them? What are the solutions to the problems like ecological imbalance, unbalanced growth of city, distingration family system, alienation or frustration of the youth? These are not the simple issues which can be resolved easily. Mass consciousness and collective efforts are required to get such burning issues resolved. Girish Karnad has made some positive, fruitful efforts in this direction and that too in a very logical, subtle and convincing manner. His presence in post-Independence Indian drama has immensely enriched our contemporary Indian and World theatre and he has become the 'cultural voice' of our country.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Is Gandhi Relevant Today?: A 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary Tribute

\*Nibir K. Ghosh

## Abstract

The aura of Mahatma Gandhi the legend looms so large in the human consciousness that it is difficult to imagine him to be anything more than a statue in the park, a portrait in government offices or a face on the currency bills. In an interview Rajkumar Hirani, the director of Lage Raho Munna Bhai, recounted how one of his goals in making the film was to revive an interest in Mahatma Gandhi, a figure whom he felt had been forgotten in contemporary India. To highlight this fact, Hirani mentioned an incident with a chai-wallah. The boy was curious, he was a big Munnabhai fan and kept asking the name of the film. The first working title was 'Munnabhai Meets Mahatma Gandhi.' The boy said, 'Munnabhai to theek hai, yeh Mahatma Gandhi kaun hai?' Based on Gandhi's life and actions as revealed in his writings, especially his Autobiography, the current tribute on his 150th birth anniversary year addresses the question of his relevance in contemporary times.

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**Keywords:** Mahatma Gandhi, Nonviolence, *Ahimsa*, Obama, Autobiography, South Africa, Civil Disobedience, Truth When will the world be safe for saints? May the Dominions, may the whole world, learn that if we are not to slide into abyss of violence, cruelty and chaos, there is no other way than that for which Mahatma Gandhi has lived and died.

#### -Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

On September 8, 2009, when Barack Obama spoke to the ninth-graders at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia (U.S.A.), a student named Lily asked the president: "If you could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?" Obama thought for a moment and answered: "Well, you know, dead or alive, that's a pretty big list .... I think that it might be Gandhi, who is a real hero of mine." He went on to say: "Now, it would probably be a really small meal because, he didn't eat a lot. But he's somebody who I find a lot of inspiration in. He inspired Dr. Martin Luther King... if it hadn't been for the non-violent movement in India, you might not have seen the same non-violent movement for civil rights here in the United States.... He was able to help people who thought they had no power realize that they had power, and then help people who had a lot of power realize that if all they're doing is oppressing people, then that's not a really good exercise of power." In a similar vein, during his visit to the Mani Bhavan Museum at Mumbai (where Mahatma Gandhi used to stay) Obama wrote in the visitor's book on November 6, 2010: "He is a hero not just to India, but to the world."

Obama's isn't a lone voice invoking Gandhi. If the Mahatma can inspire the most powerful man on earth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he has been equally formidable as a source of inspiration to countless kings, statesmen, writers and philosophers across the wide expanse of space and time. On the occasion of Mahatma's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1939, Albert Einstein recorded his veneration of Gandhi in lyrical terms:

[He was] a leader of his people, unsupported by any outward authority: a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who had devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who had confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior... (Einstein Web).

Since Einstein perceived Gandhi as an apostle and leader dedicated to the betterment of humankind through the divine power of truth and nonviolence, it was quite natural for him to idolize Gandhi in the following terms: "Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked on this earth" (Ibid.)

No less mellifluous is the adulation that Romain Rolland expressed for Gandhi in 1924:

Soft dark eyes, a small frail man, with a thin face and rather large protruding eyes, his head covered with a little white cap, his body clothed in coarse white cloth, barefooted. He lives on rice and fruit, and drinks only water. He sleeps on the floor-sleeps very little, and works incessantly. His body does not seem to count at all. There is nothing striking about him-except his whole expression of infinite patience and infinite love. There is an almost childlike simplicity about him. His manner is gentle and courteous even when dealing with adversaries, and he is of immaculate sincerity.... Yet you feel his indomitable spirit. He makes no compromises and never tries to hide a mistake. Nor is he afraid to admit having been in the wrong.... Literally ill at ease with the multitude that adores him, he feels happiest when, in meditative solitude, he can listen to the "still small voice" within (Rolland Web).

Romain Rolland sees Gandhi not as one endowed with superhuman attributes but as one who, amid the uproar of empires and nations, discovered his path by listening to his own "still small voice." Though oceans of ink have been used to portray Gandhi's thought, words and deeds in every part of the planet we inhabit, it may not be out of place to mention how the attempt to capture the many dimensions of his life and work on celluloid has enhanced his enduring appeal to all mankind.

If Attenborough's *Gandhi* attempted to take the transnational elite crowd close to the heart of the man who could change the world just by the power of his ethics, in very recent times R.K. Hirani's *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* impacted the imagination of the common man in metropolises, small towns as well as villages in India by highlighting the fact that Gandhi was still much more than a statue in the park, a portrait in government offices and a face on the currency bills. It brought home to one and all the way in which we could change the world, as Gandhi had done, by observing how people saw each other and saw themselves.

It is quite significant that no less than six Nobel Peace Prize winners and world leaders considered Gandhi as their role model and source of inspiration: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (USA), Dalai Lama (Tibet), Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Adolfo Perez Esquivel (Argentina) and Barrack Obama (U.S.A). It is ironical that Mahatma Gandhi, the man who inspired these Nobel Peace Prize winners, has never been considered for the coveted prize. I hope in the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary year of Mahatma Gandhi, the Nobel Committee will seriously consider rectifying a serious omission.

The purpose of this tribute, however, is not to extol the multidimensional personality, mission and vision of Gandhi as already engraved with the sharpness of steel on the pages of literature and history, but to shed light on the shades and nuances of his mission and vision that marked his historic passage from an ordinary mortal to that of the revered 'Mahatma.' While working on the present essay, I chanced upon "Reflections on Gandhi" by George Orwell. At the very outset, Orwell states, "Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent" (Orwell 116). In this context it will be worthwhile to recall how on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019, the day of his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, all those who literally worship Gandhi worldwide were shocked beyond belief when they read how his ashes had been "removed" from a memorial in Bapu Bhawan, Rewa where they had been for 71 years. The "vandals" involved in the act also wrote "deshdrohi" (traitor) in green paint across the photograph of the "the father of the nation," as the *London Daily Telegraph* put it.

More than ten thousand books have been written on Gandhi. They could fill two libraries: one in veneration, the other in denigration of the Mahatma. For many communal-minded zealots, Gandhi's assassins are no less objects of esteem. *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle With India*, the 2011 biography of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi written by the Pulitzer Prize winner, Joseph Lelyveld, has evoked a combination of piety and disregard for Gandhi.

Gandhi is primarily known as an undisputed apostle of truth and non-violence. "What is truth? said Jesting Pilate, and wouldn't stay for an answer" (Bacon, "Of Truth"). Gandhi, unlike the Roman Governor, never saw truth as an object of jest. Truth for Gandhi was much more than the abstract notion expounded by philosophers and saints. He tested truth in the very crucible of his day-to-day experience and used the inferences of each moment in setting up for himself a strict code of personal conduct.

I recall having read an essay when I was in the fourth or fifth standard in school. The essay, though I didn't care to find out then, was a piece taken out of Gandhi's autobiography. In the said essay, Gandhi narrates an episode related to his days at school when he was a lad of fourteen or fifteen. He had to go to school regularly for the gymnastics class at 4.00 p.m. One day, occupied in nursing his sick father, he arrived late for the said class. When he reached the school he found that everyone had already left. The next day when he met Mr. Gimi, the gymnastics teacher, he told him that he had no watch and that the clouds had deceived him. The latter refused to believe him and imposed a fine. It pained Gandhi then that he was convicted of lying in spite of the fact that he had told nothing but the truth. There was no way he could prove his innocence. Rather than lament his predicament or resent Mr. Gimi's attitude, he arrived at the inference that "a man of truth must also be a man of care" (*An Autobiography* 14). This simple experiment with truth offers invaluable insight that even a sage in meditation may have missed.

If one glances even randomly at any page in Gandhi's *Autobiography*, one can instantly see how Gandhi was a ceaseless experimenter with truth. Truth for him, as is evident from his autobiography and other writings, was always related to his own direct sphere of action and experience. In drawing his inferences from such daily intercourse with life, he relied solely on his intuitive instincts which he carefully placed under the scanner of Socratic innocence and reason. The scanner, located in his soul, sent beeps whenever it came across facts or decisions underlined by personal motives of gain and loss, temptation or fear. What is significant about his experimental mode is that each one of us, irrespective of caste, class, gender, education etc. can use it with ease to determine our own path and course of action, whatever it may be.

An Autobiography tells us that Gandhi had joined the profession of law knowing full well what everyone knew then (and what everyone knows now): that a lawyer's profession was a liar's profession. Yet, what he displayed by his conduct is extremely relevant to his own experiment with truth in the sphere of the said profession. He states in his autobiography:

I had learnt the true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby, not even money, certainly not my soul (*An Autobiography* 112).

If lawyers could be motivated by such experiments, the courts of law would be rendered redundant and superfluous. What Gandhi felt with regard to the legal profession, he demonstrated through his own experiments that it was applicable to each and every profession as is evident from his reference to the 'Seven Social Sins' that he published in his weekly newspaper *Young India* in 1925:

Politics without principles.

Wealth without work.

Pleasure without conscience.

Knowledge without character.

Commerce without morality.

Science without humanity.

Worship without sacrifice.

Each one of these avowed principles emerged out of Gandhi's ceaseless experiments with truth. However, in contemporary parlance one may reflect on these and call them anachronistic simply because these tenets of morality are no longer considered sins. It is rather unfortunate that in today's material world these social sins have come to be valued as stepping stones for instant success and recognition.

Is Gandhi, then, relevant to our own times? The question calls for intense introspection. In a society where "match-fixing" seems to be apparent in our day-today intercourse with life, it is perhaps futile to talk about the relevance of Gandhian principles. If one happens to visit the office of any one in power and authority, one can see that Gandhi's portrait is placed at the back of the official chair so that he/she may remain totally unmindful of what is expected of true servants of society. The implication is also that Gandhian ethics do not apply to those in positions of power but to those who come to them with their grievances and complaints for possible redressal. As one enters such an office, one is greeted by the enigmatic smile of the Mahatma in the portrait that seems to tell the entrant, "sorry, I am a mere spectator in the drama of moral degeneration. I did walk the earth in flesh and blood once upon a time, advocating the blessings of truth and non-violence but that's a tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The tragic irony, today, is not that we have forgotten Gandhi but that we have rendered him invisible in our day-to-day life. We have put him on a sacrosanct pedestal and we wish to venerate him from a distance rather than allow him to help us make our lives better. Notwithstanding the general trend of keeping Gandhi out of sight and out of mind, it is imperative to know that Gandhi's actions were always based on his conviction that "the good of the individual is contained in the good of all." When such thought becomes all-embracing, it is bound to transform whatever it touches; there is no limit to its power. Of all the great men and women who have enshrined the human history with their thoughts and actions, Gandhi's ideals alone lie within easy reach of mortals of all hues and shades all the world over. G. Ramachandran rightly avers:

There was nothing mystic or miraculous about his development and growth from a common man into the unsurpassed mahatma of our history. It is open to each one of us to see how he advanced, step by step, gathering innumerable fragments of truth one by one and piecing them together in the crucible of his life, ready to look at facts, understand their significance, face any consequence in the pursuit of a cause, suffer any penalty for a mistake, recover lost ground again, but always advancing, open-minded and without fear and dedicated selflessly to reach and hold the truth of a matter at any cost. He was, therefore, not born a mahatma. He grew into one. He was a common man who pulled himself up to most uncommon heights.

G. Ramachandran's lucid testimony amply resonates Gandhi's observations at the end of his autobiography, where he humbly admits:

The path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion.... To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms.... I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. *Ahimsa* is the farthest limit of humanity (*An Autobiography* 420).

It may be appropriate to mention here the narrative contained in his *Autobiography* that leads us to the incident that changed Gandhi the man hitherto involved in his individual quest for truth to the spokesman for the conscience of mankind. Many of us are aware of the story wherein Gandhi was forced to disembark from a first-class compartment while travelling from Durban to Pretoria. Gandhi describes the episode vividly as given below:

The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m... a passenger came and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a 'coloured' man. This disturbed him. [I told him] I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it.'

'No, you won't,' said the official. 'You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out.'

'Yes, you may. I refuse to get out voluntarily.'

The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment and the train steamed away (An *Autobiography* 93).

This incident reveals how greatness lies not in doing big things but in how we contend with ordinary adversities created by unforeseen circumstances. Gandhi's ruminations at the Maritzburg station clearly evinces the nature of his inner turmoil and his steadfast resolve to fight against injustice:

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial–only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice. So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria (Ibid.94).

The turning point comes when Gandhi realizes that the hardship and humiliation that he is made to undergo is merely "a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice." Rather than wallow in self-pity at the wrong and injustice he is subjected too, he firmly resolves "to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process." It is perhaps a perfect illustration of Gandhi's belief that passive resistance is not the weapon of the weak.

Matching his experiments with truth as outlined in his *Autobiography* with what he practiced as a saint of action and as a politician with principles, it is interesting to see that none of the reforms with which his name is associated was originally his in conception. They have almost all been proposed and preached by his predecessors or contemporaries. He himself never claimed that his ideas were original. "I have," he said, "nothing new to teach the world. Truth and Non-violence are as old as the hills" (*Harijan* 28.3.1936: 49). It is a fact that the ideas he used were quickened by the great life-force of his own self as he put to the test what he inferred from conceptions provided by others. Gandhi became aware of the power of 'civil disobedience' after he read

Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* in England. But the likes of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and others have acknowledged their debts of carrying out mass civil disobedience movements in their own countries directly to Gandhi. The statement of the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore is strikingly relevant:

Great as he is as a politician, as an organizer, as a leader of men, as a moral reformer, he is greater than all these as a man, because none of these aspects and activities limits his humanity... an incorrigible idealist and given to referring all conduct to certain pet formulae of his own, he is essentially a lover of men and not of mere ideas.... If he proposes an experiment for society, he must first subject himself to its ordeal. If he calls for a sacrifice, he must first pay its price himself (qtd. in Chakrabarti 128).

Gandhi was quite forthright in pointing out in his "Introduction" to his *Autobiography* that "My experiments have not been conducted in the closet, but in the open.... My purpose is to describe experiments in the science of Satyagraha, not to say how good I am. In judging myself I shall try to be as harsh as truth, as I want others also to be" (xii).

It is easy to be convinced by the fact that what Gandhi preached in terms of inferences emerging out of his experiments with truth was always in sync with what he practised in real life. His ideals never clashed with the actions he undertook with complete commitment. In my estimate of Gandhi the Man as well as Gandhi the Mahatma, he is literally infallible. But we must not forget the fact that as a political leader and *Rashtrapita* he may have committed errors of judgement that were not conducive to the interests of India that he undertook to set free. But, in any case, I would refer to them, in Aristotelian parlance, as his "Hamartia" rather than any "Tragic Flaw." We must understand that after all, he was not God incarnate but an exalted mortal with normal human failings and strengths.

To conclude the tribute, I must return to the title of this essay, "Is Gandhi Relevant Today?" No matter what his political detractors say or do, the fact remains that his life, thoughts and actions will never lose their relevance irrespective of time, clime and geographical space. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had rightly warned, "Gandhi was inevitable. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk" (King 71). Likewise, it would be pertinent to refer to what Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins record in their "Epilogue" to *Freedom at Midnight*:

Not a few of Gandhi's ideas which once appeared an old man's quirks have become... strangely relevant in a world of dwindling resources and expanding populations. Cutting up old envelopes to make notepads, rather than wasting paper, consuming only that food necessary to nourish one's frame, eschewing the heedless production of unheeded industrial goods, protecting the air we breathe and the water we drink, appear...not so much a set of charming eccentricities as a prescription for man's uncertain future on his exhausted planet (580).

Therefore, what we need to ponder about is how each one of us can make our lives meaningful not by paying lip service to Gandhian thoughts and visions but by conducting continued experiments, on the lines demonstrated by him, in the inner recesses of our souls and pertaining to our own domain of action and experience. It is time for us to realize that the burden on us is not to debate and deliberate on whether Gandhi was an *avatar* who descended on Mother India to free us from the British rule. Let us peep into our own souls and reflect on the universal and timeless relevance of the quintessential ordinariness of Gandhi's life and mission so that we may learn the art of being accountable to our own selves and, thereby, become worthy citizens of the nation.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Un-English (Irish Elements) and Early Poetry of W.B. Yeats

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#### Abstract

W.B. Yeats is regarded as a remarkable poetic genius of his time, and he occupies a significant position in galaxy of English poets of Modern Poetry. Notwithstanding, he was a great follower of Irish National Movement. W.B. Yeats' native Irish environment shaped his mind and style that distinguishes him from poets like Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and french symbolists. As an Irishman he loved the tradition of his country though he composed his poems in English. W.B. Yeats' early poetical works are, *Wandering of Oisin* (1889), *Poems* (1895), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *The Shadowy Water*. Most of his early poems were greatly influenced by the pre-Raphaelites and Celtic legends.

W.B. Yeats valued old faiths, dreams and scenic beauty. His early poetry is different from later poetry in style, technique and pattern, it expounds, exquisite music, Irish myth and local landscape, it also bristles with "eerie mystery". W.B. Yeats explicates his ideas in an article written on September 2, 1888:

To the greater poets everything

they see has its relation to

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the national life and through

that to the universal and

divine life.

The paper tries to explore Irish environment, its roots, myth and legends that shaped W.B. Yeats' poetic art as the guiding principle of poetic composition.

Keywords: Irish, Celtic, Occult, Symbolism, Imagism

W.B. Yeats was born near Dublin in 1865. He was educated in London but returned to Ireland in 1880. The poetical works of early period of Yeats are *Wandering of Oisin* (1889), *Poems* (1885), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *The Shadowy Water* (1889). The early lyrics of Yeats are remarkable for melodic beauty and simplicity of style. He was greatly influenced by Celtic legends. He felt tired of materialism, so called industrial development, and scientific advancement; he sought to escape into the fairy world and looked to the themes of Irish legend. But his later poetry written in 1938 and 1939, are marked by stark realism, objective imagination and modernist techniques of poetry.

In early verse, Yeats discarded rationalism and tried to revive the primitive impulses of human life. He believed in fairies, magic and superstitions. In short, it can be said that Yeats's early poetry is romantic, escapist and bristles with Celtic—twilight. He uses vague images, myth and private symbols: his aestheticism refers to a style that is sonorous, languid, sentimental, imaginative and romantic.

In the words of John Press, Yeats's "early poems may seem to us over-decorative, langorous and imprecisc." (Press,7) In a letter to Katharine Tynan, Yeats wrote, "it is not the poetry of insight and knowledge, but of longing and complaint — the cry of heart against necessity." Anthony Burges analyses the features of Yeats's early poetry :

Yeat's early work is full of Irish melancholy, breathing the spirit of the Celtic-Twilight. Exquisite music, evocation of Irish myth and Irish landscape, and a quality of eerie mystery. are to be found in the earlier volumes. (Burges, 214-15)

W.B. Yeats was an intelligent man; he was occupied with the problem of belief, its nature, and its relation to poetry. He believed in magic and the tradition of neo-platonic mysticism. In a letter to John O'Leary, written in 1893, he remarked: "If I had not made magic my constant study I would have not written a single word, my Blake Book, nor would *The Countess Kathleen*, have ever to exist. The mystical life is the centre of all that I do and all that I write."

Irish literary Renaissance flowered during the half century beginning about 1885, that presents Post-Victorian romantic movement; it also reached into other segments like symbolism. In Irish literature, we find a kind of fusion of delicacy with extravagance of the tender with the heroic: it also reveals a savage vitality and spiritual sensitivity. Its ethical background is Protestent or non-orthodox. It reiterates wild beauty that we find in the herotales and romances, described in lyrics. The Irish Renaissance or Irish Revival was sparked by W.B. Yeats, who aspired to create anational literature". The finest poet of the movement was W.B. Yeats himself. Later, other poets as James Stephens. Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty and F.R. Higgins, presented excellent stuff in the lyrics of their poems. But Yeats was the first great Irish poet, whose famous work Wandering of Oisin (1889) was a part of the great Irish literary Renaissance. He discarded facile and rhetorical use in poetry and stood for a personal passion, a deliberate style and use of living speech in verse. He imposed a kind of discipline in verse. He stated:

Irish poets, learn your trade,

Sing whatever is well-made,

scorn the sort now growing up

All out of shape from toe to top. (Preminger, 406)

The mind and the poetical art of W.B. Yeats was shaped by native environment and his style is different from modern English poets. Yeats was an Irishman. rooted in the tradition of his country. The Irishness strikes certain features of his poetry. He began as one of the last romantics; he valued heritage and legacy of the past. Contrary to it, poets after the first world war, were facing destruction of traditional values, frustration and spiritual aridity. Experiment was the watch word for contemporary poets, who paid stress on newness and novel techniques. But Yeats never broke with the past; he was one of the band of Irish writers, who actively took keen interest in the Celtic Renaissance that valued the heritage of Irish people. The Celtic-revival was a renaming and re-ordering of the folk-spirit marked by superstition, myth and folk-lore. In a letter, written in 1902, Yeats observed:

We should make poem on the familiar landscape we love, not the strange and rare and glittering scenes we wonder at.

W.B. Yeats had a strong conviction that one's verses should hold, as in a mirror, the colours of one's own climate and scenery in their right proportion. The Irish folk literature was significant because the Gaelic literature discovered the mind that created the religion of muses. The Celtic Revival was nurtured by Parmal, a political activist and Jonhn Leavy whose long imprisonment, his banishment, and his integrity inspired many young writers and poets of Ireland. Maud Gonne also left a great impact on Yeats. Angusta Gregory was another influential aristocrat who helped Yeats in collection of old legends.

W.B. Yeats, in course of time. drifted away of contemporary trends of Irish politics. He disliked the Irish involvement in the civil war, burning of houses and destruction of many estates. Disgusted with political upheavals of Ireland, he retreated to the past and nestled round the Ireland of eighteenth century. (Jeffares,263) Yeat's had distaste for contemporary English life as well; his mind was dominated by passions of the love of the unseen life, and love of his country. The atmosphere of the time of Yeats was charged with magical and occult practices, According to Richard Ellman, during the eightees' and 'nineties', the attraction of magic was very strong. (Ellman, 91) Yeats himself founded the *Dublin Hermetics Society* in 1885; he also became a member of Esoteric Section in 1988. He

approved Society's rejection of science and materialism and liked its access to ancient wisdom. Resultantly Yeats's early poetry uses the ancient symbols that are drawn from magic and occult disciplines.

The first collection of Yeats's poetry (1885-1902), is marked by the quality of his un-impassioned soul, haunted by vague desires and dreamy escapism. Most of his poems are inspired by Arcadian themes: later on, he was deeply involved with the fiery word of Celtic Twilight and Irish superstition. His famous poetical work *The Wandering of Oisin* (1889) is a beautiful heroic poem. Like John Keats's *Endymion*, it is the first long narrative poem. The poetic plot of Yeats's poem is concerned with the wandering of Oisin to three islands under the guidance of Niamh, the beautiful daughter of Aengus and Edain who lures Oisin to the fairy kingdom. The beauty of the kingdom is described as follows:

Where men have heaped no burial-

mounds, and days pass by like a

Wayward tune, where broken faith

has never been known, and blushes

of first love never have flown.

The hero as mentioned in the poem, spends one hundred years in each of the three islands, the island of living, the island of victories and the island of forget-fulness. (Rai, 50) W.B. Yeats selected the story from several translations of the old Gaelic Legends; but he changed, the source material and shaped the plot, with a coherent design. Each of the three Books denotes one particular island that has a beautiful style, rhythm and picturesque images. (Rai,76) The following sample demonstrates the nature of the verbal music marking the fusion of the assonance, the alliteration and consonantal sounds. The following lines present the art of imagistic pattern. The entire poem bristles with personal symbols:

Men's hearts of old were drops of flame

That from the saffron morning came,

or drops of silver joy that fell

out of moons pale twisted shell;

XXXXX

Between the lids of one

The imaged meteors had flashed and run

And he fixed stars had dawned and shone and set,

Since God made Time and Death and Sleep.

Many critics find symbolic interpretations of the three islands as three ages of man-youth, manhood and old age; they also represent love, action and contemplation; it also stands for sligo, London and Howth. (Rai, 90) The poem is full of colourful descriptions; it also presents a visionary world in which human and super human characters are depicted. The portrayal of the heroine as 'a pearl pale high born lady, who rode/And like a sunset were her lips," exhibits poetic immaturity.

W.B. Yeats's another poem "The Song of the Happy Shephered", lends stress on, rich poetic imagination and foolish passion for "dusty deeds." Yeats's next poem "The Sad Shephered", wanders in a hostile world that shares his sorrow with different objects of Nature. "The Madness of King Gall", exposes Irish themes written in ballad form; "The Stolen Child" is a poem of fairy world that is rooted in sligo-scenery that lures a child from painful world. The poet exhorts:

Come away, O human Child !

to the waters and the wild

with a faery, hand in hand,

For the world's more full of weeping

Than you can understand.

Yeats's a significant poem "Down by the Salley Garden" is a wonderful lyrical poem of the Irish country side. The poem deals with pensive mood of a youthful love. The beloved gives a repeated warning—"she bid me take her easy, as the leaves grow on the tree; But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree." The snow white feet and hands, represent her purity. Yeats's another

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poem, "The Rose", published in 1895 explicates personal experiences of love. It was Maud Gonne, the celebrated Irish lady who gave the taste of love to W.B. Yeats. The poet was a dreamer of Celtic Twilight. Yeats as a poet wrote a number of lyrics that are linked by complex symbols of Rose and Tree, which have multiple meanings. There are many associations of rose in poetry, religion and occult sciences. The rose was sacred to Mary, symbolic of the Heaven in Dante's poetry. "The rose transformed the "golden ass" of Apuleius. The Irish Poets have adopted it as the symbol of Ireland; it has also many facets of the occult associations. Dr. V. Rai explains Yeats's association clearly. According to him "In Rose of Peace", the rose is the symbol of earthy love; but in another poem it stands for spiritual love and beauty. (Rai, 76) Yeats's another poem, "The Rose of Battle", is full of occult tenets. In Yeat's maximum early poems, the principal themes are Irish, love and sorrow, especially for Maud Gonne. The occult presents the tree of knowledge, the Irish themes are represented by king Fergus who gives-up royalty in exchange for a life of dreams. "The Rose of the World", is another poem dealing with poet's passion for his lady Maud Gonne, who is a woman of "red lips with mournful pride". The lady merges with Helen whose beauty burnt the topless Towers of Ilium; in Yeats's poem she presents elegance and spiritual beauty together. In the poem Maud Gonne appears as a woman of surpassing beauty and phantom of delight.

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree", a poem written in 1890, is a beautiful lyric that has its rhythm of poet's own music. Innisfree is an island near sligo. a native place of the poet; it also narrates poet's home-sickness, "The Wind Among the Reed" (1899), as a poem was appreciated by Symons for its symbolic interpretation. In this poem, W.B. Yeats uses Irish mythology and folk lore, where characters represent human desires. Irish superstition believed Sidhe to be a class of fairy goddess under whose influence men were possessed. The fairies can take all shapes and inhabit the water as fish. *The Wind Among the Reed*, is a collection of many poems that postulate love and regret. Wind in the poem stands for desire; the marriage of Maud-Gonne in 1903, shattered the romantic dreams of the poet. The poet articulated his bitterness in the lyrics of the next collection.

The second phase of W.B. Yeat's poetic career (1903-1914) is the period of transition during which he became more realistic; as a poet he developed keen interest in modern poetry characterized by modernist movement in poetry; he was greatly influenced by Ezra Pound and other imagist poets. Yeats's early poems were not appreciated by new poets. John Eglinton, in the Dublin Daily Express in 1899 framed the charges of escapism against W.B. Yeats. He wrote: "The Poet looks too much away from himself and his age, does not feel the facts of life enough, but sees in art, an escape from them."

But W.B. Yeats defended his art and poetic style used in his early poetry. He laid stress on the renewal of belief that liberates arts from life and age. He valued old faiths, myths, dreams and scenic beauty; to him poetry meant a revelation of a 'hidden life', and painting, poetry and music are great means of conversing with eternity. Not with standing his youthful poems have serious limitations. W.B. Yeats himself remarked: "years afterwards when I finished *The Wandering of Oisin*, dissatisfied with its yellow and its dull green, with all that over charged colour inherited from the romantic movement"

W.B. Yeats's early poetry that is un-english in spirit, is different from later poetry in style, technique and pattern. In later poetry he exhibits his maturity and clear vision of reality. The poetry and personality of W.B. Yeats, as a whole, was full of paradoxes. He suffers from his partial isolation from the modernist literary movement. We cannot afford to ignore his Irish roots and traditions of his country. Yeats was proud of his nationalism that was the guiding principle of his art. He was the last romantic and was conscious of his 'Self'. He aptly observed — "Literature is always personal, always one man's vision of the world, one man's experience". The poetic form best suited to a romantic temper is lyric and Yeats was a lyric poet *par excellence*. As an artist he used many styles as high style, middle style and low style. His use of high style in early poetry is loaded with colours, ornamentation and tapestry of the late romantic manner. In his early verse we find "God's Plenty", it is full of freshness and vigour of an ideal world marked by gaiety and passionate delirium of wild youth.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Un(veiling) the Silence: A Psychological Study of Mahesh Dattani's *Thirty Days in September*

\*Binod Mishra

### Abstract

Mahesh Dattani, an Indian actor turned playwright, doesn't face the problem of language as other Indian creative writers. Performance, being one of the subtlest mediums, Dattani touches upon various social issues not only by provoking his audience but also enabling them to ponder over and find remedies for the social ills worldwide. Unlike other Indian writers, he neither writes in regional languages nor translates them for wider audiences. His involvement in theatre provides him an edge over other dramatists of his time. The first Indian English playwright who got Sahitya Academy Award, Dattani is credited with several notable plays, which at times, may be considered controversial but are not devoid of the speck of truth.

The present paper which is based on Dattani's play *Thirty Days in September*, apart from presenting the painful episode of child sexual abuse, explores psychologically the predicament the characters suffer from. The paper unveils the helplessness of a mother's attempt to camouflage the modesty of her daughter's incestuous affairs. Both the daughter and the mother are finally able to expose the

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criminal clothed in a lamb's attire. An attempt will also be made to unplug the repressed emotion that darkens the prospects of both the mother and the daughter, making them inimical to each other. While the daughter's anxiety over the thirty days of the calendar acts as her biological discomfiture, its outlet may prove to be cathartic. The disturbed childhood falls heavily on the growing child sandwiched between being and becoming. The 'return of the repressed' paves the path towards violence alone so as to smoothen the bruises of the soul. The heavy atmosphere of the play finds its release in the proper communication between the mother and the daughter who seem to share the same crooked fate.

**Keywords:** Theatre, Sexual abuse, Repression, Anxiety, Communication

Women in India have a tradition of being revered next to goddesses. But this has, at times, been only a surface reality. There have been many incidents of hideous crimes which have been covered in the name of sacrifices, sacrosanct performances and also under the layers of protection where fear factor religiously termed as power politics in modern day world have suppressed and oppressed the weaker section. In this regard the cobweb of relationship eats away the tender feelings of love, compassion and cordiality so that the crimes perpetrated can never show its ugly face.

Literature acts as a vanguard in fighting out social stigmas that halt the growth of civilization. Creative writers always have an upper hand in this regard as they portray the horrendous realities not only to make people realize the social lapses but also to reform themselves through alternatives. Mahesh Dattani, a contemporary Indian playwright and an actor has been of immense help in awakening people from the shackles of several taboos that require serious attention. With many prominent plays like *Where There is a Will* (1988), *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely*  Fought the Queen (1991), Final Solutions (1993), On a Muggy Night in Mumbai (1998), Seven Steps Around the Fire (1998), The Murder that Never Was (2000), 30 Days in September (2001), Brief Candle (2009), Where Did I Leave My Purda (2012), and Big Fat City (2012), Dattani has established his reputation of a playwright who touches upon issues that at times have brought him rewards and canards well.

Mahesh Dattani's play *Thirty Days in September* is an attempt to expose the psychological trauma of two women characters who suffer a crooked fate yet they find themselves unable to expose the criminal in the guise of an animal who acts tiger like but behaves like a lamb. The play under discussion depicts the horrid picture of Indian society which camouflages sexual violence just to maintain the traditional dharma of relations under the garb of hollow tradition that doesn't allow women to express their sufferings. The major characters of the play namely, the mother and the daughter also become alien to each other to satisfy their egos in their own ways. While both the mother and the daughter suffer the same accursed fate, circumstances do not allow them to share their agonies simply to continue their sojourn and fight out their rights in the wrong ways.

The play can be studied psychologically to understand the discomfort caused by the adult world where lack of proper communication between the mother and the daughter stunts the growth of the growing girl, Mala, the protagonist. The story of the play revolves around the psychological trauma playing havoc both with the mother as well as with the daughter. Mala, the girl child bears the stigma of being the daughter of a mother who has been deserted by her husband. On the contrary, the mother tries to hide the wounds of her soul only to act as the protector of her daughter. Apprehensive of her daughter is future, the mother tries to persuade her daughter to forget the wrong doings and start life afresh. But the lack of proper communication results in distancing the duo apart.

The dramatist presents the psychological crisis through settings and some symbols manifested through the division of stage areas. The stage space has four acting areas—all of them working as the background which represents and ricochets the mental condition of characters. The presence of a counsellor, the images of a doll and the portrait of Lord Krishna—all act and lead to the psychological crisis which the characters undergo. The lights and shades also lend meaning to the mental perturbations. The play written with a view to expose child sexual abuse also delineates the adult world that looks at family relationships as pious where an iota of doubt too fritters away in the name of thickness of blood. What actually makes the matter worse and ironical is the inability of two main characters, namely the mother and the daughter who despite living under the same roof are unknown to each other's misery.

Mala, the heroine and the worst sufferer, has been a victim of unabated sexual assault first by her uncle and then by her cousin. She has been molested several times by the man who in the name of saviour eats away the flesh whenever he gets a chance. The unnatural and untimely sexual offence during her puberty affects her growing age and she is unable to think of the romantic feelings and love even for Deepak, the boy whom she might long for a lover and a partner. Mala's disturbed childhood and the unpremeditated damages to her body affects her psyche deeply and she doesn't seem to overcome it. Her feminine consciousness gets so vitiated that she is unable of think of 'desire', 'sex' and romantic life in their true essence. She undertakes an inner journey where nothing seems fair and no men as decent. She tries to distance herself from her boyfriend and persuades her mother not to allow him to their house. Mala's effort to share her agony with her mother never materializes as the latter either tries to pacify her or evade to some other issues. Shanta, the mother had though an inkling of the despicable act of her brother yet she feigned ignorance. Deepak's proposal of marrying Mala is rejected merely because of one man's fault. We can understand Mala's predilection against man in the following conversation:

SHANTA: After she said she never wanted to see you again—she said—'That is the way with men.' That is why I thought that you....

DEEPAK: That just doesn't make sense. I have never ever given her the feeling that I am only interested in a casual affair. In fact, I went out of my way to show how much I respect her as a person. (94)

Shanta knows her daughter well and is hopeful that marriage will settle everything. Deepak's interest in Mala prompts him to ascertain the reasons behind his beloved's nonchalance in him. A large hearted fellow, Deepak seems to go an extra mile in providing comfort, cordiality and reassurance to Mala. Shanta welcomes Deepak's proposal and persuades him not to think ill of her daughter. One can get ample proof of mother's helplessness and also the struggles her daughter is undergoing:

SHANTA .... There are times when she is at home early from work and spends the whole evening reading magazines. She feels very restless then. That is when we quarrel. She is fine when she has work, or when she goes out. That is why I feel sometimes, thank God she is going out. At least she looks—happy. But I am her mother. I must worry about her. I pray for her. I never pray for myself. Only for her happiness. (96)

Mala is not at peace with herself and she wages a war between what's right and what is wrong. Her anger with her mother finds room in the image of Krishna who is an apostle of love. Since Mala knows about Krishna's romantic background, she gets infuriated at times with her mother because of her excessive devotion to the portrait. In her scuffle with her mother, the portrait gets broken and she derives both a faint satisfaction mixed with regret why she didn't break it earlier. Krishna as a symbol of love though stands for freedom and joy but he may also symbolize a sort of philandering according to many in India. The portrait seems to stand as an impediment in the way of candid communication between the mother and the daughter. While the portrait means everything to the mother who has made Him listen to all her grievances against the male chauvinism, it has distanced the growing child from her sheltering mother. Blaming her mother for the entire tragedy, she chargesher with ignoring everything and pacifying her with the choicest food. In an angry outburst, Mala says:

MALA: ....Instead of listening to what I had to say, you stuffed me with food. I couldn't speak because I was being fed all the time, and you know what? I began to like them. I thought that was the cure for my pain. that if I ate till I was stuffed, the pain would go away. Every time I came to you, Mummy, you were ready with something to feed me. You knew. Otherwise you wouldn't have been so prepared. You know all along what was happening to me, and I won't ever let you forget that! (104)

Mala's observations in general bear a testimony of the majority of mothers silencing their daughters against anything that can bring disrepute to them. In addition, this also reflects the age-old practice of hiding the disgrace meted out to women lest their future is forestalled.

Shanta's reticence, undoubtedly, is a party to her brother's explorations and encroachment on Mala's body. She faintly remembers how Mala had pushed herself on Vinay, the perpetrator. But every time when Mala wanted to explain, the mother had offered her only one remedy, i.e to forget everything. Mala's sufferings lay heavy on her soul like an Albatross and she wanted to get relieved of the pain. Unable to bear and to yearn for freedom, she wanted to blurt out the repellent behaviour of her body which had forgotten all the boundaries of decency. She feels herself a victim not only of herself but of her uncle, her lover Deepak, and of many more. One can find a feeling of acute sympathy for Mala while the latter explains her plight to Deepak: MALA: —How can I even begin to explain to you? I see this man everywhere. I can never be free of him. I am not so sure I want to be free of him. Even if I were, I am not sure whether I have the ability to love anyone....else. (134)

Vinay's interference with Mala's body has taken deep roots in her psyche and it always appears as repressed emotions making her act abnormally at times.

The dramatist uses the device of Mala's taped voice as her confession. While this voice is a sort of recuperation, it also reveals Shanta's desertion by her father for another woman. This had led to Vinay's exploitation of the entire situation simply by paying the rent and becoming a saviour and a hero both for the mother and the daughter. It is further revealed that Shanta, too, had been a victim of such atrocities and had maintained a silvery silence simply for sustenance. Vinay, the man in question, had been paying for their living. When Vinay hands over the legal papers of the flat to Shanta, Mala blurts out saying:

MALA: Yes, you did. He didn't just buy a flat. He bought you!

SHANTA: That's not true! Oh god!

MALA: He bought your silence. So that you can never tell anyone what he did to your daughter! (133)

Mala is shattered to know about the mother's plight when the latter persuades her to forget and begin life anew. The conversation between Mala and Shanta evokes a sort of self-pity for both the characters:

MALA: By staying silent doesn't mean I can forget! This is my hell. This hell is where I belong! It is your creation, Ma! You created it for me. With your silence!!You didn't forget anything, you only remained silent! (135)

SHANTA: (Defeated). Yes.... I cannot speak anything. My tongue was cut off years...My tongue was cut off years ago....(To Deepak) Please save her. I couldn't save her. I did not know how to save her. How could I save her when

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I couldn't save myself?... (To Mala) Yousay I did not help you? I could not help you. Same as you could not help me. Did you ever see the pain in my eyes? No. Nobody saw anything. Nobody said anything. Not my brothers, not my parents. (135)

Shanta represents the lot of women who suffer in silence and yet do not scream. Her bodily injuries have silenced her soul and her resignation to lord Krishna has helped her forget everything. The scars on her soul reveal how unlike Draupadi, she couldn't be saved. But yet the faint satisfaction that her daughter too would be able to forget everything, fails. If Shanta represents a mute witness to what man has done to woman, Mala represents just the opposite. She becomes vociferous and is bent upon taking a revenge on the man who destroyed her beyond repairs. We can find Mala trying to overcome the trauma and her super ego seems to awaken her finally. If Shanta's silence has eaten away her soul every moment, Mala's soul revolts and she makes silence a weapon to fight out her case.

It is quite ironical that Shanta realizes her fault too late and attempts to kill herself by jabbing a sharp shred of glass in her throat. Mala too realizes her mother's helplessness but her resolve to punish the man comes at last when she strangles him, saying, 'You deserve to die'. Mala's action reflects that women need to come out of the traditional rut and raise voices against the male dominance. While the title of the play symbolizes the continuation of women's persecution, the 29<sup>th</sup> February symbolizes that such cycle can be broken even though in a leap year. This also suggests that women should recognize their inner strength and instead of hiding their wounds insults, should expose the culprit. Both the mother and the daughter finally feel relieved when the years of silence coagulated like blood finally oozes out and washes the angst and bitterness which had blocked the duo's relationship. The unveiling of silence recuperates both the mother and the daughter and heralds a new beginning of togetherness.

Dattani makes Mala his mouthpiece to express both 'the secret unconscious desire and anxieties' of her father who had deserted her mother calling her a frozen woman. This may be the reason behind Mala's infantile sexuality observed in her wilful forcing on uncle's body and later her submission to her cousin. In addition, the uncle's repeated move to coerce Mala into the past time affair may be thought of as a contrived device to cure the mental disorder of the victim. It is quite pertinent to quote Peter Barry who says: "Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorder by 'investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind" (Barry 96).

We cannot ignore the dramatist's approach of curing Mala through Freud's doctor-patient symptom when the uncle reminds her of old acts of intimacy through tactile means. The binding passions of the past blind Mala for some time but her conscious mind reacts at last. In addition, Mala resolves to avenge both her mother's as well as her personal laceration which had lent them nothing but an everlasting despondency. Mala is not devoid of the deafening roars inside her and she wriggles in pain when she says:

MALA: Dear Mother. It just isn't easy to forget. Occasionally I catch his reflection in the glass of a subway, hiding behind a newspaper or pretending to be asleep. But it doesn't matter. I can live with it now. He as a person is not important to me anymore. (138)

As a part of psychological study, we can find Mala's early childhood delineating a reflection of 'mirror stage' which prompts her to seek temporary pleasure in the company of men but ultimately her conscious self develops a sort of aversion forcing her to terminate the man who had ruined her life. She had become a split personality and endeavoured to come out of the pulls of negative forces towards an authentic being. Her libidinal displacements had to be articulated through a language that could be structured through nothing but violent blows and hurts. She emerges triumphant much like Lawrence's Paul and unifies herself with Shanta and Deepak in whom her melancholy meets, mellows and melts. Thus, the unveiling of silence in the play paves the path of characters' progress from darkness to light and also provides a sort of catharsis resulting in the purgation of all repressed emotions.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Narratives of Gendered Subalternity: A Study in V.S. Naipaul's *Half-a-Life*

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## Abstract

The postcolonial critics talk about the notion of 'difference' on the basis of gender where women have been defined as 'other'. They articulate their anguish for being treated as subaltern in every sphere of life governed by phallocentric community and their gender biased mechanism. The agony and predicament faced by the female subalterns are very serious and the most miserable of all oppressive conditions. The present paper intends to examine V.S. Naipaul's fiction *Half a Life* from the postcolonial perspective of gendered subalternity to bring out at the fore the struggle between subaltern classes and those who by virtue of gender, class and race are defined as being at the centre of the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial, Gender, Difference, Male, Female, Subaltern, etc.

The Postcolonial discourse highlights the notion of 'difference' on the basis of gender where women have been created and defined as other by men. They articulate their anguish for being treated as subaltern in every sphere of life governed by phallocentric community and their gender biased mechanism. The subaltern is

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not suffused with the positive but negative image at every stages of social, cultural and personal life. The gravity of the situation is more intensified when the subaltern is a woman. Being at the precarious juncture and criss-crossed by multiple forces of oppression, she is the one who occupies the lowest position in the social hierarchy. Her presence is not even authenticated and is only to inforce the superiority of the male counterpart though occupying a marginalised position. What Stuart Hall remarks in this context is true that "discourse of difference was able to maintain its difference over the other" (57) and hence the subaltern woman is being represented in mainstream discourse by elite community. Thus adopting mainstream discourses to subaltern female experiences only lead to further marginalisation of the subalterns both as individuals and as a community.

The agony and predicament faced by the female subalterns are very serious and the most miserable of all oppressive conditions. Their life, dreams, hopes and the right to a dignified survival are thwarted by multiple forces of oppression. They often become victim of racism, classism, and most significantly, of the primarily subjugating ideology of the patriarchy. Therefore, gender equations attain threatening dimensions within the framework of patriarchal dominance. Juliet Mitchell considers patriarchy as dominant feature with cultural rooting and maintained through the operation of ideology. It is perpetuated through a process by which subjectivity is culturally constructed. Gendered subjectivity can be seen as "constituted ideologically ensuring the continuous reproduction of dominant masculinity and dominated femininity," (Mitchell 197). Patriarchy is not only an ideology but a set of organised power structures with the key positions occupied by man or his supporting mechanism as what Beauvoir calls "an absolute human type, the masculine" (15).

The powerful images of gender roles or myths related to them have been created during the history and "those roles are always socially constructed and perhaps the most important and embraced role played by humans is the sexual role" (Stuteville 10). Historically, gender roles have been differentiated from each other because of the need of reinforcing gender role responsibilities in the society. It is the reason that the various roles played by males outside the home and females within home have determined a basis for powerful social and cultural ethics. Most of the different roles and positions within a society are influenced by social organisations and rules that vary between cultures. As Pronger perceptively remarks in the following lines:

Sex or gender can be defined as the activity of managing situated conduct based on normative conceptions of different attitudes and activities that are appropriate for one's sex category. On the other hand, gender can be understood as a cultural distinction that divides power between man and woman (280).

However, we can not deny the fact that sexual mythology is based on the idea that sex is differentiated from gender. The expression of masculine has been used to define the exertion of power and at the same time femininity is connected to the state of disempowerment. This kind of fundamental structuring of patriarchal power proves that gender can be understood as a myth that justifies, expresses and supports the power of man over woman. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is culturally idealised form of particular masculine character and "operates on the terrain of common sense and conventional morality and defines what it means to be a man" (Hanke 235). It is obvious that hegemonic male sexuality includes certain characteristics which are "manifested by adult males through social interaction and relationship with other men and through sexual relationship with women" (Herek 76).

Most of the post colonial writers like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul and Rohinton Mistry among others depict the theme of gendered subalternity in their novels in an authentic manner, which of course, has attracted the attention of readers and scholars from several points of view. V.S. Naipaul is not only a prominent postcolonial author having practically a living colonial and subaltern experiences but is also a versatile genius as a novelist, journalist, diasporic and travel writer who migrated in a powerful European country England because for him "England is situated at a different level of reality, firm and stable, while other regions can be relegated to haziness" (Mukherjee 2). Most of his novels deal with the theme of colonial experiences in post colonial societies with an explicit account of common complexities inherent among the marginalised societies. Though his work offers an implicit biography of his departure from the marginalised background of the caribbean island to the open cosmopolitan culture of the world at large. But born and brought up in a colonial set up, Naipaul never forgets the subaltern experiences and the identity crisis of an individual in his fiction and non-fictional works. The sense of cultural dislocation, patriarchal orthodoxes and gender issues have always weighed very heavily on Naipaul's consciousness as a writer and his fictional writings have also pronouncedly registered these aspects of has personality. As Bruce King perceptively remarks about his vision regarding gender issues is true that, "his evolving complexity as a writer is specially seen in his treatment of sex and women. The early fiction is critical of the brutality with which west Indian men treat women while seeing sexual desire as a temptation which interferes with a person's rational decisions... In the later novels he shows how male sexual insecurity leads to sadism and hatred of women while women themselves are often masochistically attracted towards brutality" (19). Moreover Naipaul's awareness about gender differences and its treatment into fiction is also called by Peter Hughes as "paired narratives" which convey his complex vision of gendered cultural reality and "reaches closer to the truth" (59).

It is obvious that as a dissector of civilisations, cultures and histories across the world, Naipaul has constantly interrogated societies and their politics of marginalisation. He knew that the people migrating from India in early ages were conservative to their social, religious and cultural conduct. They carry with themselves not only the traditions but the whole nationality where women have specific role within national boundaries. The present paper intends to examine V.S. Naipaul's fiction *Half a Life* as a critical understanding of the post colonial issues of gendered subalternity not only as a cultural phenomenon but also a development of women's empowerment due to globalisation. It also brings out at the fore the struggle between subaltern classes and those who by virtue of gender, class and race are defined as being at the centre of the twenty-first century.

Naipaul is an expatriate from Trinidad whose primary business as a novelist is to project carefully the complex fate of individuals in a cross-cultural society. He has set the novel in the Indian communities of Trinidad and India. The people living in those communities had firm belief in old traditions so far as women's treatment is concerned. The Naipaul's female protagonists are archetypes of Indian masses and are highly prejudiced. These women protagonists are divided into two major parts as dominated and dominating types although the culture of both is same with minor difference in their overall condition. They had enough power to maintain the families and control household affairs. But the irony is that despite enough power, they had to bear the reprimand and often subjugated and neglected by their family or male counterparts. In this context what Bruce king remarks is true that "Half-a-Life is, however, a distorted mirror inversion of the earlier book. Here the wife comes from an impoverished background and is modernising. Here the son loves the mother and hates the father. Here the son is favoured and the daughter neglected," (King 183).

As a diasporic fictional writer and belonging to a marginalised society, Naipaul writes about the Indian communities especially in Caribbean and African countries where people live with outdated customs and rituals. Female oppression and exploitation, conservative outlook about the condition of women in the society and family, and illiteracy in their progress are the inseparable part of their customs. There are male protagonists in his fictions as Pt. Ganesh, Mohan Biswas in *A House for Mr. Biswas* and Willie

Chandran in *Half a Life* who have stepped out of their finite worlds of orthodoxies and patriarchy but could not get out of their own cultural upbringing which compel them to dominate the opposite sex. They desperately feel the need to change the thinking of the women of their families and want their partner to be equal. But they never made an effort to bring about the change rather they expected the things to happen themselves. Naipaul reveals the fact that those people want a change but they could not give up their customs and rituals all of sudden. Their traditions satisfy their ego and cover most of their faults and shortcomings to dominate women. The conflict between male and female regarding power and position and between the other male dominated communities has been minutely observed by Bruce King in Naipaul's *Half a Life* in the following lines:

Life always consists of people desiring more and trying to satisfy and advance themselves by conquering or tricking others. There is always an unfair social hierarchy which is in the process of changing (not necessarily for the better) as people and peoples compete for space, comfort, sex, security. There is always domination, power and the need for protection, those who lack the means, will and energy to advance and protect themselves will become victims of others (193).

Ι

The post colonial fictional narrative takes up issues of cultural discrimination on the basis of gender and conflict between different ethnic or religious groups as main aspects of social reality. The struggle of the marginalised communities against their disadvantaged position in the socio-economic spheres coupled with relentless striving to create an identity for themselves, occupies the main domain of literatures produced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Naipaul's *Half a Life* published in twenty first century deals with the women's issues and their subalternity in a phallocentric world or as happens in Indian society. The condition of the women in this novel is different in comparison to the women in his magnum

opus fiction A House for Mr. Biswas. The female protagonist like Shama, a conservative uneducated stereotype girl is a hurdle in Mr. Biswas's progress where as Willie Chandran's mother and his wife Ana in Half a Life are graduates and understand their men to a certain extent, yet they are also considered as obstacles in their progress. In the opening section of the novel entitled "A visit from Somerset Maugham", the story of Willie Chandran's mother has been narrated in a metaphorical manner. She is the first female protagonist who becomes the victim of an egoist male person who lives in his own ideal world. Therefore Willie Chandran's mother always falls short of his father's expectations. She is treated as a 'backward caste' girl whom Willie Chandran's father never married. Therefore, she could never get a respectable place in India where marriage is considered an important institution. Willie Chandran's father could never share his feelings with his wife as he never felt attached with her. Though he was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi where he first met her in his college time. Gandhi suggested the youth of India to defy the caste system by accepting intercaste marriages in the society. So he decided to live a "life of sacrifice and this girl became the victim of his infirm decision" (12). Naipaul's subtle narrative reveals Willie Chandran's father's derogatory thinking about this girl in the following speech:

I actually had someone in mind. There was a girl at the university. I did n't know her. I had n't spoken to her. I had merely noticed her. She was small and coarse featured, almost tribal in appearance, noticeably black, with two big top teeth that showed very white. She wore colours that were sometimes very bright and sometimes very muddy, seeming to run into the blackness of her skin. She would have belonged to a backward caste (11).

Being aware about the personality of this girl, Willie Chandran's father considering her emotions proposed for marriage in a very awkward manner. He felt "fascinated and repelled" with this proposal though without real love and affection "came a little sympathy" (12) in his heart and the girl on the other hand became

a victim of marriage due to low caste status and gender deliberately. Naipaul criticises this kind of marriage proposal where sacrifice was imposed on her by Willie Chandran's father. She never invited him for the marriage but was forced to marry and live with him due to his ego to follow Gandhi's call to marry low caste girls to defy the caste distinctions and barriers. She suffers throughout her life due to his arbitrary decision. She is often abused and tortured by Willie Chandran's father for her vulgar manners because he considers her "uneducated inherently."

She would have been of the very low. It would have been unbearable to consider her family and clan and their occupations. When people like that went to the temple they would have been kept out of the sanctum, the inner cell with the image of the deity. The officiating priest would never have wanted to touch those people. He would have thrown the sacred ash at them, the very food is thrown to a dog (12).

It is obvious that Willie Chandran's mother was tortured not only by his father but also by the dominant forces of the society as well. When she was pregnant second time with a girl child, Willie Chandran's father did not like because the "girl was the image of her mother and it was like divine punishment" (35).

### Π

In Naipaul's *Half a Life*, the women's agony is intensified and becomes more acute by the virtue of their individual flaws. They lack courage and confidence to oppose the social customs and hence suffer from subalternity and marginality. Like Willie Chandran's mother, Ana too suffers throughout her life as a traditional wife. She serves Willie Chandran as her husband without any expectations from him. She loves him also from the core of her heart beyond the fact that he was entirely different from her and never get attached with her. Unlike other novels, in *Half-a-Life*, Naipaul creates however a different situation and role where a woman feels satisfied and considers her life meaningful if she can assist her husband in his personal pursuits

and achievements. It is the reason that Ana surrenders herself physically and mentally to her husband and in return she has no right to expect anything from him. Though Willie Chandran always used young Portuguese-African Ana for his comfort and sexual gratification and never gave importance to her as equal partner of his life. Being self-centred and pretentious, he takes advantage of her timorousness as a woman in establishing passionate relationship for his fulfillment and completeness. He has a split personality and discovers in her personality traits of inferiority to subjugate for sexual comfort beyond anything:

Ana, even at that time of, passion, had been half timorous; and when I had been admitted into more of her family history I understand her timorousness. We each found comfort in the other; and, we had become very close, not looking beyond the other for satisfaction, not knowing infact, that another kind of satisfaction was possible (189).

Willie Chandran feels attracted towards Ana due to his lack of wholeness. It is his half life that always reminds him to establish a kind of reciprocal relationship. Therefore when he visualises in Ana his own 'halfness', his inner urge compels him not only to feel similarity but also her low position as being born from a mixed culture which rendered in her personality incompleteness and 'halfness'. The protagonist Willie Chandran's conjecture about her low family background is obvious in the following speech.

She might not be as nice as her letter. He knew almost nothing about her Portuguese African country, nothing about the races and groupings and tensions. She had mentioned her background but not said anything about it. It was possible that she belonged to a mixed community or stood in some other kind of half-and half-position (124).

However this halfness of Ana, as Willie Chandran understands, makes him a perfect man thus forgetting his own inherited halflife from his parents. Her arrival in his life gives him enough scope to breathe and remove the shadow of inadequacy which by the way covers and protects his life. The third person narrative unfolds Willie Chandran's experience of completeness for the first time in his life which he did not get at home. "He felt himself in the presence of someone who accepted him completely. At home his life had been ruled by his mixed inheritance. It spoilt everything" (125). It is Ana's generous and submissive nature that she accepted Willie Chandran in her life but Willie Chandran on the otherhand is not willing to maintain his married life with Ana and continues his extra-marital relations. Though he considers Ana lucky and fortunate in his life because he got strength and courage of a female partner on whom he can "lean on and as he thinks no harm could come to me." He tells without hesitation about Ana's loyalty and her devotion as a wife to him:

I believed in a special way in her luck. Some of this had to do with the very fact that she was a woman who had given herself to me. I believed that she was in some essential way guided and protected... (141).

Though he accepts Ana's loyalty but he does not want to spend his life emotionally and economically under her leadership and guardianship. While narrating about his past life to Sarojini, he recalls his life in Africa that instead of succeeding in securing a place for himself, he had lost whatever little autonomy he had in London. In London he was known as Willie Chandran but in Africa he becomes simply "Ana's London Man" (145). Similarly Ana is also in the same boat and she knows the agony too well. She has herself been leading a borrowed life as she tells Willie Chandran "perhaps, it was n't really my life either" (128). It is obvious that both Ana and Willie Chandran are in a marginalised condition but depended on each other for their survival while realising that "to be on the margins is to be part of in the self's encounter with others" as Timothy Weiss truly remarks, and "the exile can live a double exteriority for he or she belongs to two cultures without identifying wholly with either. The exile can engage in a crosscultural dialogue and through that dialogue can affirm both his uniqueness and the interrelationship between himself and others" (13).

Willie Chandran was aware about Ana's precarious situation and as an opportunistic man only joined her company to grow into manhood. His relations with Ana have never been passionate and it is the reason that he begins to visit African prostitutes for his sexual satisfaction and domination. "I began to live with a new idea of sex, a new idea of my capacity. It was like being given a new idea of myself" (189). Later on as a over ambitious man, he does not want to shelter under the shadow of Ana. He felt himself as "a live in" man on her terms and conditions and therefore wants to be "his own man." He gets completely disenchanted by Ana at the end of the novel and decides to divorce her. When Ana visits him in the hospital to take care of his health he tells about his final decision of separation from her : "I told her I wanted to divorce her" (227).

#### III

Another female protagonist in Naipaul's *Half-a-Life* is Willie Chandran's sister Sarojini who is the very image of her mother as he calls her "the little ugly Sarojini." She could not go to college or abroad for higher study because her father never supported her and always treated as 'other'. Her father merely wanted to marry her as soon as possible and the better prospects he could devise for her is an international marriage. He selects a lame, aged German photographer as a lifelong partner for her who was already married with two children. His biased attitude is revealed in a letter to his son Willie Chandran :

I write now with news of your sister Sarojini... Well, a German came one day. He was an oldish man with a bad leg. Well, to cut a long story short, he asked to marry Sarojini, and that is precisely what he has done. You will know that I always felt that Sarojini's only hope lay on an international marriage, but I must say this took me by surprise. I am sure he has a wife somewhere, but, perhaps it is n't good to ask too much (112).

It is obvious that for her father, she was a burden and after marriage left to her destiny. Though after marriage, she manages to visit England and also her brother who was staying in a hostel. Willie Chandran feels 'repelled' by the smell of the food prepared by her sister in the little hostel room. He also disliked her Indian way of dressing and thus did not introduce her to his college friends. He considers her inferior and always underestimates her position as being female :

Sarojini had never been a good cook, and the food she cooked in the college room was awful. The smell stayed in the room. Willie was worried about breaking the college rules, and he was just as worried about people seeing the dark little cook-clumsily dressed: with a cardigan over her sari and socks on her feet (116).

Thus we find that Sarojini is neglected and deserted by his father and also after marriage by his German photographer husband who treated her as other and never felt attached with her. After coming from Germany, Sarojini started living with her brother Willie Chandran as there was no other option for her. She had no false conceptions like her brother and adjusts naturally in the family and never feels awakward due to her Indian identity. She provides support to her brother in his urgency and requirement. But her brother, on the contrary, still feels the same repulsion for the "food Sarojini cooked in the small stale-smelling kitchen at the back" (137). Willie Chandran was not feeling happy with her sister and observes a major change in her dress as "she had given up the style of Sari and Cardigan and socks. She was in jeans and a heavy sweater and her manner was brisker and even more authoritative than Willie remembered" (137-38). Being male, Willie hates her poor adjustment with him and even in worse situation he finds Sarojini living a comfortable life. It is clear that Willie Chandran never treats the role of women as significant as the way they supported in his life. In his childhood, it was his mother, in young age Ana and in his later life it is Sarojini who cares for him. Naipaul's journalistic temperament criticizes the mentality of Willie Chandran who always wanted women and "really looking for women to lean on" for his satisfaction and domination. Sarojini inherits her 'firebrand' maternal uncle's radical genes and is furious in nature, where as Ana is different from her in thinking due to her racial and cultural background. Willie Chandran deliberately liked this difference in Ana to some extent and despised Sarojini. As he himself confesses:

I did n't think she had a chance, and I would have done anything to help her became a happy woman. Then this old German man comes along and ugly little Sarojini changes. She becomes the complete married woman, as though that woman was there all along. She has become just like my mother. I feel as if all my worry and love has been mocked. I am not sure I like this Sarojini (115).

Both Ana and Sarojini were important for him because he depended on them for his idea of being a man and in his survival of early and later life. But the irony is that both these women were merely the means of survival for Willie Chandran and were treated as subaltern and never given the respectable position either in the family or in the society as they deserved.

Thus we can say that Naipaul's Half-a-Life is really metaphorical in the sense that it records the half life or divided world that shapes the story of the oppression of women and their subalternity in the post colonial society. The seductive and turbulent nature of the male protagonist Willie Chandran is an ultimate product of post colonial society that chooses to take shelter under the shadow of women but treats them subaltern rejecting his own inherited half life. Though Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas is autobiographical in nature where as his Halfa-Life is more powerful in understanding sex and subalternity of women oppressed by the male counterparts. However, the realistic mode of narration does not depict only their subaltern condition in an authentic manner but also renders a new dimension by unfolding the gradual changes in their personality in terms of self dependence, freedom and identity construction for empowerment due to the global changes.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Reflection of Culture & Environment in Indian English Poetry

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### Abstract

Culture is the refined state of people. A country, society and people should always have a good and appreciable culture. Lest, the country, society and people will be deemed as uncultured and barbarian. No one likes barbarianism. Culture reflects good aspects, progress and development. Without culture, a nation cannot have its own individuality or uniqueness. India has its own culture– Indian Culture–different from Chinese, Russian, English and American Cultures. But each culture–Chinese/Russian/ British/American culture has its own ups and down. All genres of Literature portray and vivisect people's culture. How culture reflects in Indian English Poetry is an interesting study.

Environment is a must for any life, human, animal, plant and even building. In a congenial atmosphere only, human beings can live happily and peacefully. What happens in the border areas of India? Are people there living happily? At any time enemies may attack. Even daily life is a struggle for them. Animals too like a congenial environment to live and breed. That is why during winter and summer seasons

\***Dr. K. Balachandran,** Prof. of English (Retd.,) Annamalai University, 64/1, Subramanyan Street, Chidambaram–608001. Tamil Nadu E-mail: prof\_k\_balachandran@yahoo.co.in they are changing their living place. During winter times, birds prefer a warm country/environment. During summer season animals and birds migrate to a country/place/ environment where they can get water and prey. Building/ houses too should be built in good place/soil/environment. Will anybody prefer burial ground for a prestigious institution? Will anybody build his/her house in a burial ground? This paper analyses the portrayal of Culture and Environment in Indian English Poetry.

Keywords: Refined, uniqueness, congenial, migrate, happily

Anthropocene is mankind as the central element of existence. For man's meaningful and happy existence, civilized Culture and conducive Environment are needed. If there is no civility, culture will be absent; and if at all it exists, it will be culture of barbarianism. So civilization and culture are like the two sides of a coin. If civilization is there, it will reflect good culture. If culture is there it will reflect good civilization. Similarly conducive atmosphere for human beings is a must. For study, a calm atmosphere, environment is needed, only then a school/college can function fruitfully. A noisy environment will not be helpful for an educational institution. For a temple/mosque/church/gurudwara, clean and calm environment are necessary to concentrate in worship and prayer. So environment and culture play vital roles in the anthropocene-in the existence of human kind. How poets in Indian Writing in English portray these two aspects is an interesting and lively study. For the portrayal of culture 5 poems and for environment 5 poems have been taken to delineate the study convincingly.

In 'Culture' poem Dr. Arbind Kumar Choudhary (*Happy Isle*, p. 8) writes "Cultural essence is a saving grace." If one is cultured, it is one more positive aspect in him/her. It is a beauty also. India is a country with rich culture and civilization. It has a rich cultural history also. A.K. Choudhary mentions, "India's cultural heraldry is a celestial artillery./ For the glittering glory of a man of feretory." Heraldry is the art of recording genealogies and blazoning coats

of arms. Celestial is belonging to the Divine. Artillery is part of an army equipped with guns. So India's culture art is safeguarded by guns (here it means protection) of the heaven or Divine. That is why an individual of the R.C. Church (feretory) glitters in glory. If he is uncultured, he cannot shine in glory. This is applicable not only to a man who associates himself with church but also to one with temple/mosque/ gurudwara. Hence culture is interrelated with the God (Divine). Whether one calls Ram, Allah, Jesus, Gobinda Singh, all refer to one God only! Hence there is no culture without the Divine or God. Gods may be different according to the various religions. Thus here A.K. Choudhary reflects Indian culture in his poem in his own unique way.

Culture includes and exhibits values also. Without value, nothing can be sold/ achieved/appreciated. If only brinjal or tomato is good, it can be sold, rotten vegetables no one will buy. If only an individual has values, he/she can achieve success in life. Similarly if one has values, he/she will be liked or appreciated by all. About values, Kedarnath Sharma, has penned a poem "Value" (*The Poetic Bliss*, pp.11-12) in which he tells, "When candle lights another one/Light glows, grows not less." Generally candle brings light to remove darkness. A candle is used to light another so that there will be more light.

One cannot be cent per cent good. He/she may commit some wrong also; for that he/she should not be condemned outright, Kedarnath Sharma writes,

"Wrong and right are like day and night:

Let's fear not if wrong done.

From wrong we learn value of right,

Wrong guides what's to be done" (p.11)

According to the poet as night follows day, wrong will happen after doing something right. If wrong is done, one need not fear about it. From wrong only we learn the value of right one. Wrong doing guides us to do the right thing. Is this argument by the poet acceptable? As taste differs, here also whether to accept his argument or not is left to individuals.

The poet in his further argument says hollow and mean persons make a noise whereas the wise don't. Which is more worthy? Value or Valuables? He answers:

"Let's teach kids values if we can;

If values we leave them.

They'll find them more valuable than

Valuables we leave them."

In this further portrayal he delineates that we attach value to things either before we get them or after we lose them! He is of the opinion that, "Chance makes us meet many people; choice makes us good friends" (p. 12). Chance meetings help people to get good (valued) friendship. Later among the people one meets, he/she has to use discretion to select the individuals for good friendship. Hence there is a proverb: "Tell me your friends, I'll tell who you are." Often friends and books should be valuable ones. If they are good, positive results will recur, if they are not, negative results only will occur. Surely an individual who cares for values will be a cultured one. If everyone tries to be good, naturally culture will blossom there.

Another poet K. Vijay Kumar in his poem, 'Human Values and Humans' (*The Poetic Bliss*, p.181) very effectively portrays these two aspects. A man can be called superior being only when he has Human Values in him. All humans are not humans. He writes:

Among them are race several-

Giants there are, and, devils too,

beasts like he- buffaloes, bulls,

dogs, swine and cunning jackals,

donkeys, monkeys and drunken dirties.

What is the main quality of a human? He writes, "Humans need to love one another". If the values are not in individuals, "Humans are the worst of all" (p. 181). So let us be humans cherishing human values which indirectly transforms an individual a cultured being.

Dr. Amol Raut in his poem, "Human Values" (*The Rainbow Hues*, p. 269) asks people to understand their own values. The poem is about unkind employer "who makes an employee displease and disturbed at work place." He thought of sacking an employee from the office. He tried his best to oust him-but in vain. The employee had all moral principles and hence justice was on his side

"An employee got results with benefits after ten years

He moves further with insight and kindness" (p. 269).

Through this poem the poet asks the employer to be kind with the milk of human values. One having respect for human values will be normally and naturally be cultured.

Raghavendra Rao Shrestha in his poem "Love Knot" (*The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry*, p. 239) describes a man's (lover's) request to his beloved. He requests her (Tara) to wear the Jessamine – buds he plucked with his first thoughts of her from the swift wind's way.

O bind me. Tara, your hair in a knot-

All your glory of dark, dark hair,

In a knot as true as love's knot bind it,

My Jessamine buds to wear. (p. 239)

The lover's message is very simple-to bind him with her (in love's knot) and to wear the Jessamine buds he brought for her dark hair. But it reflects the culture of an Indian lover giving flowers to his lady love. This is in Western countries by giving a rose to a lady love.

Environment is a must for any life - human, animal, plant and even for houses and buildings. Water is the life giving force to any

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living organism. Without food, dress and house one can live but not without water. Water comes from rain. If only rain (Varuna Bhagawan) is kind, people will get rain, lest everyone has to starve due to water scarcity. Dr. Megha Bharathi very beautifully and also painfully portrays in her poem, "About To Rain" (*Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, Winter 2010, pp. 352-353.) Everyone is expecting the rain-about to rain, sky getting darker, smarter, clouds white, small, fresh wondered it was about to rain. The poetess narrates:

North-east, South-west, South-east, North-west From here and directions many more

The soft winds started

They blew softly and softly shoving the clouds

They are wheezing softly still

And they say it is about to rain. (pp. 352-353)

Finally did the rain pour? No. It is awaited A rainless environment is a barren land. Is it a punishment to people by one of the 5 elements, (rain) water?

Niranjan Mohanty in his poem, "When it Rains" (*Tiger and Other Poems*, p. 50) narrates the environment graphically when it rains. When there is rain he sits down to meditate on the non-necessary parts of his being. What is the non-necessary part in any body? He says it is his own self! Does a self need any meditation? The dampening news of rape, corruption, parents selling away their children in Kalahandi-do they need meditation?

The rain drops don't watch him. But he has a secret need to watch them. He writes,

I find them lifting the level of water in our

Back-yard pond on whose bank

My father, the year he lost his voice

And died, had planted ten coconut trees

And ten mango trees, believing

That these would protect our house From evil, from jealous eyes, from greed growing in ten directions. (p. 50)

So the rain water increases the water level in the pond. Usually in the back-yard of a house, plants and trees will be planted. Its main purpose is to get 'yielding' (harvesting coconut, mango, vegetables etc). It is believed that mango leaf has the quality of obstructing evil force entering a house and also people's jealousy and greediness.

He watches them flushing their clogged drain, cleaning naked children's slim back; their jumping, laughing and dancing in the rain. The rain makes their paddy fields greener with animated whispers and the excited flutter of a flock of orioles. Thus it brings a very pleasant environment around the poet which makes him happy and contented. Congenial environment makes human beings' existence worth living. Nature and birds also like congenial environment and they also feel happy, grow well and birds migrate to pleasant environment.

Nissim Ezekiel in his poem, "Island" (*An Anthology of Indo-English Poetry*, pp. 16-17) narrates an island which is unsuitable for song and sense. "The island flowers into slums/ and sky scrapers, reflecting/ precisely the growth of my mind" (p. 16). The poet is here in this island to find his way. Some times he cries for help but keeps his own counsel. He hears distorted echoes of his own ambiguous voice and "of dragons claiming to be human."

In that island the breezes are bright and tempting. It flows across the island, separating past from future. The air is still and he sleeps the sleep of ignorance. The soul finds delight with absolute sense of salvation. He doesn't want to leave that island because he belongs to that place. The last verse para sums up his ideas thus: "Even now a host of miracles /hurries me to daily business, /minding the ways of his island/ as a good native should/ taking calm and clamour in my stride". (p. 17)

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Environment refers to people's living place (house) and office buildings also. Dr. K. Balachandran's "Vasthu Problem" poem (*Life Around the World*, p. 56) narrates one such office premises of CBI Head quarters, New Delhi. Only now when the former home minister Mr. P. Chidambaram was arrested, "the Head quarters environment is not good", said by the CBI officials. The shocking item is it has been built in a burial ground! No body will build a house in a burial ground! Similarly office building also should not be built in a burial ground-it is meant for burning the dead bodies of people-the place where the 'Kala Arakkan' (God of Death) used to reign. Will anybody prefer that place for building a prestigious institution? That's why it has been giving trouble to all the Directors who chaired the prestigious office!

CBI Officials shed crocodile tears now

That it should not have been built

In a burial ground, Atleast now there

Comes 'gnanam' for them!

Before starting building a house or office building, the soil of that place should be tested whether it is good soil or not. In a burial ground what will be there except heap of human bones. At the very first instant itself, that place should have been rejected and alternative site (place) should have been preferred. The poet asks, "Why it wasn't done? Who knows?"

When the office building was built the 'grahapravesam' (consecration) took place on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2011; declared open by the then Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh in the presence of his other Ministerial colleagues, Mr. P. Chidambaram, Mr. Veerappa Moily and Mr. Kabil Sybil. The then CBI Director A.P. Singh took the VIPs round and showed them the facilities it had. The poet records,

Do you know the greatest irony?

It has a Guest House in which the former

And many time Asia's best Finance

Minister Sri P. Chidambaram shelved.

The VIP participated in the opening ceremony: now houses him like house-arrest in that guest house! All the CBI Directors almost suffered in one way or other in that prestigious office. When Vijay Mallaiya who is now in Great Britain escaped from India, Anil Sinha was much grilled. Recently it is said Alok Verma was dismissed because of the difference of opinion with his Deputy.

How is the history of

CBI? Above all how is the conduct of

The CBI officials in 'capturing' Chidambaram

From this poem one can understand very clearly that Environment plays a major role in one's life and also in an institution's life (role). That was why in those days (in the past) 'vasthu' was seen first but now-a-days much importance is not given to this aspect. When problems come successively one after another, they consult 'Vasthu' consultant'.

L.S. Enie's song "Song of Migration of the Nagas (Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies, June 2009, p. 124) illustrates the environment of the Nagas. The poem begins with the question, "Where from our forefathers/of Naga Nation come?" He himself tells from the valley of Lishan nd later Batel valley. After that they migrated to Turkey mountain as flocks of hornbills. From there they flew into the Ural Mountain as clouds of Heaven. Later to Siberia. Not in one place but "Thousands migrated to Mongolia and build houses to dwell in". When thousands migrated to inner Mongolia, some left for China. From China they spread to Burma, Kuchin and Manipur valley. At last they came to Phiston valley where seven Brothers split to form the Naga Tribes. "And divided themselves/Into Saramati, Japfu, Tiyi, Honoho, Totsu Ranges" (p. 124). Though it is a small poem in 24 lines, its geographic map extends to many countries (many environments). It is the struggle of the Nagas, the (environmental) history of the Nagas-how they went to various countries for their existence. Man strives hard for his existence. Here it is about the existence of the Nagas and their environmental sketch.

Hence culture is the refined state of people. A country, society and people should always have a good and appreciable culture. Thus we have seen the portrayal and reflection of culture and environment in the Anthropocene, since literature is the mirror of life–life of human beings, animals, birds and Nature.

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# Tagore's Journey from *Rakta Karabi* to *Red Oleanders*: Translations and Adaptations

\*Dr. Vinita Jha

### Abstract

Asia's first Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore wrote his Bengali drama, Rakta Karabi in 1923-24, which was translated into English by him in the same year as Red Oleanders, published in Vishwa Bharati Quarterly. Within a year of its publication, Times Literary Supplement criticized Tagore and his translated play for the vagueness of his style and symbolism. The response of the western reviewers is primarily confined to the theme of this translated play which they failed to understand due to the allegorical overtones and the physical Bengali culture. In 1987, Ananda Lal published a translation of Three Plays by Tagore, including Red Oleanders, but again his translated Red oleanders did not impress the western spectators when it was staged at Camden Peoples' Theatre in England in 2006. In 2008, a writer-translator from North America, Nupur Lahiri, tries to recast Red Oleanders to the Western World in a free and comprehensive form, maintaining the original message of the play. Lahiri says that translations have to be updated, renewed and adapted periodically, and naturally her translations is lucid and comprehensible with limited characters and compressed songs and dialogues.

\***Dr. Vinita Jha,** Professor and Head, P.G. Department of English, M.D.D.M. College, BRA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur (Bihar). E-mail: <u>vinitajha2010@gmail.com</u> This paper discusses poetics of Tagore's translation which make *Red Oleanders* a piece of bafflement for the Western readers and an autonomous artistic work for the Indians.

**Keywords**: Adaptation, Allegorical Overtones, Lucid and Comprehensible, Physical Bengali Culture, Vagueness.

Asia's first Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's *Rakta Karabi* in Bengali version was staged only once in the poet's lifetime by his family in their Jorasanko residence, and it was only in 1954 that a successful staging was accomplished under the direction of Sombhu Mitra's Bohu-rupu company. One of the western critics of Tagore's writings, Alex Aronson, who had a deep knowledge of Indian culture and Bengali language, made such an illuminating remark on the poetic genius of Tagore:

"Millions of Westerners saw, read and responded to Rabindranath. A few great and unprejudiced minds responded wholeheartedly and unhesitatingly. Many failed either because they admired Rabindranath in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons or because they could never attain the degree of cultural aloofness which has enabled them to give a meaningful response to so extraordinary and overwhelming a figure as this poet who had come to them for Bengal." (Aronson, 79)

Surprisingly enough, the same British critic could not maintain the cultural aloofness because he made the following comment when *Red Oleanders* was staged in Edinburgh:

'But its characters come on and go off the stage without doing anything that forms a plot with exposition, development and denouement'. (Aronson, 99)

The Western reviewers did not appreciate the poetic imagination of *Red Oleanders*; had they understood the meta-theme of Tagore's self translated play, the cultural significance of Bengali language, the realistically delineated characters on the pattern of cycles of season in Bengal, they would not have made the callow comments, as one made by *The Sheffield Telegraph* on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1925: Mr. Tagore is too serious a writer to be suspected of publishing absolute nonsense on purpose. So, one must suppose that he did it by accident. (Aronson, 84)

The unkind comment on *Red Oleanders* by Western critics shocked Tagore so much that after this translation, Tagore never published any other play in English translation. It was supposed that Tagore realized the problem of an unhappy mismatch between the theme of his plays in Bengali and the rendering of those into the linguistic framework of English.

In the interpretation of his self-translated play, *Red Oleanders*, Tagore pointed out emphatically, '...However, I think, in justice to myself, I should make it clear that it has a definite meaning which legitimately claim literary expression'. (Tagore, 20)

Tagore's translated play conveys the spiritual message for the survival of human values against the dehumanized greed of industrialism by fighting legitimately against the forces of oppression. The world of *Red Oleanders* is Yaksha Town in which we get a direct conflict between two sets of characters, symbolizing the affirmative and the negative principles. Nandini, Kishor, Ranjan, Professor and Bishu represent the principle of pure joy and hope in life whereas King, Governor, Assistant Governor and Government machinery represent the principle of negation and death. M.K. Naik calls this play a thesis play and remarks:

*Red Oleanders* is symbolic presentation of the triumph of humanistic values over soul-killing Mammonism. Nandini, the spirit of joy, love and beauty destroys the tyrannical regime in Yaksha town, which has reduced its citizens to gold-digging slaves, though she herself dies in process'. (Naik, 102)

The play embodies Tagorean vision of female autonomy to redeem and rejuvenate a dead world, ridden with lust, violence and strife through its central character, Nandini. No doubt, Tagore's plays are the plays of feeling and imagination which are based on ancient Indian myths, legends and epics. Tagore's poetic effusion obliterates him from constructing a thick plot which goes beyond concrete description. Thus, the opening scene of *Red Oleanders* doesn't present an insightful dramatic activity, but the long poetic expression by Nandini and Kishor. This translated play appears to be a tragic play without any tragic conflict, resulting from the encounters between Nandini and Governor, Nandini and Professor, and Nandini and the King.

## Π

As a translator of his own Bengali literary works, Tagore enjoyed so much liberty that his English versions have become something far from being simple translations. Tagore's doubt about the capacity and willingness of the English readers to understand the thoughts and values of Indian life reflected in his fictional works, and his attempt in translation to fit the source language text to the demand of the target language readers, affected the English translations of his novels, which is the specific area of interest. When the English translation of his famous novel *Gora* was in progress, Tagore wrote to W.W. Pearson:

"I find that English readers have very little patience for scenes and sentiments which are foreign to them; they feel a sort of grievance for what they do not understand and they care not to understand whatever is different from their familiar world.... This makes me think that after you have done with your translation, it will have to be carefully abridged." (Tagore, 178)

It is clear that Tagore himself was in favour of abridging, modifying, changing and recording his original Bangla works, while translating them into English, only to make them comprehensible for the western minds.

The problem of the western readers and critics related to the self-translated literary works of Tagore may be explained in these terms: 'Translation is not merely limited to literary texts but it involves the cultural activity, study of colonialism, post-colonialism, literary history, semiology and deconstruction covering the areas

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like cultural hybridity, globalization, identity construction, minority languages and questions relating to comparative literature... (Naik, Bhagabat, 205) ...the job of the translator is interlingual and intercultural, but in transculturation often either consciously or unconsciously, he remains involved in cultural politics. This kind of involvement of the translator sometimes becomes constructive or catastrophic when the culture of the Source Language (SL) dominates the culture of the Target Language (TL) or vice versa.

But any kind of subordination or domination becomes cannibalistic when the translator as a comparatist translates the culture of SL text to TL text. (Naik, Bhagabat, 210-11) If we judge the credentials of *Red Oleanders* in the light of these translation theories, we may assess, to some extent, why this translated drama became a piece of bafflement for the western critics.

### III

*Red Oleanders* is generally considered as the most difficult of Tagore's symbolic plays, and particularly for the western readers, the most obscure or elusive. Hence Tagore gave an elaborate explication of its allegorical meaning in *The Manchester Guardian*, without caring for this play as a work of art. It was much later, when it was staged by the Bahu-rupu Theatrical Group that it was realized how tremendously powerful this play can be on the stage. As Sombhu Mitra puts it:

This play has in it a total picture of the crisis in civilization of the contemporary world. It deals with the frightful dilemma of the modern man in the grip of an acquisitive society. And because the dilemma and the prospect have a larger-than-life nightmarish quality about them the form given to the play is larger than the frame of a picture depicting the particular and the individual. The form had to be such as to be adequate to the content, which stretches down to level after level of meaning and extends beyond particular problems of a particular individual and family. (Mitra, 41) *Red Oleanders* has been described on the title page as 'a drama in one act', put it is different from the formal one-act drama because one act, with reference to *Red Oleanders*, probably indicates only that the play is to be staged with no break at all and with no change of scenery. In fact, the play consists of many scenes and songs, one flowing into another, in the Yatra fashion.

In the preface to *Ovid's Epistles* (1680) Dryden proposed his celebrated tripartite division of translation into

- **Metaphrase**—translating line by line, word for word from one language into another;
- **Paraphrase**—translation with latitude or sense by sense view of translation; and
- **Imitation**—where the translator can abandon the original material.

Tagore has applied all the three strategic principles because the poet-dramatist sometimes translated some situations of the SL text word for word in *Red Oleanders*, but where this principle doesn't fit in, he recollected the sense of the original and then rendered them into English. However, when both these principles did not work, he resorted to the last principle of abandoning certain dramatic scenes for this translated play. For the sake of effective communication, Tagore occasionally appeared to be very much meticulous about the details of symbols he transferred from *Rakta Karabi* to *Red Oleanders*. Tagore also emerges as a champion of free translation who moves away from the original in many dramatic situations of Red Oleanders.

In his article 'Translation of Symbols and other Tropes and Schemes in *Red Oleanders*' Basudeb Chakraborty says that Tagore's *Red Oleanders* is replete with many symbols. (*English Drama in English*, Chap. III, 2015). Most of the symbols, used in Tagore's *Rakta Karabi*, constitute a kind of spiritual abstraction though they may have social or ideological bias. The name 'Nandini' itself is symbolical which stands for a daughter, bringing

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joy to the family. Nandini, while revealing the character of the King and his interest to Bishu, makes use of some visual metaphors in Rakta Karabi which are retained also in Red Oleanders by Tagore. The initial metaphors Tagore uses in the reply of Nandini to Bishu are 'a thousand year old banyan tree' (Chakraborty, 42) for the King and 'a tiny little bird' (Chakraborty, 42) for herself. These visual images for the King and Nandini have been selected very carefully by Tagore because they are universal in connotation. Another visual image is 'manuscript' which is related to Nandinin. The King wants to know the natural feelings of Nandini, so he says, 'I want to read you' (Chakraborty, 43) and in her reply to him, Nandini says, 'I am not a manuscript' (Chakraborty, 43). In the same piece of conversation, when the King asks Nandini, 'how much she loves Ranjan, Nandini replies that she loves Ranjan as 'the rudder in the water might love the sail in the sky, answering its rhythm of wind in the rhythm of waves' (Chakraborty, 43). In this dramatic situation, Tagore knows well that word-by-word translation is possible because the smile of 'rudder' is intelligible to the western reading people, but on certain occasions he did also show his limitations. In Rakta Karabi, Nandini addresses Bishu as Pagal Bhai (Chakraborty, 44), but in Red Oleanders, Tagore avoids this address realizing the problem of translating the nuance of the Bengali word. That's why, Tagore deletes the metaphor, 'Jom' (Chakraborty, 44), used by the King in Rakta Karabi, in *Red Oleanders.* The second metaphor in the same situation is Nilkantha Pakhir Palok (feather of blue-necked bird), (Chakraborty, 44). Nandini places 'the blue-throated feather' on Ranjan's crest after his physical death. Nilkantha is the name of 'Mahadeva' who holds the venom in his neck for the benefit of the world. The effect of foregrounding through the employment of this metaphor on Indian readers is superb, but it may be an obscure literary allusion to western readers of Red Oleanders. However, a reader, when he attempts to enjoy a piece of creative writing written in an alien linguistic framework, must be familiar with the pragmatics of the language community.

In his review of the critical book by Basudeb Chakraborty 'Some Problems of Translation: A Study of Tagore's Red Oleanders', Raymond-Jean Frontain comments emphatically: Among the significant issues that Chakraborty analyses are such small but letting instances of the difficulty of cultural translation as Tagore's having the raja address Nandini as 'Comrade' in English (raising the distracting echo of communism to a post-world war II Anglo-American reader) whereas in Bengali, his addressing Nandini by the more familiar form of her name, Nandini, reveals his intimate identification with a social inferior at the pivotal moment of illumination, and how Bengali syntax allows for the enactment of 'the play of magic' in Nandini's world, a syntactic maneuver impossible in English.... Perhaps the most illuminating instance analyzed by Chakraborty is Tagore's translation of the play's title, which refers to the flower that Nandini wears.... Rakta Karabi refers to the flower in the singular, whereas its translation as 'red oleanders' is plural. The plural form... appeals to the western sense of agency and its consequences, suggesting that others will follow Nandini in her resistance, (apparently Tagore made the English version of the play more action-oriented) [http:/ /www.the Free library.com...]

### IV

Tagore's self translated poems of *The Gitanjali* were lauded extravagantly as the mystical utterance of a seer from the East, but ironically enough, Tagore's self-translated play invited adverse comments from the western critics mainly because of Tagore's vehement protest against the Jallianwala Bagh, Massacre, his subsequent renunciation of the knighthood, conferred by the British Empire, in 1919 and his close association with the Indian National Congress. The Tagore centenary in 1961 provided a renewed impetus to Tagore's scholarship and fresh translations of Tagore to highlight his many-sided genius; the 1980's and 1990's may be appreciated as Golden period of Tagore's Translations with two pertinent literary works, William Radice's *Selected Poems* (1985) and Ananda Lal's Three Plays (1987) including Red Oleanders. Anand Lal in his translation of *Rakta Karabi* represented a faithful recreation of the original work, with pertinent scholarship on the history and context of the play. Lal strives to maintain a scrupulously close correspondence between Bengali and English, sentence for sentence, and in many instances, even word for word. Again, he tries to preserve, in his translation, the 'speech-rhythms' of Tagore's characters, and that is why, he has to sacrifice 'the restraint and economy of English in favour of the more luxuriant Bengali' (Lal, 112). He is more concerned with the stage potentiality of the plays and their translations are to be considered not as definite texts but as 'performance scripts' for producers and actors. His Three Plays (1987), he claims, ought to be given a special position in the history of Tagore's translation as 'the first full-length study in English of Tagore's drama (Lal, 35). In 2008, Nupur Lahiri, a writer-translator from North America, translated Rakta-Karabi, dedicated to 'all readers of Rabindranath Tagore for cross cultural exchange.' Lahiri says that translations have to be updated, renewed and adapted periodically, and naturally she has recast Red Oleanders to the western world in a free and comprehensible form, with limited characters, compressed songs and dialogues which has received endorsement from noted writers such as Sahitya Akademi President, Sunil Gangopadhyay. It is supposed that her efforts to recast the important play into a stage worthy English translation will generate a fresh production of Red Oleanders in a contemporary setting. The unique aspect of Lahiri's translation lies in the fact that her simplicity of language and expression breaks through the mystique of Red Oleanders and hopes to reach out to a wide readership. Again, Tagore's Red Oleanders made theatrical history in 2006 when it was performed in London by a new British Theatre Company, determined to introduce the Nobel Laureate's dramatic genius to a wider audience. The latest version of Red Oleanders has been staged successfully by the Myriad Productions. Kevin Rowntree, the company's artistic director, seemed to be steeped in Tagorean

Literature and Indian philosophy, and naturally he made *Red Oleanders* as his company's debut play. He says that the script of *Red Oleanders* was based on the recent translation by Anand Lal, Tagore's own translation and things they put in themselves. They borrowed also from vigorous storytelling techniques of Commedia dell' Arte from Italy and English medieval popular drama as well as the physical traditions of *Kathakali* and eastern material arts training. [http://m.telegraphindia.comndiacid].

Adaptation is one of the tools of effective translation which is generally used in case of cultural differences. Increasingly, people are considering translation of literary works as a form of adaptation, and not strictly language translation. Many academics these days resist the idea that any literary work can be brought from one language to another only in pure sense that the very act of bringing it across linguistic and cultural barriers results in inevitable changes to the work that can only be described as an adaptation, similar to when a novel is adapted into a screen play or a stage play brought to the television screen. We have seen the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Indian cinemas, and we wish that the process of turning *Red Oleanders* into a film in a modern perspective will be launched soon.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Shobha De's *Strange Obsession* and Meenu Mehrotra's *Lilacs Bloom in My Backyard* : A Study in Self-exploration and Self-revelation

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#### Abstract

The institution of marriage and family forms the bed rock of the Indian social system. But the irony is that marriage as the very essential institution has been the basic tool of gender bias and exploitation of women at home and society. The Indian women coerced into a mindless acceptance of male hegemony have been a considerably conditioned product of the socio-religious sanctions since the ages, irrespective of their class and status. Man not only forms the nucleus of social and national life; he is also the pivot around whom the existence of women revolves at periphery. However, with the passage of time they felt suffocated under the patriarchal mould. They emerged no longer as passive victims of male authorial desire; they by subverting the male-dominated discourse, tried to establish their own identities. This brought forth the concept of new woman. The women novelists who appeared on the literary scene during the late 70s and early 80s grapple with the predicament of the new women in one way or the other. Not content with exploring the centrality of sexual desire

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\*\*Urwashi Kumari, Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya (Bihar) Email: urwashisharma0009@gmail.com in heterosexual relationship, some Indian women writers have tried to delineate themes like lesbianism and other perversion. Shobha De's Strange Obsession and Manju Kapur's A Married Woman very well depict the theme of lesbianism. Besides, Sunita Namjoshi and Meenu Mehrotra have also touched upon the theme of lesbianism Shobha De's Strange Obsession discusses Meenakshi's neurotic moods and eccentric moves. Her counterpart Amrita has to undergo many emotional disturbances because of Minx's homosexual advances put in state of emotional crises. Meenu Mehrotra's Lilacs Bloom in My Backyard also deals with the lesbian relationship. Ramona and Misha, two protagonists are completely disillusioned with men in their lives. They revolt against the established norms of society and hypocrisy in relationships and the entire story revolves around ups and downs in lives of these two characters.

The present paper intends to present a comparative stance of Shobha De's *Strange Obsession* and Meenu Mehrotra's *Lilacs Bloom In My Backyard* in respect of lesbianism which is not a new phenomenon; it has been there since centuries. The paper will also highlight the spirit of womanhood, the resilience and energy of women.

**Keywords**: Lesbianism, Victim, Homosexuality, Relationship, Suffocation, Revolt

In Indian English literature the trend of female bonding and companionship is growing very fast. Women writers in recent past have written extensively on the theme of lesbianism. The novels documenting 'unhappy burden of the women', novels scrutinizing how sexuality is socially constructed and how woman's body is made a mere agent in fulfilment of needs of others have been amply produced. These novels have sceptically analysed and dismantled the marriage and family institutions.

The institution of marriage and family forms the bed rock of the Indian social system. But the irony is that marriage as the very essential institution has been the basic tool of gender bias and exploitation of women at home and society. The Indian women coerced into a mindless acceptance of male hegemony have been a considerably conditioned product of the socio-religious sanctions since the ages, irrespective of their class and status. Man not only forms the nucleus of social and national life; he is also the pivot around whom the existence of women revolves at periphery. However, with the passage of time they felt suffocated under the patriarchal mould. They emerged no longer as passive victims of male authorial desire; they by subverting the male-dominated discourse, tried to establish their own identities. This brought forth the concept of new woman. The women novelists who appeared on the literary scene during the late 70s and 80s grapple with the predicament of the 'new women' in one way or the other. Not content with exploring the centrality of sexual desire in heterosexual relationship, some Indian women writers have tried to delineate themes like lesbianism and other perversion. Shobha De's Strange Obsession, Manju Kapur's A Married Woman very well depict the theme of lesbianism. Besides, Sunita Namjoshi and Meenu Mehrotra have also touched upon the theme of lesbianism.

These types of literature abound in cases of strong emotional bonds between women who choose with cognizance relations with other women over that with men. Mostly in these novels, 'sisterhood' and 'lesbianism' are treated as alternatives to institutions of marriage, family and patriarchy. In lesbian and gay literature, it is proposed as an alternative to heterosexual love itself. Adrienne Rich believes all women are situated somewhere on a "lesbian continuum". Lesbianism easily encompasses many more forms of emotional intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support. (Rich, 239)

Most unlike the European and American literature, in Indian English literature the nature of lesbian relationship is of a very subdued mellow kind pertaining more to the emotional level than to sexual level. Moreover, the concept of sisterhood leaning towards lesbianism is difficult to gain social acceptance, the state being so what we find in recent Indian English literature is a strong relationship between and among women to which women turn after having disappointing and frustrating experiences with their male counterparts. This bond with other women has often various emotional shades, being aware of each other predicament and needs, caring for each other, supporting each other in daily activities, sharing a rich inner life coming together against male tyranny.

The present paper intends to present a comparative stance of Shobha De's *Strange Obsession* and Meenu Mehrotra's *Lilacs Bloom in My Backyard* in respect of lesbianism which is not a new phenomenon; it has been there since centuries.

Strange Obsession, one of the important novels of Shobha De centres round two female characters–Amrita and Meenakshi, better known as Minx. Amrita, the gorgeous young super-model is attracted by a mysterious woman called Minx. Both of them are portrayed as strong characters. However, Minx appears somewhat an obscure and mysterious creation of the novelist. She wants to have full control over Amrita. With the passage of time her demands grow and Amrita's life turns nightmarish. It is indeed, a novel of sexual obsession and its calamitous consequences.

Minx has strong fascination for Amrita. She sends a bunch of flowers with the note 'to your eyes' to Amrita. She goes to the extent of stealing her inner garments which reflects her obsession. Very soon Amrita knows everything. Moreover, when Minx asks over phone whether she has scared her off, her voice sends a chill down Amrita's spine. Karan, Amrita's senior in the studio, knows fully well about Minx. He advises Amrita to change her address in order to save her from Minx. But Amrita finds no sense in it as she knows it that Minx will not spare her. Minx, herself tells about her obsession:

...I wanted to see how you lived, where you lived. What your bed looked like. The basin in which you brushed your teeth... The shower under which you showered... (*Strange Obsession*, 22)

Minx often addresses Amrita as 'sweet heart'. From Minx's actions it is more than clear that hers is the strangest of obsessions. And this is surely the outcome of her identity crisis. Though Amrita feels great contempt for her, she is unable to do anything against her as nothing would stop her once she takes a decision:

I'm not one to give up so easily. Whether or not you like it, you'll have to accept my presence in your life. You see, Amrita, you have become a part of me. You live right here in my body. I can feel your presence inside me all the time... (23)

Minx is so possessive that she does not tolerate Amrita's affair with Ranjit Rover. She does not have any qualm about going to the extremes. She makes the following comments about Rover:

That man is an animal. He fucks anything that moves. I want you to be medically examined... (35)

Minx sees to it that her enemies are finished or nearly finished whenever they stand against her interests. She makes arrangements to nearly kill Rover. When Amrita complains about this Minx replies very coolly that he is a bad man and he deserves that punishment.

Minx narrates her past life to Amrita. According to her, she was sexually abused by her father. The natural consequences of this confession is that Minx successfully begins to receive some sympathy from Amrita. However, Amrita realises that Minx is going to be a very difficult lady to deal with. She does not tolerate even girls harassing Amrita in any way. She goes to the extent of killing a model, Lola brutally as she was trying to compete with Amrita. Minx can go to any extent for the sake of Amrita's love. She is never perturbed by what she does to her adversaries as she is made of such stuff. She does not mind having a collaboration with Karan as both of them love Amrita and share the same passion.

Minx does not want to leave Amrita even for a minute. She follows her like a shadow even when she leaves for Delhi. She appears to be 'Amrita's guardian angel'. Minx would go to any extent to catch the sympathy of Amrita for her interest in her had already crossed all the limits. Though she would not like herself to be called a lesbian she was exactly that and perhaps more. Minx did not go wrong in her calculations and at least for the moment it was a total surrender as far as Amrita was concerned:

She shut her eyes and ceased to think or feel, surrendering to Minx who was over her moving her hands tenderly along the length of her body, caressing her face kissing her softly. She felt Minx's fingers unbuttoning her linen jacket... and she did not resist. (94)

Indeed, Minx's behaviour here may be attributed to sexual repression. If sex is repressed, i.e. condemned to prohibition, nonexistence and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself, to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. (Foucault, 6)

It is a fact that silence becomes the rule when it comes to the subject of sex; the social convention very often stands against free expression of one's desires. As far as Minx is concerned, there is no going back and she has fully decided to be in Amrita's company. However, Amrita even at this stage does not hesitate to tell Minx that she hates being watched and followed. Besides, Amrita also tries to convince Minx that her yielding to the physical relation with her is a mistake which she will not like to be repeated. But Minx is determined to be with her and take care of everything– clothes, finances, travel and food.

Since Minx has a 'strange obsession' for Amrita she cannot live without her. She herself says:

I've tried to get her out of my system... I've stopped at nothing-hypnosis, psycho-analysis, shock-therapy, tranquilizers, even a witch loiter. Nothing works. I want her see badly, I'm in physical pain. (163) She keeps track of Rakesh and Amrita and follows them to Nainital while they are honeymooning. When Rakesh goes out for a walk alone she kidnaps him and confines him in a remote secluded hut. Amrita searches for him and ultimately reaches that hut. Minx plays her tricks to separate Rakesh and Amrita and then sets the hut on fire. All of them sustain burn injuries. Minx is serious in hospital while Rakesh and Amrita recoup. During their accident, Amrita meets Minx's father from whom she comes to know that Minx's version of her childhood tragedy was mostly fabricated. Her mother was a psychological case and so she often indulges in these abnormal activities. Very soon Amrita comes to know about Minx's death and she breathes a sigh of relief.

Meenu Mehrotra's *Lilacs Bloom in My Backyard* also deals with the lesbian relationship. Ramona and Misha, two protagonists are completely disillusioned with men in their lives. They revolt against the established norms of society and hypocrisies in relationships. The entire story revolves around ups and downs in lives of these two characters. The novel begins with Ramona's wish to run away from California. She is seen observing:

I have to call off this wedding.

I can't marry Amit. No, never...

(Lilacs Bloom in My Backyard, 2)

However, she had taken an instant liking to Amit with his cheerful disposition, his intense eyes, childlike innocence and his whacky sense of humour. Amit too fell in love with Ramona, a thirty-year old lean girl of medium height with a mannish gait. They were engaged and their wedding date, too, was fixed for the coming month. But her last minute decision not to marry Amit shocked everybody. Ramona gave everything she had–her love, her trust, her soul, her body–to Amit but he, according to her cheated him as he was found in bed with someone else. This event was so shocking to her that she wished to leave California as soon as possible: California smells of him. I find him everywhere. I can still feel his hands on my body. The memory of those days that I spent with him and that night... (32)

Moreover, Misha was more than a friend to Ramona. Her breaking conjugal life also brought her closer to Ramona. Even Misha had become so much a part of her life that her absence mattered to her : Misha meant a lot to her. There was an innate comfort she felt in her company. She could talk to her for hours and still not feel impatient to end the conversation. Ramona's friendship with Misha blossomed like a seasonal flower. Despite her parents' objection to her relationship with Misha, their relationship with the passage of time, grew stronger :

She had found a rare friend in Misha, one with whom she could laugh and cry. The two had found comfort zones in each other. (120)

Indeed, she looked forward to meeting Misha everyday. She grew impatient in her absence and her heart ached to see Misha's alluring face and smell the fragrance of her body. Ramona felt that she had started longing for Misha like a lover. She felt Misha was destined to be the focus of her life. She felt the need to be with Misha growing strong after a few days. She wanted to be with Misha in a way a lover would... wanted to love her, kiss her, explore her body but found herself being pulled back by the chains of customs and traditions. Gradually Ramona unchained her mind from the traditional thoughts that were preventing her from leading her life the way. She wanted to tell the whole world that she was in love but a woman was not supposed to fall in love with another woman. Misha had tiptoed into her life and made herself an indispensable part of it:

The universe around her had transformed. It was as if spring had arrived, bringing with it new flowers and fresh fragrances. (130)

Moreover, Gayatri, Ramona's mother had completely failed to comprehend the dilemma her daughter was going through. She always felt that they share an abnormal and unhealthy relationship, that two women cannot desire one another. But Ramona was confident that what her heart felt, her mind could never jeopardise. It was a voice she had heard from Misha's heart and it could never be wrong :

Ramona's hands moved all over Misha's back caressing her shivering body like a tender lover... Misha drew herself closer to Ramona, burying her face deep into her bosom. No words were required to describe what they felt for each other. (135)

Their intimate relationship is clear in these lines :

Ramona felt the sensation rise inside her, right from the back of her neck, through the gulf between her breasts and circling her inner thighs. Misha held her tighter now and the energy seemed to flow from one to the other... She wanted to bury herself in them... wanted to see them... see their beauty. The trance lasted for a few minutes as Misha allowed her to explore her body... (136)

Aastha in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* also had the same type of relationship with Pipeelika Trivedi. However, it is not a lesbian text as lesbian sexuality is depoliticalised and is reduced to the matter of private preference. Even in the most intimate moments that Astha spends with Pipee, she cannot help thinking about her kids. Her relation with Pipee was not the outcome of her sexual desire, to be with a woman, it was more an incidental happening resulting from her predicament :

Like a woman of straw, her inner life dead with a man who noticed nothing. (A Married Woman, 27)

Manu continued his torturous behaviour to Misha and very soon she wished to get out of the marriage. Ramona's importance for Misha was increasing day by day. Their meeting became more passionate and intense :

They hugged tight and then their lips locked in a long, passionate kiss. The softness of each other's lips melted

inside their mouths and both experienced a bit of heaven for the first time. (150)

Though their relationship was not made public, Ramona's mother knew everything. She was so angry with her daughter that she called her 'a sick lesbian'. This expression hurt her and she decided to leave her parents. The process of Misha's legal separation from her husband was also under process. She knew it fully well that she might not have survived the brutalities of her husband without the support of Ramona. She was really special for her. It was her deep feeling for Ramona which forced her to capture her face in a portrait :

There was a certain tenderness in the way Misha had touched her today and she felt her entire body responding to that touch. Her body seemed to open up like a sunflower responding to the sun. It quivered with a delicious sensation that ran from the back of her neck down to her thighs. (208)

For Ramona too, Misha had become an inseparable part of her identity. She could not imagine a life without her. The novel ends with the positive note:

The two of them kissed and embraced each other. It was the start of a new life that they had so eagerly looked forward to. The azure sky seemed a fitting testimony to their union. The cool breeze brushed against their bodies. Today was a big day. The whole world seemed too small to celebrate their closeness. (276)

Thus we find that in both the novels the theme of lesbianism has been highlighted. However, the treatment is different. Shobha De's *Strange Obsession* discusses Meenakshi's neurotic moods and eccentric moves. Her counterpart Amrita has to undergo many emotional disturbances because of Minx's homosexual advances put in state of emotional crises. Similarly, Meenu Mehrotra's *Lilacs Bloom in My Backyard* also deals with the lesbian relationship. Ramona and Misha two protagonists are completely disillusioned with men in their lives. They revolt against the established norms of society and hypocrisies in relationships and enjoy life in full. In *Strange Obsession*, the relationship between the two is not smooth; there is always some sort of tension prevailing between the two. But Meenu Mehrotra has developed her characters in a different way. According to her, love does not need much logic and practicality and this viewpoint is very much reflected in Misha's and Ramona's relationship. Both of them had supported each other through hard times. The novel really makes a deep study in self-exploration and self-revelation of the women caught in the middle of tradition and modern life.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Archetypes of Gender Performativity

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## Abstract

Gender performativity is essentially inscribed with human character and biological traits. It influences human feelings, behavior, actions, habits and thinking through specific inherited contents and images. It is scripted culturally while gets manifested in human consciousness, intention and actions. In language and philosophy gender plays an influential role due to the 'epigenetic marks'. It is archetypal in the analogies of human instincts, behavior and development of consciousness. Archetype, the mother of all expressions symbolizes wisdom, fertility, intuition and maternal instincts which develop the consciousness for actions. Archetype becomes the caretakers of all sensibilities. Archetype of gender performativity is both verbal and nonverbal in communications and actions which establish individual's identity. It contributes to analytical psychology, feminist theory and stylization of body. It examines the history of sexuality, investigates the axiomatic and anatomic ground of gender construction. Judith Pamela Butler, the American philosopher and gender theorist determines gender performativity, in the philosophy of language and speech act

\***Prof. Bhagabat Nayak,** Dept. of English, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh–791112 Email: <u>bhagabatnayak74@gmail.com</u> theory Gender Performativity is an enactment of human actions which are socio-anthropologically confirmed. Gender identity is recognizable only from individual's ascribed roles. The paper in its theoretical framework addresses the fluidity of gender performativity in communication, emotional experience and literary representation. It estimates the recognizable modes and behavior of gender in socioanthropological paradigms.

**Keywords:** Anthromorphic, Epigenetic, Homonormative, Androcentric, Logocentric, Primordial, Synchronicity.

Gender performativity is a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors and supposedly present in the collective consciousness. It is believed that this consciousness is archetypal in its shape and function. It is understood that archetypes are the close analogies of human instincts and inherited traits that motivate and demonstrate human behavior long before the development of consciousness. Archetype is the innate tendency that moulds and transforms the individual consciousness and drives human behavior through specific inherited contents and images. Archetypes do not have well-defined shapes although they are manifested in human intention and action. On the psychic and material plane myths and folklores as archetypes build human consciousness. Archetypes also get reflected in dreams, fantasies, delirious ideas, illusions and intense emotions. Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology in his essays "On the Concept of Archetype" and "The Mother Archetype" analyses archetype as the model image of a person and a mother figure across the cultures. Archetype as the mother expression symbolizes wisdom, fertility and growth, intuition and material instinct in the universal tendency of consciousness. Mother archetype is the foundation of all relationship among the conscious desires and unconscious actions. 'Mother' is metaphorical in presence as it is attributed to Divine Feminine, the creator of wisdom and caretaker of all sensibilities. While in Freudian sense it is a conscious state built with the influence of biological factors and Mother Earth, the Gaia, in Jungian sense it is constituted with the human psyche that influences the body and individual person or the individuation-realization in collective consciousness.

Archetype in psychic activity gets reflected in solitary behavior and collective behavior of the individuals. Umberto Eco, the Italian novelist and literary critic rightly says:

The term 'archetype' does not claim to have any particular psychoanalytic or mythic connotation, but serves only to indicate a preestablished and frequently reappearing narrative situation, cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts and provoking in the addressee a sort of intense emotion accompanied by the vague feeling of a déja vu, that everybody yearns to see again (414).

In Sigmund Freud's model of psyche, the 'Id' is primitive and instinctual part of the mind, the 'Super ego' operates as a moral conscience, and the 'ego' is the realistic part that mediates between the conscious desires of the 'Id' and the 'super-ego'. 'Ego' is the "part of the *id* which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world" and analysed "like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse" (Freud 25, 15). For Freud archetype is the tabula rasa (black slate) at the time of birth but functions externally with body's sensory experiences. For Jung archetype is a psychic orderedness built by a 'priori" (known without / before experience) with Kantean pure reason for expressing concern with the performance of actions. Gender is archetypal in individual's emotion and social situation. In individual's unconscious self archetype forms a 'shadow' which one does not know but only through effort can know and recognize. In anthropomorphic consciousness archetype is a state of priori revealed in collective unconsciousness with its presence or inheritance of 'anima', the unconscious feminine of man what Esther Newton writes "my appearance outside is masculine but my essence inside is feminine" (103), and 'animus' the unconscious masculine side of women individual reveals his / her gender attributes either in 'extraversion',

the outgoing behavior, or in 'introversion', the inner psychic activity.

Gender performativity as an archetype is imbibed in human consciousness. Gender analysis without feminism is partial, and feminism without gender study is incomplete. Gender is understood in performativity as a repeated stylization of the body. It is not a biological signifier rather a social and cultural signified one. Mostly in the 'homonormative' process and framework of social constructivism gender is revealed in individual's performances like verbal or non verbal expression, manner, behavior, attitude, temperament and philosophy. Performance is an action or rehearsal but performatives are formatives of utterance that strictly adhere British philosopher J.L. Austin's notion of speech-act-theory. In feminist and gender theory performativity projects the concept of identity as a key to analyze gender behavior, action, gestures and enactments as "performing of an action" (Austin 6) and "to facilitate a political convergence of feminism, gay and lesbian perspectives on gender and post structuralist theory" (Butler xiii). Gender reiterates performance and performativity conforms to gender norms within the bounds of intelligibility. In archetypal phenomena gender as a conditional consequence builds human consciousness that governs individual's behavior and sentiment in "synchronicity" or meaningful coincidences of events, situations and occasions. Archetype of gender performativity is recognized in individual's consciousness that governs the human utterance and communication what is called-'locution (utterance), illocution (interdisciplinarity) and 'perlocution' (effect upon listeners). Austin views that the function of language assigns "the mark of gender" that involves the alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity and gender roles in social realm, domestic life, desires, practices and relationship.

Performativity is also an act of performance in the field of theatrical, social or linguistic inquiry. It is connected to performance studies, critical theory and cultural studies. Gender performativity is archetypal and recognizable in psychic activity, solitary behavior or collective behavior of the individuals. The origin of the term 'performativity' is traced back to J.L. Austin's posthumous work How to Do Things with Words (1908) that presents "all utterances are performative, even those that appear merely to describe a state of affairs, since such utterance do the act of informing" (Hall 184). All utterances are viewed as actions and performances but not performatives. Performativity is a complex process of translating the consciousness in speech acts as gendering the language and locating the gender from language is a spontaneity with its continental philosophy and validity of a definite culture. Perfromativity maintains the identity of a person in speech expression, action, behaviour and gesture. Judith Butler, the American philosopher and gender theorist presents this in her Gender Trouble (1990) with the scientific criticism of body that matters to awake the impulse of gender categories.

Gender and sex are often used synonymously. Sex is scripted biologically where as gender is the ascribed roles, actions, and performances with the expectation of society. Society's expectations about gender roles alter the human brain at the cellular level, hence, making it an enigmatic mark. While the differentiation of masculine and feminine is confirmed on biological or physiological determination of man and woman with the 'anatomy of body', the concept of gender defines the 'anatomy of destiny' in their actions, roles, actions, functions of emotion, personal and public performance, language and morality, consciousness and anxiety, semiotics and cultural practices. French philosopher Michel Foucault views in his 'The Archeology of Knowledge (1969) that gender affects the body that frames 'power' and 'knowledge' which further rules the body. Gender relation is examined in the context of power relation in French feminist Kate Millet's Sexual Politics (1969) with its manipulative nature that establishes male dominance over women. Similarly gender performativity in the context of class, race ethnicity, sexuality and different stages of human life is viewed differently. American author Sara Suleri's essay, "Woman skin deep: Feminism and the post colonial condition" and Marry Ellman Greer's *Thinking About Woman* (1968) analyze gender performativity as an 'epigenetic mark'.

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Language is the exterior medium of gender. Butler believes that gender is archetypal and recognizable from verbal and non verbal expression, manner, performance, practice and communication. In socio-anthropological study, phallocentri ideologies and patriarchal interpretation gender becomes unstable. Gender performativity is archetypal for its origin in history, psychology and sociolinguistics which create the 'sexual polarization' in perception and creative imagination. French feminist Simone de Beauvoir writes woman as a gender group in the expression, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" in her The Second Sex (1949) on the basis of cultural assumptions and social prejudices in language and style, and expression. But Helene Cixox coinages the term 'ecriture feminine' in her The Laugh of Medusa (1976) to counter "the oppressor's language", the patriarchy's medium of language, with a reason for woman define to herself in her language. This exposes the fundamental analogy of language and its difference between men and women. Woman's gender identity is inscribed culturally and psychologically that get manipulated in the language of patriarchy. This makes the woman think that other's language cannot construct her representation. Woman's performativity in language raises 'woman's questions' about her body, concern, anxiety, dressing as well as the 'masculine' function of man's language, rational, and code of knowledge with world view. While Focault's The History of Sexuality (1976) estimates the history of sexuality, Butler's Gender Trouble investigates the axiomatic and anatomic ground for sex and gender analysis. Kate Millet considers woman's anxiety for creativity as performance in a political act. Woman breaks the restriction that writing is a male profession to prove her self-image like Austen, Brontes, Mary Shalley, George Eliot and Emily Dickinson.

#### Archetypes of Gender Performativity

Gender performativity is an autonomous subjectivity for the formation of identity. It has ontological status for human subject. Since gender constitutes sensuality it further promotes performativity for representation. Performance is an act of study in interdisciplinary relationship, research and relationship between the performer and audience in everyday life. Performatives are performances particularly in speech-act-theory that inscribes power and facilitates transgression on interdisciplinary issues. Speech-act performativity is an act of utterance and locution in ceremonial conversation or in certain conditions of expressions. Performativity is a concept derived from the speech-act theory of J.L. Austin which is closely associated Judith Butler's referring to the enactment of both gender and sexuality. Butler's view of 'performance' is related to the enactment and continuous repetition of normative codes of masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality in demonstration of authority, opportunities and expressions of sexual and gendered subjects. Her description of 'gender performance', its contexts, conditions, opportunities, correspondences and certain conditions either marginalized or privileged profoundly contribute to shape feminist criticism, performance studies and queer theory.

The concept of performative utterance is for identity and representation. It has been reworked in Butler's performativity in the understanding of biological sex, language socialization, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and manipulative ideologies of masculine and feminine speeches. In 'conventional' language gender performativity becomes normative for identity construction "in which body shows or produces its cultural signification.... by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction" (Butler 180). Gender performativity is significantly a practice in the priority of corporeal politics and the notion of subjectivity that interprets it. Butler says, performativity. As a strategy to denaturalize and resignify bodily categories, I describe and propose a set of parodic practices based on a performative theory of gender facts that disrupt the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame (x).

Gender does not define sex rather a norm and identity, a law that internally signifies the subjectivity and intelligibility of 'masculine' and 'feminine' for identity construction. The archetype of gender performativity is a primary perspective to explore the distinctiveness of body, identity and psychic signs in the scientific study of human impulse and tradition of a prejudiced society. It is inherited, imposed and stylized in body acts, philosophy, utterance and action.

Gender performativity determines the language used by the gendered category with the shaping of linguistic behavior and cultural ideals. The updated new analytical tool: Critical Performative Analysis of Emotions (CPAE) expresses the normative behavior of gendered categories in emotions. Gender performance consists of a stylized practice involving gestures, language and serves to form an identity. Gender is associated to the role of men and women in male-female dichotomy. In performance gender innates the human and cultural ideas which are biologically formed and culturally determined in the use of clothes, hairstyle, body language, celebrations and ceremonies, behavior, facial expression, socialized behavior, emotional or physical care giving. Gender is a biological expression but not the expression of biology. All gender practices involve stylized manners, gestures, language and speech in order to form and build an identity. While feminism is concerned with the nature and representation of men and women and different kinds of approaches for a personal and social change with an agenda to challenge the traditional power of patriarchy, gender study represents the dilution and diffusion of it by neutralizing the sexual politics. The idea of gender in argument is the two opposing and mutually defining positions with the idea of heterosexuality and socially assigned role to a particular biological sex.

Archetype of gender establishes the identity of a person. It is neither complementary nor derogatory for "the data of biology" (de Beauvoir 4) in embryonic development or embryological investigation. Gender performativity has no relation with human biology but it has the bio-related characteristics due to individual's hormonal influence, potentiality and sexuality. It is a living activity in the synthesis of individual's being and becoming. It defines and differentiates man and woman with their experience and performance in intellectual pleasure and political necessity. Performativity reveals the consciousness of the body, sensibility and physical features in linguistic, behavioural, and emotional activity. Gender performativity is the self-elaborating mechanism in the power of language or in behavioural activities. While Luce Irigary distinguishes gender categories in the binary of masculine and feminine either in phonic or literary presentations, Monique Wittig says, "There is no feminine writing" (63). It is apparent that gender performativity defines the nature and culture of individual's identity through multiple meanings of linguistic signification of "sex-as-matter" and "sex-as-instrument of cultural signification" (Butler 50). The linguistic signification of gender performativity is expressed in:

...a phoneme as distinctive element of meaning, [that] belongs to language as Symbolic. But the same phoneme is involved in rhythmic, into national repetitions; it thereby tends toward autonomy from meaning so as to maintain itself in a semiotic disposition near the instinctual drive's body (Kristeva 135).

Gender performativity is an instinctual drive for individual's intellectual pleasure, political necessity and cultural necessity for identity. Cultural influence or corporeal action in the "plasticity of language" reveals gender identity. Through various acts and in different ontological status body becomes performative.

Gender performativity in the ontological reality of social reification and literary subjectivity subverts the idea of writing as a "masculine territory" (Butler 159). As body establishes the image of a person, language has the manifestation of self. One transcribes his/her psyche in the performance of language that further represents the self. While French critics and theorists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigary and Helene Cixous view woman's performance is opposing and challenging sense in literary presentations, the Anglo-American critics like Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter and Germaine Greer analyse feminine gender performativity in geographical, linguistic and cultural paradigms of writings. Patriarchy influences and introduces gender consciousness artificially and culturally by generating a consciousness. The archetype of gender performativity builds individual's image in Immanuel Kant's 'categories', building the rational under the universal law, Noam Chomsky's 'acquition device', moulding the human mind for language acquisition, Jean Piaget's 'schemata', cognating the acquisition blocks of the mind, and Michael Fordham's 'innate release mechanism', stimulating a response in the neural network. Woman in her 'semiotic' and 'symbolic' articulation of language expresses her gender difference in the consciousness built under social influences.

Language is the medium for self-revelation because the expression of body mediates between individual's understanding and perception. Language authenticates the body through the lived experiences of life. Body is the 'corporeal ground of our intelligence' that speaks about the essentiality of sentiments and feelings with biological power. In literary structures one finds biological imagery in women's writing that reveals how language speaks the body and body speaks the language in different connotations. Biological differences connote our language differently due to the sexist aspects of language. When man's writing proceeds with male prerogatives, "women's writing proceeds from the body" (Burke 851) American feminist theorist Nancy K. Miller calls it "the body of her writing and not the writing of her body" (271). Performativity conceptualizes our situation in society that resonate our body. With the feminist movement women's language is getting the new primers with passion for life in its scientific,

poetic, political, intellectual and theoretical interpretation. Feminism has influenced gender performatives in women's writing for liberation.

In a patriarchal set up woman speaks man's language in which she not only feels uncomfortable but gets deintellectualized in an epistemic violence that patriarchy enforces on her. On the issue of language she fails to decolonize her in willy-nilly revolution. In fact this prompts her "to invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that does not leave speechless but that loosens the tongue" (Leclerc 179) in a psychological revolution. As women prefer silence as they do not perform in their language they remain outside the historical process. Woman as a gender category do not face the challenge for not inventing their language, nor do they make themselves capable to speak for them or perform for their status and concern. Any advocacy for woman's language is a political gesture which she knows will be riddled in masculine connotations. Mary Hiatt in her The Way Women Write (1977) mentions that every linguistic performance is gender specific and in case of woman "Feminine language must, by its very nature, work on life passionately, scientifically, poetically, politically in order to make it vulnerable" (Chawaf 177-78).

The archetype of gender performatives is in the 'playful pluralism' of feminist criticism, "the only critical stance consistent with the current status of the larger women's movement" (Rich 35). In the structures of speech and creative writing activity gender performativity provides an investigation into human psychodynamics. In the study of humanities gender performativity is marked with an awareness and sensitivity. With the recognition and conceptualization of 'third sex' and legalization of gay relationship same sex relationship is still adjudged as 'obscenity' in 'the policing of sexuality'. In the archetypal structures of patriarchal consciousness homosexuality and gay relationship struggles to become a right in "the battle of sexes". Psychologists and socio-linguists differentiate the gay and queer category from others for their 'logocentric' expressions. Creative writers, activists and sociologists think that they can define their body and demystify their feelings and concerns. They reject other's interference to analyse their body as the 'ultimate site' for perceptual entertainment. The archetypes of gender performance in literary creativity are taken as a site for experiment in new criticism, cultural materialism and poststructuralist thinking. In the postcolonial context the rigid definition of gender faces the challenge due to different social activism. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) category express their concerns, anxiety and intense feelings in their logocentric performance. The intervention of judiciary has given a fresh life to this category in recent times. Body becomes the ultimate site of all discourses on gender, sex and sexuality as their voice in logocentric expression reveals their inner feelings with an urge to express that the same sex love is not inferior to men's love for women. Same sex love is no more considered a sin or a crime in religious bias or an illness in medical science. In the biologic and dialogic discourse gender becomes performative in ideational and hypothetical analysis. Both in textual criticism and theoretical analysis of gender impulse, instinct, sexuality, heredity, perversion and degeneration gender performativity is studied to normalize human relationship. The invisibility of sexuality in gender performativity is well defined in Focault's The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969).

Writing is a performance. In critical practice and methodologies of literary interpretations gender performativity becomes apparent. From the understanding of a literary text gender specific features give the opportunity "to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connections between textuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psychosexual identity and cultural authority" (Gilbert 36). Bio criticism does not invoke anatomy risks of the phallic and ovarian theories of art but it develops the psychological function of the gendered categories as 'a *priori* tendency', the creative tendency in imaginative power. In the usefulness and delicacy of language while 'women's writing' conceptualizes feminine gender as the 'generative power' in men's writing and critical practice, male voice evokes the essentiality of biological paternity of understanding of a literary text. In literary interpretation it will be absurd to say that language is free from gender conscious both in expression and description. Secondly, in articulation of language by masculine and feminine genders is different in 'semiotics' and "phoneme' forms. Language can be same when it is spoken by a man and woman but they do not speak in same way. Body language and articulation methods become the indications of the gender of language user. Moreover, corporeal action has its linguistic signification. Man can speak a language in feminine tone artificially or in vice versa but this cannot bring the naturality, genuineness and authenticity to the gender performance of the language. Two men or two women do not speak in similar way but their language in speech act distinctly becomes gendered.

To conclude the archetype of gender performativity one finds it as a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors and continues in the collective consciousness. With an extension to Austin's performativity in linguistic expression one observes it a normative process in "social temporality" (Austin 14) and language variation. Butler estimates historical and psychological theory in interactional and ritualistic function to affirm that "gender is always implicated in any performance of sexuality.... And necessarity sexualized" (Cameron and Kulick 143). Gender is inherited in consciousness, symbols, images and character within the universal, historical and cross-cultural symbols or expressions. This makes Butler say:

If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction (192).

Since gender is a cultural inscription and culture is historical the both make it archetypal in individual's *modus operandi* and *modus Vivendi* as a *prima facie* or a *priori*. Gender performativity is an inner and outer expression of the individual's 'fabricating mechanism' and intelligibility, and requirements of deconstructive politics. Performativity opens the possibility for proliferating gender configurations for which "Gender can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived" (Butler 193). However, gender performativity is an accomplished, internalized and stylized act in anatomical facticity, philosophical polarity, historical and anthropological congruity white helping "to unify and integrate our literary experience" (Frye 99) in gender corporealization.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Lady Lazarus: An Expression of Saddest Thought

\*Dr. Samir Kumar Sharma

## Abstract

This research paper discusses Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" known as confessional poem from objective and subjective points of views. It has been emphasized that the expression of personal experiences can also make great poetry and Sylvia Plath has done it by transforming her despair, disillusionment, and frustration into great and immortal work of art. She gives expression to the holocaust of the second war and the trauma, pain and death of the Jews in the concentration camps of the Nazis under the leadership of Hitler. Plath who identifies herself with a Jew finds the world totally meaningless and therefore, wanted to commit suicide. Two times she could not succeed but succeeded at the third attempt. This paper is about Plath's unequalled capability of making a balance between experience and thought, thought and expression and expression and language.

**Keywords:** Confession, disillusionment, suicide, concentration camps, Germans, Jews

The idea of death has been the most important theme of literature all over the world. Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Sophocles'

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*King Oedipus* deal with the theme of death. Not only literature but philosophy also endeavours to understand and reveal the mystery of death. Almost all the philosophers and creative writers have given maximum space to the theme of death in their own ways. Human life should be virtuous and be led in such a way that after death Paradise is regained. The only difference among the critics as well as the creative writers is that whereas one group such as T.S. Eliot deals with this theme in an objective way and considers the emotion of art to be impersonal, the romantic poets such as Keats and Shelley prefer to remain subjective and for them there is no harm if the emotion of art is personal.

In our days attachment, involvement, personal experience and feelings are being given prominence. That is the reason feminists and dalit critics opine that the suffering of women and dalits can be best expressed only by them. They question as to how those who have not suffered can portray suffering simply on the basis of being witnesses. Unless pain is experienced, it cannot be expressed.

In the above light if we read "Lady Lazarus" by Sylvia Plath, we find that the poem is an artistic expression of her own suffering. Sometimes we wonder how a person who encountered death three times, suffered a lot, passed through unspeakable mental torture could write in such a brilliant way and make her suffering her extraordinary song. It is here that Shelley's unforgettable line comes to our mind- "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought" (To a skylark 89-90)

"Lady Lazarus" was written on 23 October 1962 and was recorded on BBC on 30 October 1962. In the morning of 11 February 1963 Sylvia Plath committed suicide. If we study this poem in this background, we find that Sylvia Plath is not only an artist par excellence but also a writer/person extraordinary.

"Lady Lazarus" begins with the lines-

I have done it again

One year in every ten

I manage it- (1-3)

The poet initiates the poem with personal account but soon the tone is changed artistically –

A sort of miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade, (4-5)

and she controls and manipulates experience by means of metaphoric transformations. Her sense of personal, internal disintegration / disorder in death is generalized by allusions to the notorious Nazi commandant who had a lampshade made out of a human skin. By referring to the terrible /horrific acts of the Nazis done on the Jews during the second world war, Plath identifies herself with the Jew and points out the incidents of history related to discrimination (racism in the case of Nazis and misogyny in the case of patriarchy), extermination and genocide (the Nazis were the first to technologize mass slaughter), and degradation of human life and collective pillage, loot and plunder. The Nazi commandant used flaved Jewish skins, after the latter were exterminated, to make lampshades; skulls and limbs to make paperweights, and extracted gold fillings from the teeth of the already slaughtered Jews to melt and convert them to bullion gold, subsequently hoarded in Swiss banks. The first four stanzas are about the comparison of the narrator with the burnt bodies of the Jews in gas chambers. The narrator is very familiar with her personal history and she has measured her life with her bitter experiences and not 'with coffee spoons' of Eliot's Prufrock.

The image evoked is that of the Nazis who were 'infamous' for using the skin of the victims as lampshades and soaps. Even the 'foot' is metaphorically used as a paperweight and so not used for walking. This foot will not take her anywhere. It suggests that life surreal image moving at all. The surreal image of 'face' refers to the awful treatment of the Jews by the Naziz, who made fine linen from skin.

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The next four stanzas are about the personal experience of the narrator describing her first attempt of suicide and after hospitalization her rebirth. The expressions 'The grave cave ate' underlines ubiquitous nature of death that is present everywhere, 'And I a smiling woman is an echo of W.B. Yeats' line 'A sixtyfour years old smiling man' in "Among School Children". 'And like the cat I have nine times to die' the narrator has reversed the saying 'nine times to live' in order to put emphasis on death rather than life. 'One year in every ten' is about her repeated attempt of suicide. The narrator is aware of that she is wasting her time and considers it a trash 'what a trash'. Million filaments (slender wires in light bulbs or thin fibres in plant or animal structures) suggests her dilemma. It is said that only the wounded persons can understand the wounds of the other. For the sufferer general people are peanut crunchers seeing somekind of show in the circus or the theatre. She is the seashell-tight to herself, darkened and closed off from the world. The reference to suicide in the line 'The first time it happened I was ten' is based on Plath's life when she swam out to sea intent to drowning herself without any plan. Echoes of the death camp victims parallel with that of the narrator's suffering. The image of the fire's dying down suggests that only the ash is left, there is neither flesh not bone because the flesh has been turned into soap and there is wedding ring (reference to her failed marriage) and a gold filling from a tooth. The last lines suggests that lady Lazarus will rise up in altogether a new entity with red hair capable of devouring men simply by breathing them in. The use of the phoenix image suggests that the lady will ultimately be victorious. The equation of her personal sufferings with the experiences of the tortured Jews makes the world of "Lady Lazarus" the world of death, suicide and resurrection. The poem stands on two myths simultaneously. One is a religious myth taken from the Holy Bible's Gospel narrative of John (11:18, 30, 32, 38) according to which Lazarus the brother of Martha and Mary, lived in Bethany, near

Jerusalem. When Lazarus died, he was raised by Jesus from the dead after he had been entombed for four days. This miracle inspired many people to believe in Jesus as the Christ. The other myth is that of the legendary bird Phoenix which is said to resurrect itself from its own ashes, every five hundred years. Various personae and postures have been adopted to give expression to the horrific experiences at the Nazi camps. The persona identifies herself with the Jew in the Nazi camp. Needless to say that the world she was living in was the Nazi camp and she the Jew and by this way she has intensified her suffering.

Plath presents in this poem her lifelong flirtation, infatuation, with suicide, and like Lazarus of the myth, she survives each brush with death. The lines-

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well. (42-44)

are often cited as the centre of Plath's obsession, but actual suicide mocks at their efficacy. Dying is certainly not an art but writing well about dying is surely a great art and what is important here is that Plath did exceptionally well the latter.

Plath has presented her attempts of suicide in terms of the theatrical act and the world around her is like the audience crowd/ shoves in to see. She mocks the readers' curiosity about her death and then she counter-attacks the male sensibility which must pay attention to her.

The readers will have to pay the 'large charge' not in monetary terms but in emotional terms, for what they get from watching that their macabre awe at the way she presents herself as an 'imaginary Jew' cremated to bones and ash-marks the readers' complicity in the masculine version of human life which is so degrading. She hates the system of life. She makes the readers see that she is a live woman writing the poem and she will die into its images, the blood, bone and ash, to nothingness, and then

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rise as a fierce consciousness accosting and taunting the readers in the poem's speech. The readers are Christ to her; they are the air she breathes because their minds give her new life; she eats them as a flame eats air. Her imagination inflames the readers' conscience. She makes herself immortal in her works.

In the final sections of the poems there is an invocation to Herr God, Herr Lucifer in which there is no self mockery (Herr is the German word for Mister). The warning 'Beware' sounds as though a dangerous circus animal has escaped and refuses to perform anymore. The lioness turns on trainer and audience alike, baring her claws instead of her wounds, and revealing her untamed power for the first time. She gives everyone a bigger charge that they wanted or expected.

'Lady Lazarus' is an allegory about the woman artist's struggle for autonomy. The female comes back from the dead– on her own–without the help of anyone either man or God. It was Christ who brought Lazarus back from the Dead but here she is without Christ-assertive her independent creative powers. This stanza refers to some incident in Plath's life, or to belabor the fact that Herr God may be a representation of her father or her husband. They (the father and the husband) were the usurpers of her artistic powers, and they are defeated. She is a phonenix, a flame of released bodily energy.

The poem is confessional in the sense that Plath uses personal experience as material, which is formed into a highly wrough poem. Plath made three attempts to commit suicide and here the persona of the poem does the same. It is a social poem with a strong didactic intent and social criticism. It is a work of art revealing excellent intellectual and technical ability.

Plath employs stanzas of three lines. The tone is casual and non-serious nature of the thought content. This style is apt to the development of the theme of Plath's own dehumanization. Her revolt and triumph over the murderous Nazis by turning vengeful herself has been superbly presented in the poem. She considered writing as a religious act. In an entry for 12 December 1958 she defines writing in the following terms:

Writing is a religious act: it is an ordering, a reforming, a relearning and revolving of people and the world as they are and as they might be. A shaping which does not pass away like a day of typing or a day of teaching. The writing lasts: it goes about its own in the world.... You do it for itself first. It brings in money, how nice. You do not do it first for money... The worst thing would be to live with not writing. (Journal entry for 12 December 1958, pp. 436-437)

We are simply amazed to see the exceptional artistic control of Plath on language as well as on poetic style even when she was mentally distressed. The literary devices like alliteration (words begin with the same consonant sound like 'face a featureless'), anaphora (repeating the words or phrases in a clause like 'I do it feels real'), enjambment (carrying the line straight on without punctuation into the next line (like A sort of walking miracle, my skin Bright as a Nazi lampshade,), metaphor (the use of a non-literal word in lieu of the actual word, or phrase as 'I am your opus, 'I am your valuable'), prosopopoeia (the person who is absent is represented as speaking like 'A miracle'), simile (comparison between one thing and another such as 'and like the cat I have nine times to die') and rhyming scheme tell a lot about Plath's excellent control over the technical aspect of poetry. It is in her poems that we find a superb and matchless balance between experience and thought, thought and expression, expression and language.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Diasporic Space and Identity in Contemporary Hindi Movies: *Namaste London* and *Patiala House*

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### Abstract

Contemporary Hindi cinema plays an important role in the negotiation of national identity. For decades, the expatriate Indian served as a counter-example for acceptable behavior, a living testimony of inappropriateness. In the mid-1990s, the Non Resident Indian (NRI) in Hindi cinema became the epitome of Indianness and embodied at once capitalist and consumerist modernity. NRI-centric films are openly utilizing the Diasporic characters as a safer experimental platform to negotiate the complex issues of identity. The film's multiple subplots, tackling a wide range of issues among the Diaspora, offer an engaging explanation of India's portrayal of its expatriates as a socially liberal, and hybridized ethnic population within their host societies. There is a visible deviation of Hindi cinema from a dominantly Indian industry to the sphere of transnational cinema through images of the NRI. The well paid market of Indian Diaspora and an uneasy transition period made the Globalized Bollywood do this. The first generation's nostalgia arises from watching Bollywood movies, and, for their children, who have never seen India before; Bollywood movies enable them to romanticize their homeland. Diasporic

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communities look at their homelands to visualize their identities. The paper explores the influence of Bollywood movies in the Indian Diaspora's identity construction.

**Keywords**: Diaspora, identity, space, Bollywood, NRI, Indianness.

## Introduction

Historically, the Indian Diaspora has struggled to maintain a comfortable relationship with the homeland wherein physical and ideological disconnect often overshadowed any traditional commonality. Nevertheless, the media has consistently remained a tool the Diaspora has used to connect with their Indian heritage and culture. The expansion and global broadcast of premier Indian television channels such as Zee TV, Sony Entertainment Television, Doordarshan, and Star Network have consistently brought homegrown cultural entertainment to the Diaspora. These media channels have delivered popular serials such as the hugely successful television adaptation of Ramayana, and then the onslaught of family saga soaps in the '90s. The increasing presence of NRI characters in the new wave of Bollywood films is signaling an obvious break from the traditional themes of nationalism and citizenship, while the notion of "Indianness" is still evident, albeit in a different form "American Dreams, Indian Soul."

A recurring reference in most texts dealing with diasporic representation in Bollywood is the film *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (*DDLJ*, Dir. Aditya Chopra, 1995) which is seen by many as a pioneering film. Yash Chopra films have since then set the trend of big-budget productions based on Diasporic characters. The films of Yash Chopra have consistently utilized Western locales as spaces for Indian characters to live out their fantasies. In his films, primarily in the 1980s and 1990s, Chopra has led the way in eroticizing the West and even paving the way for Hindi films to completely shift their narrative base to foreign locations. Karan Johar has emphatically contended this NRI movement. His first film, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), a college love triangle, was set entirely in India among the upper-middle class. However, the second female lead, Tina, is a woman who was born and raised in England but decides to transfer from Oxford University to come to Mumbai's Xavier College, where the first half of the story takes place. Johar's second film, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, or *K3G* (2001), was a grand family saga in which the narrative starts with an unimaginably affluent family in India and then continues to the wealthy suburbs of London. In Kal Ho Na Ho, through a multifaceted storyline, Johar presents issues of regional politics, sexuality, generational divide, communal tensions, and disability, all under the overarching umbrella of a dysfunctional NRI family.

Diaspora suggests the scattering of seeds. It is important to think of this image when defining Diaspora. The plant is from one particular area i.e. the "homeland," and the seeds move to other areas away from the plant to create a new home. The migration of people from one place to other is not a new phenomenon, but these communities overseas are linked to their origin and show a typical religion, language and culture. This gives them ethnic identity. They develop their own net work of communication. All the modern means of communication are used to express nostalgia and cherish memories. The new public culture of Indian Diaspora has Indian films as a model of celebrity. The first annual International Indian Film Awards were recently convened in London in 2000 suggests that Indian cinema, although a national cinema, has deterriotized so that its boundaries are no longer identical to those of the nation-state. (bharucha, 2014)

With the Indian Diaspora being the largest and fastest growing Diasporic community in the world with numbers in the millions deposited in various countries, these nonresident Indians have become an important market of popular culture as well as a site for its production. First generation NRIs desperately try to hang on to the values that mark their difference from the rest of the nation-state. The NRI population produces and reproduces "India" through Bollywood films and is "crucial in bringing the 'homeland' into the Diaspora as well as creating a culture of imaginary solidarity across the groups that make up the South Asian Diaspora". Bollywood then "brings the global into the local, presenting people with shared 'structures of feeling' that in turn produce a transnational sense of communal solidarity. The various Indian diasporas are, in a sense, imagined communities that read Bollywood Cinema as a very culture-specific, self-contained phenomenon without any critical reference to other" national cinemas. Bollywood then takes on a new meaning and significance in their lives. The bond between themselves and India "has been one of imagination. With time, as memory of 'roots' -the real India-was fading away, films took over the responsibility of constructing an empty, many-colored space through its neverending web of images, songs, 'dialogues' and stars". Bollywood then creates its own public space for people to interact. Instead of yearning for the roots of one's homeland, the culture is reconstructed from an imagined homeland culture in new surroundings. In many instances, the individuals that make up the Diaspora have no desire to return "home" but do desire to be connected for reasons of identity and cultural values. Bollywood amply provides a romanticized version of Indian culture for them to connect with. Diasporas not only consume the culture of Bollywood, but Bollywood also consumes the culture of the Diaspora.

#### **Diaspora Stories**

The Bollywood film industry's use of the NRI situation as the main focus of films is a newer phenomenon. By doing this the industry enlarges its terrain and produces films that directly target the Diaspora groups. Concrete examples of such films are *Patiala House* and *Namastey London*. The commonality between these two movies is they take place outside of India for the most part and are an example of Bollywood appropriating the Diaspora story; they also include many of the characters taking on

Westernized versions of their Indian names, i.e. Nikhil becomes Nick and Jasmeet becomes Jazz, and they are all popular films.

**Patiala House** (2011) explores the conflicts in sporting allegiances due to ethnic belonging, forces us to question how sport, religion, and nationalism are interconnected and become relevant in local and national circuits. The film is the story of Sikh patriarchial family of Bauji (Rishi Kapur), Bebe (Dimple Kapadia) and their son Gattu (Akshay Kumar). Bauji becomes a sikh champion of sports in Southall, England, creating a mini Punjab there. Bauji is faithful in possession of tradition, showing typical Indian fatherly figure. He is deeply religious, follows all codes of patriotism. This becomes the reason of clash when Gattu, canot play on national level as Bauji would never ever allow him to play against India. The two generations of Diaspora show two different shades of Indianness. Their senses of identities are different. Gattu, a bona fide British citizen exemplifies Glocal Indian, and Bauji expects him to show respect to his mother India whatever the location may be. The influences Bauji's personality shows are cultural and religious which are difficult for Gattu to understand. Bauji is the example of Diasporic struggle of first generation.

All the other family members too are forced to follow the professions under the shadow of Indianness. The daughter who aspires to become a rap singer is forced to sing Bhajans and Kirtans, the boy who wants to become a chef is compelled to become Jalebiwala, and the same obligation is for Gattu. The story shows interesting twists and turns to intensify the complexities. The film becomes good example to discuss the changing concept of Diaspora identity. The typical mother of our hero, Bebe, represents the similar helpless side character, a wife of a patriarch, Bauji. In this way or that, Bebe, too shows typical Indian wife, which is not much changed in course of time. The popular culture like cinema has not changed its view to depict the mother in Indian movie from *DDLJ*'s Lajjo, to *Patiala House*'s Bebe. While other female characters in the film are not so passive.

Simran (Anushka Sharma), being a hybrid character, is different from other female. She is the embodiment of confidence and identity. She is born of a white, British mother, is in charge of her nephew. She becomes responsible to motivate Gattu to play for England. This feminine character transforms Gattu and leads the story to the happy ending where the conflicts of plural belongings come to an end. She reunites Bauji's household to Gattu's cause. Though the film is not about Simran, she is the pivot of the relationship between father and son.

Globalization has reconfigured the links between sport, nationalism, and gender in the production and dissemination of identity and belonging at home and in the Indian Diaspora. (De, 2013)

*Namastey London* The film espouses peculiar sentiments regarding the 'homeland' and the character of Manmohan Singh, the NRI father figure and patriarch who constantly harks back to the glory of his birthplace. More importantly however, the movie focuses on Manmohan's attempt to bring together the two 'worlds' of East and West through matrimony between Arjun, who, born and brought up in India epitomizes Indian masculinity, and his daughter, Jasmeet, a rather westernized girl of Indian origins. The prominent themes in this film are the clash of cultures and the generation gaps, the obvious issues that surface, but the screenplay's colonial references also plays a major part in this romantic comedy. "I'm just the Indian father of an English daughter," sighs Manmohan Singh (Rishi Kapoor) when confronted with his daughter's westernized life.

Our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie, 1991)

Jasmeet or Jazz is interested in a British playboy who proposes to her; however, her father wants her to consider an Indian man and suggests that she go to India before she makes her decision. Manmohan secretly has a plan to get her married on the trip to Arjun whom they meet in India and are friends with the family. It is obviously an ill-match, Jazz slyly agrees, but when the family returns to Britain, she tells them that the marriage would not be recognized in Britain because it was not registered in India before they left. She has plans to marry the British playboy Charles. Jazz continues to make arrangements with Charles, but after visiting India, she has a slow but new found pride for her heritage, which Charles and some of his British friends do not appreciate nor understand. Jazz slowly begins to develop a connection with Arjun whom she has to start spending more time with since Charles is not interested in planning the wedding, after all it will be his fourth marriage. Her transformation towards recognizing her identity, thanks to their trip to India, leads the movie to the expected ending.

The film tries to show the conflicts between the generation of NRIs born in India and their British-born and raised children. The theme reminds us of other films like *Pardes* and *Aa Ab Laut Chale* which, as the names suggest, deal with ideas of homeland and belongings. There is craving to return to homeland. The NRI situations in *Namastey London* are evident even by the tagline, "A British brat meets a 'Punjabi' boy" (IMDb). However, when watching the movie the themes are even more apparent. The mixing of British and Indian cultures and trying to identify or negotiate those boundaries in a true coming of age tale from Jazz and Imran's behavior, the audience receives many points of view from the Diaspora community. The film also to a lesser extent highlights the culture shock of coming to a new country with Arjun's tale.

The film is full of dialogues which emphasize India's greatness. The repartee between Jazz and Arjun are entertaining. The main concern of the director is the generational and culture gap between the father and the daughter. He is also concerned with the confusion present in modern day relationships. The film is also about identities which are confused and insecure. The British are shown as insensitive snobs: the Indian-born kids are debauched smokers. The hero is a reincarnation of goodness and representative of Indian values who sees the heroine in a towel in her bedroom, and preserves her modesty by pulling the door shut. The film abounds with such and many more stereotypes. The film provides instances of patriotic imagination, and how notions of the homeland translate into fierce nostalgia and nationalistic zeal on the one hand, and integration and westernization on the other. The movies scrape the tip of the iceberg when discussing films that target the South Asian Diaspora. However, these films are among the most popular and needed to be discussed further. There is no doubt the South Asian Diaspora uses Bollywood to construct elements of its cultural roots, and the films act as a way to transport Indian culture to places where it is not as prevalent. Bollywood has an extremely important place in the hearts and minds of NRIs and their connection to the homeland whether they consciously recognize it or not.

#### Conclusion

Films discussed encompass how the concept of identity in the modern world is corollary to the corporate symbol of Globalization. Gattu becomes the contemporary Diasporic personality of ambivalence, in terms of cultural inheritance and negotiation of identity. All the Indian patriots today have to admit that playing for England doesn't make him a traitor. The cricket must have been deliberately chosen in the film for dealing with communal and cultural issues. The transnational films today show not only the humane facets of Indian Diaspora without focusing on their status, but also inculcate overseas actors like Katrina Kaif and Jacqueline Fernandez. It is a symbol of modernity and power to overcome barriers. There are films which directly deal with the issue of migration. Some of these films go even further and revert to the old approach of the NRI as a perverted Indian whose redemption can only happen at the cost of relocation into the homeland. These few examples reveal that, since the mid-2000s, while NRIs

continue to bring in money at the box-office and therefore to assert their presence—positive or negative—on the big screen. The film in past few years have continued this trend of showing NRI heroes as champions of ethnic nationalism and unabashed liberalism. The NRI, not so much of a role model anymore, has become one of the normalized figures of Indian society on the big screen. The world economic crisis or return migrations cannot stop the Diaspora hero to fully integrate into the mainstream imagination of Indianness.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Feminism in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe

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### Abstract

Among the women writers of the new generation of Indian English writers who have presented the regional beauty and the lushness of the vegetation in their word picture in exceptionally realistic manner along with the feminist issues, the name of Anita Nair has a very significant place. Anita Nair's second novel *Ladies Coupe* presents the various facets of feminine sensibilities and women's predicament in the society through the stories of six female characters centred round the main protagonist Akhila's struggle to survive alone in a patriarchal society.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Patriarchy Journey, Sex, Love, Marriage, Independence, Loneliness.

In her second novel *Ladies Coupe* Anita Nair uses the fictional strategy of the ladies compartment to bring her six characters together. All of them have their own stories to narrate. However each story illuminates the central story of Akhila who is alone at 45 and wondering whether a woman can survive alone. Akhila born into a Brahmin family, her parents happily married, finds herself the person in charge after her father's death. She gets a job in the Income tax department and gets her sister and

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brothers on their feet. At 45 she finds herself with no life of her own, deeply lonely and yet too conservative to seize any happiness she might have found along the way, but then the other women's lives showed the other facets of the female predicament. The women are bound by their common human experience. They are other faces, other possibilities of Akhila. All these lives form a kind of mirror in which Akhila may see her reflection made whole so that she may move to grasping the happiness she has a right to. Indeed, at the very end, Akhila is empowered to reclaim her lost love. Here Anita Nair tries her hand on feminist theme.

In a very dramatic way the novelist introduces her protagonist Akhila:

So this then is Akhila. Forty-five years old. Sans rosecoloured spectacles. Sans husband, children, home and family. Dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience. Aching to connect. (Nair, 2)

As the above lines indicate Akhila is a spinster. After the death of her father she got the job of a clerk in the Income tax department. Being the eldest child of her parent she bears upon herself the responsibility of her entire family. She spent her time and money on the education of her two younger brothers Narayan and Narsi, and her younger sister Padma. Narayan joined the tank factory as a machinist. Narsi became the first graduate in the family and then, the first postgraduate. He found a teaching job. Padma, her younger sister also became gradually young. All of them were married and started leading their life in their own way caring little for their elder sister Akhila who has also some feelings. She also wants to lead her life as a woman. Throughout her life she has been leading the role of elder sister and bread winner of the entire family. In the role of elder sister she forgot to lead a life of her own. But when her brothers and sister were married and started leading their independent life, she got an opportunity to think about herself. But still there is some problem. When Akhila decided to live alone in her house, her sister Padma objected. In fact Padma has been living with her family in the quarter of Akhila and taking care of the house. But she cannot allow her elder sister Akhila to lead a family life because in that case she has to vacate the house. At last Akhila comes up with her decision that she is going to live all alone in her house. Her decision arouses tremor in Padma's life and she calls her brother Narayan to persuade Akhila. Here Akhila quite boldly asks everyone:

'Has any one of you ever asked me what my desires were or what my dreams are? Did any one of you ever think of me as a woman? Someone who has needs and longings just like you do?'(206)

Akhila's brother and sister are stunned to hear all these things. Narayan tries to handle the situation by saying that they are very much concerned about her seeking to soothe, console and heal the bruises of Akhila : 'Which is why I'm afraid for you. How will you cope? This is not a reflection on who you are. How can any woman cope alone?'(206) His concern touched Akhila but she had her answers ready. 'I know I can. I did once before when you were children. Now I can for me, for Akhilandeswari. Nobody's daughter. Nobody's sister. Nobody's wife. Nobody's mother.' (207) Now Akhila has decided to seek the woman in herself and satisfy the longings of that woman. She also wants to seek an answer to the question 'can a woman cope alone?' (22) In order to celebrate her independence as a woman and to find an answer to her question Akhila for the first time in her life goes on a long journey to Kanyakumari. She gets her reservation somehow in a lady coupe in the second class sleeper compartment. During her train journey she meets five other lady passengers who in course of their journey become quite intimate and shares the events of their lives with one another. The narration of their life stories reveals different facts about the life of a woman and that is the core of the novel. Ultimately Akhila finds an answer to her own life in their stories. The conversation starts among the ladies in the compartment. They start giving their introduction one by one. Prabha Devi, a co-passenger asked Akhila, 'Did you choose to remain unmarried?' Akhila replied:

'I didn't choose to remain single. It happened that way,' she said. When she saw the curiosity in their eyes, she elaborated, 'My father died and I had to look after the family. By the time they were all settled in their lives, I was much too old to marry.'

'You are not all that old,' Janaki said. 'You can still find yourself a good man....'

Akhila leaned towards her and said, 'As far as I am concerned, marriage is unimportant. Companionship, yes, I would like that. The problem is, I wish to live by myself but everyone tells me that a woman can't live alone. What do you think? Can a woman live by herself?' (20-21)

First of all, Janaki, the co-passenger starts narrating her life story. Janaki married Prabhakar when she was eighteen and he was twenty-seven. Theirs was an arranged marriage; the horoscopes matched, the families liked each other and they were considered perfectly suited for each other. Janaki didn't know what to expect of marriage. On her wedding night, when her husband touched her lips with his, she could not understand this strange behavior. She had never been alone with a man in a room, with the door locked. The company of men had always been frowned upon and suddenly because she was married they said it was all right for her to be with him, let him touch her and even undress her.

'He is your husband and you must accept whatever he does,' Janaki's aunts had whispered as they led her to the bedroom adorned with jasmine and scented with incense sticks. (25) Their marriage remained unconsummated for more than two months as Janaki did not allow her husband to do sexual intercourse with her. In the beginning, Janaki understood that the performance of sexual intercourse is the meaning of marriage because every night her husband tried to play with her body and did not allow her to sleep

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without sexual intercourse. In course of time, Janaki herself started taking interest in her physical union with her husband. Then one day Janaki discovered she was pregnant. During her pregnancy her fondness for copulation decreased and she did not allow her husband to play with her body. Her husband took care of her. For every big and small needs she depended on her husband. When a male child was born to them, it became a centre of attraction for both of them. They understood that their son bore their image in the world. When Janaki developed sleeplessness, her husband Prabhakar never forgot to give her a sleeping pill at night . Thus Prabhakar didn't forget his place as a husband, father and provider. Janaki is also happy that there is someone to take care of her. The domineering nature of Prabhakar, however, forced Janaki to think that she could lead an independent life even without a husband.

The fourteen-year-old Sheela, another co-traveller shares her experiences of life with Akhila. She is quite young in comparison with other fellow travelers but she has an ability to perceive what others cannot. She has been quite intimate with her grandmother who has played a great role in grooming her personality. Her parent do not understand her much and that is why her father rebukes her quite often on even a paltry thing. In her childhood Sheela was quite fond of her grandmother who was sixty-nine years old at that time. The grandmother was old but she did not like to be called old and that is why she spent much of her time and energy on her make-up. The grandmother used to give advice to Sheela's parent about her movement as she was growing young. She insisted that Sheela be asked to stay at home after she came back from school. 'She's a grown-up girl. You shouldn't let her wander around. And who are all these men she plays badminton with? She may call them "Uncle" but they are not her uncles and how dare that man Naazar put his arm around her? She's not a little girl. And I saw the look in his eyes... If you don't take care, you'll regret it one day.' (65) The grandmother was a great one for manifestations of femininity. She appraised carefully every new woman she saw and most of them were found wanting. 'You call that a woman! A proper woman has a good head of hair and a chest full of breasts. And a womb that blossomed readily.' (67) The grandmother used to share her experiences as a woman with Sheela who was growing to become a woman. One day the grandmother said to Sheela, 'You remind me of myself when I was your age. Except that I was more buxom and womanly. You don't eat enough. You are so skinny. No man will want you for a wife. Men don't like bones in bed. Men like curves.' (68)

On the other hand, Sheela's father always wants to control and dominate her. He does not allow her to mix up with others and lead an independent life. For Sheela, he turned into a hideous beast. Nothing Sheela did was right. He picked on her and found fault incessantly: 'You don't help your mother enough. Your friends are not our kind of people, they're riff-raff! You watch too much T.V. You wander around all the time. Who taught you to say 'shit' in every sentence? Who is that boy I saw you talking to near the park gates?' (69) Thus Sheela grew to be a young charming girl under the advice of her grandmother and constant criticism of her father. She is a young girl who wants to lead an independent life but she does not provide the answer to Akhila's query that 'can a woman live alone?'

Prabha Devi, an elderly lady is a co-passenger and she also shares her experiences with Akhila. She was born in a good family and lived a life of plenty. She wants to enjoy her life within the limited freedom granted to her by her husband and society. Prabha Devi was eighteen-year old when her father settled her marriage with the only son of a prosperous diamond merchant. The bridegroom Jagdeesh was good-looking and smart; his family pedigree was excellent and Prabha Devi was lucky to marry into such a fine family. After marriage there were stray moments that parted themselves from the morass of nothingness and clung to the walls of her mind. Cobwebs of fleeting happiness; a ripeness of joy that overwhelmed Prabha Devi with a single thought in its wispy wake. She felt, 'How lucky I am to be me!' (172) Her husband Jagdeesh was very much caring and he did not want to dominate his wife in any way. That is why, when Prabha Devi wanted to swim in the lily pond in their garden, he did not object. A month later, Prabha Devi was radiant with excitement when Jagdeesh was taking her with him on a business trip to New York and on the way back, they would stop over at London. Prabha Devi felt as if her life had just begun. At New York, Prabha Devi adopted the dress of that place which sometimes worried her husband. Now Prabha Devi felt she was finally a woman of the world sans the slouch, the downcast eyes and the sari pallu weighing down her youth. She looked to be a bold and beautiful woman of a foreign country. She wanted to enjoy her life and that is why she did not want child for some years. In order to avoid pregnancy she requested Jagdeesh to use condom during sexual intercourse. She also shared with Akhila about her encounter with her admirer Pramod. Being attracted by the beauty of Prabha Devi, one afternoon Pramod came to her house and started taking sexual advances. At first Prabha Devi could not resist his advances as she was completely shocked at this behavior. But soon she recovered and slapped him. After all she is a respectable lady and she can't allow anyone to play with the prestige of her family. Thus, 'Prabha Devi became the woman her mother had hoped she would be. With eyes forever downcast and busy hands; embroidering, pickling, dusting, birthing babies, preserving order and bliss in the confines of her home and all the while chanting to herself: this is who I ought to be, this is the way to be happy.' (183-184) Prabha Devi had a daughter and a son. Hers has been a blessed family. In the beginning she had to take great care of her children. But as they grew, they did not want any interference from their parent and this gave ample time to Prabha Devi to think about herself. Prabha Devi had a great passion for swimming and now she decided to pursue her passion. She bought her swimsuit from the shop from where she used to buy her normal clothing.

Overcoming her shame, she put on her swimsuit and jumped into the pool water to learn swimming. Of course, there was a trainer who made her work easy. What the novelist wants to show is that Prabha Devi is not a traditional woman confined within the four walls of her house. She is bold enough to pursue her hobby and yet be a good wife and a mother. Both Janaki and Prabha Devi are satisfied with their status. They live happily with their husbands and think that a woman cannot live alone. Husband is the necessity of every woman. Sometimes they also crave for their freedom but they can't cross the limit. They are satisfied with their traditional life. Margaret another co-passenger passes her comment on two elderly ladies Janaki and Prabha Devi: 'They are nice women but they are the kinds who don't feel complete without a man. They might say otherwise but I know them and women like them. Deep in their hearts, they think the world has no use for a single woman.... The truth as I know it and as I live it is that a woman needs a man but not to make her feel whole.' (94-95)

Margaret Shanthi is another co-passenger whose words brought a deep impact on the mind of Akhila. Margaret is a married woman. Her husband Ebenezer Paulraj is Principal of a reputed school and she is a chemistry teacher in the same school. Margaret met Ebenezer in the church and fell in love with him at first sight. Ebenezer was plainly dressed and looked apart from the general lot. Not only that he was a good singer and when he started singing a song, Margaret was deeply influenced and she decided to have him at any cost. Although their marriage was a love marriage, it was solemnized only after the proper approval of their guardians. After their marriage both of them lived happily. Their families also were much happy with this marriage. Margaret described her experience after her marriage:

In that first year, my love for Ebe worked like a solvent. It loosened the tenacity, weakened the purposefulness that had until then been a part of my mental make-up. I was so drunk on my feelings for him that all I wanted to do was be with him. Please him. Show him in a thousand ways

how much I loved him. Everything else was unimportant. (104)

Eighteen months after their marriage, Margaret discovered that she was pregnant. She was very happy and she wanted to inform her parent also about her happiness. But her husband Ebenezer convinced her about abortion: 'Let's wait till we're both settled in our careers before we have our baby. We have each other. What more do we want?' (105) Margaret agreed for an abortion but she was very much shocked at this decision of her husband. Since then her relationship with her husband became quite bitter and she started finding fault in her husband.

In fact, Ebenezer was a self-centered man and due to pressure of work in school he did not pay proper respect to feelings of his wife. Due to this, a kind of gap was created between wife and husband. On the other hand, Margaret's family grew to love and admire Ebenezer even more. They saw him as a successful man, a respectable member of the community and a good husband. When Margaret tried to talk to her mother about her bitter experiences with Ebenezer, she dismissed it saying, 'It is normal to quarrel with one's husband. Everyday won't be the same when you've been married to a man for years.... it is a woman's responsibility to keep the marriage happy. Men have so many preoccupations that they might not have the time or the inclination to keep the wheels of a marriage oiled. Ebenezer is a busy man. The principal of such a large and prestigious school. You must understand this and behave accordingly. Not greet him with your glum silences and bitter words when he returns home after a day's work.' (112) But Margaret retorted, 'What about me? Don't I have a right to have any expectations of him? Don't I work as hard as he does and more because I run the house as well? Why do you think he is busy and I have all the time in the world? Shouldn't you as my mother be on my side? Shouldn't you as my mother be on my side? (112) But her parent don't want to disturb the idyllic world of their conjugal life by interfering in their affair. They want peace and happiness in this relationship and for this they expect that their daughter should adjust herself according to the situation. Margaret, on the other hand, is a working woman. She has to work in school and she has to work at home also to please her husband. But this is too much for her. Being a working lady she has her own limitation and she expects that her husband should at least understand her situation. But Ebenzer behaves with her as a super boss both at school and at home. The personality clash of wife and husband is destroying the otherwise happy conjugal life. As per the advice of her mother, Margaret thinks it her duty to keep her conjugal life happy by sacrificing her wills and desires. She goes on cooking for her husband. Afterwards a girl is born to her and somehow or other she wants to remain happy. Margaret got off at Coimbatore. But before leaving, she said, 'Akhila, if there is one virtue I have, it is immunity to what people think of me. Naturally this makes them dislike me even more. People don't like to think that their opinion of someone means nothing to that person. And when it is a woman... the thought is intolerable. But like I said, I don't care. I'm not saying that you ought to think like I do. But you'll discover that once you stop worrying what the world will think of you, your life will become that much easier to live.' (136) Margaret's advice appeals to Akhila very much. Most of the time we think what others will think of us and due to this thinking we do not take proper decision in our life at right time. But once we come out of this others' dictates, we enjoy our life. Margaret's story in fact opens the eyes of Akhila who has been facing the tough question of her life-can a woman live by herself? Now she gets the answer to her question.

The last co-passenger who narrates her life story to Akhila is Marikolanthu. She introduces herself in the following words:

My name is Marikolanthu. I am thirty-one years old. I was born as a little village called Palur near Kancheepuram. I have a son and no husband. My parents have been dead a long time and I have severed all ties with my brothers. I work as a helper in a mission hospital. (211)

The story of Marikolanthu appleals to Akhila very much because she has a son without being married to anyone. As Marikolanthu has stated she was born in a village, her mother started working as a maidservant in the house of the village landlord. The house was enormous, with countless rooms and annexes. Marikolanthu used to help her mother in her work. So she used to accompany her mother. She looked beautiful and attractive. One day, strange thing happened with Marikolanthu. When she was going to the Chettiar house in the evening passing through a dense orchard, Murugesan, the Chettiar's nephew caught her and raped her. Marikolanthu was so much shocked at this incident that she could not tell her mother anything. She tried to forget about it but she can't. She had to tell her mother about this incident when she came to know about her pregnancy. Her mother tried to abort her pregnancy with the help of her distant relative who was an expert in such cases. Both mother and daughter lived in the house of their relative for the treatment but the medicine did not work. In the fixed month Mrikolanthu gave birth to a male child. The child looked quite healthy and attractive. Thus she became a mother without marriage. After the death her mother, she was driven out of the house by her brothers and thus she had to work in a hospital for her survival.

Thus the life stories of the co-passengers inspired Akhila very much. Being inspired and invigoratd she went to Kanyakumari to enjoy her life in her own way. She does not care for traditional morality. Akhila hires a room in a hotel at Kanyakumari. The hotel is by the beach and she gets ample time to watch the waves in the sea either by sitting in her room or walking by the side of the beach. From her balcony, she can watch the sun rise and set. Every morning and evening, she goes out for a walk. Sometimes people stare at her. They are not used to the sight of a single woman all by herself. But Akhila doesn't care any more. Her interaction with her fellow passengers has awakened a new consciousness in her. The novelist has clearly pointed out this change in the personality of Akhila: But Akhila is certain that she won't let her family use her any more. Look at me, she would tell them. Look at me: I'm the woman you think you know. I am the sister you have wondered about. There is more to this Akka. For within me is a woman I have discovered. (270)

In order to honour the woman within her, Akhila interacts with a young man on the seabeach and satisfies her sexual hunger by indulging in sexual intercourse with him. She wants to assert herself as a woman without caring for the traditional morality. Thus we see that the novel *Ladies Coupe* is the story of a woman's search for strength and independence. The novels of Anita Nair can be compared with the novels of Anita Desai which are replete with the feminine consciousness. Her delineation of women is the most charming feature of her fiction. Her women are neither stiffjointed stuffed marionettes, nor are they vague and floating shadows. They are the specimens of full-blooded, free and sensible womanhood, moving in the living world with all the free actions of life and instinct.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Portrayal of Draupadi in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* and Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*

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### Abstract

Draupadi, the epitome of Indian womanhood and an unpredictable heroine stands as a role model for a contemporary society. The eminent Indian women novelists Pratibha Ray and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reinterpret the story of Mahabharata through Draupadi's perspective in their works, The Palace of Illusions and Yajnaseni. This paper analyses the characteristics of the two texts. The authors have taken the character of Draupadi from Vyasa's creation as their key figure. In the novel The Palace of Illusions, Divakaruni focuses on different themes. One of them is Draupadi's destiny. As a child, she hears Vyasa's prophecy that she will become the wife of five men, the mistress of wonderful palace and she is the cause of a universal conflagration. Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as an expert in fine arts like drawing, painting and sewing. In Yajnaseni, Ray presents an objective account of women's emotions, desires and their problems, assessing Indian womanhood's confrontation with stark reality through the

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character of Draupadi. Ray never pays attention to other characters which are very significant in the original Mahabharata. She has the ability to understand and depict female agony which is presented in the great period. Vyasa has created Sri Krishna as the hero in the epic *Mahabharata*. But Ray makes Draupadi as principal character for her novel. In the depiction of human relationships both Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Pratibha Ray compete with each other. The authors have tried to present a realistic picture of life, in its varied forms through different characters and situations.

**Keywords:** Multifaceted, Gender Discrimination, Divine Friendship, Inspirational Woman.

The authors Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Pratibha Ray have selected Draupadi, one of the most significant figures in the epic Mahabharata as their protagonist. Divakaruni has written the novel The Palace of Illusions based on the life of Draupadi. In this novel Divakaruni illustrates the life story of Draupadi into different chapters. In Yajnaseni Pratibha Ray portrays the character of Draupadi as an ordinary woman. She has written this novel in her mother tongue Oriya. Pradip Bhattacharya has translated this book into English. In her novel the story starts from Svargarohana parva. In the novel The Palace of Illusions Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as the heroic figure. She explores the plight of the woman through the character of Draupadi. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as a powerful, strong and independent woman, an equal to men around her. Vyasa portrays Draupadi as a mysterious woman of Mahabharata. But in the novel The Palace of Illusions she appears as an ordinary woman with many imperfections and shortcomings. Irrespective of her sincerity in performing her wifely duties towards her five husbands, she feels distress. Vyasa does not recognize the female agony. After analyzing the characteristics of the texts, The Palace of Illusions and Yajnaseni, we find some similarities and differences. Here, both the authors have extracted the plots for their texts from the epic *Mahabharata*. They have taken Draupadi's character from Vyasa's creation as their key figure. Through utilizing first person narrative technique their women characters as narrators of the novels, make them speak their mind and express their self-doubts, fears, guilt, smothered anger, self-sacrifice and silence that have haunted them throughout their life.

In Yajnaseni, the story is narrated through feminine consciousness. Ray presents an objective account of women's emotions, desires and their problems, assessing Indian womanhood's confrontation with stark reality through the character of Draupadi. Neetika observes that "Pratibha Ray's Yajnaseni displays courage in challenging and questioning the male dominated practices that render women helpless. She maintains silence and even in her silence she keeps thinking and questioning her predicament." (Neetika 203) She interprets Draupadi as a modern woman with an identity of her own. Vyasa and other Vedic philosophers have envisaged Draupadi's character in the classical feminine tradition. She is sophisticated, knowledgeable, well versed in fine arts, warfare and even in the game of dice. Pratibha Ray uses the epic facts and modulates them with modern feminine outlook. In addition to this, she has added new features to the personality of multifaceted character Draupadi. She successfully maintains faithfulness and legitimacy while the re-visioning of her text. Dr. Sanchitha Choudari opines that

The atrocities of Yajnaseni have not only been reflected in this story but also carry with the real-life connection between mythology and reality. (Choudhary:252) (There is at least a bit of Yajnaseni in every woman.)

In *Yajnaseni*, Ray never pays attention to other characters which are very significant in the original *Mahabharata*. She focuses on one of the female characters in the text. She has the ability to understand and depict female agony which is presented in the great period. She brings to light the pathetic picture of Draupadi waiting, especially waiting for the beloved:

I was decorating Palguni's room I was decorating his garden, his library, sitting room I decked myself lie a virgin bride. Let not Phalguni feel that twelve years had gone by and that I had grown older by twelve years. (Pratibha:197)

Nilanjana S. Roy points out that:

Representations of Draupadi in Indian Literature have sometimes been controversial, but often rewarding. In Pratibha Ray's classic Yajnaseni, Draupadi comes through as woman of fierce independence, struggling to balance her passions against her dharma. (Roy: The Business Standard)

Divakaruni focuses on different themes. One of them is Draupadi's destiny. In the novel *The Palace of Illusions*, as a child Draupdi hears Vyasa's prophecy, that she will become the wife of five men, the mistress of a wonderful palace that she eventually lost and she is the cause of a universal conflagration. Divakaruni portrays Draupadi as an expert in fine arts like drawing, painting, sewing and decorates with the age-old auspicious designs. She is better at composing and solving riddles and writing poetry. Balu Vijaya Raghavan opines that:

Divakaruni's version is notable among the other Mahabharata novelizations not only for trying to include more of the original stories but also for its lack of compelling protagonist. (Balu:<u>www.academia.edu/8262623)</u>

Divakaruni has adopted feministic concept from the epic for her work and has added imaginary situations, imaginary history to the original story. She has introduced the imaginary characters like Dhai Ma and Sadhubaba. These characters have not appeared in the original text. She narrates the story through Draupadi's perspective. She has tried to depict the ordinary woman's mind set through the character of Draupadi. The relationship between Draupadi and her brother Dristadyumna drags main attention of the readers. The Character of Dristadyumna appears from the beginning of the novel. Divakaruni makes this character as supporting character to the main character. She has interwoven the situations in the new palace which is created by Maya. She portrays Draupadi as learned woman in many fine arts like mathematics, drawing, cooking, flower decoration etc. In Yajnaseni, Ray creates Draupadi as poet without training. But in the original text Vyasa never says Draupadi is a poet.

In creation of Sorceress character Divakaruni has deviated from the original text. She makes this character as skilled trainer of Draupadi. In Ray's version this character is not identified. Divakaruni introduces Dhai Ma who has an intimate relationship with Draupadi from the beginning to the end and makes a significant figure. This character appears like a well-wisher of Draupadi throughout the novel. Draupadi shares her sufferings, thoughts and feelings with her. It is reviewed in *The Sunday Times:* 

Panchali, in the final reckoning is a weak, malleable character. She is unlikable, consumed by her ego, lacking the essential humanity that makes us love our heroes; the only thread that keeps the reader concerned for her is the memory of other, more fully fleshed Draupadi. Divakaruni seems to have juxtaposed one of the near-identical, female protagonists of her previous books onto an epic setting. But positioning an indistinct character in a grand plotline cannot make the transposed character inhabit that skin comfortably by default. One wishes that Divakaruni had been bolder, dared to manipulate the epic in a manner that could have made this truly hers. (Saranya Manivannan Review: 13 April, 2018)

Divakaruni describes the fascination of Draupadi towards Krisha portrayed in her own words:

...I adored the way he laughed... I often forgot that he was much older than me. He had been friend of my father's... he was genuinely fond of my brother; but I had the impression that it was I whom he really came to see. He called me by a special name, the female form of his own; Krishnaa. It had two meanings; the dark one, or the one whose attraction can't be resisted. Even after he returned to Dwarka, the notes of his flute lingered in the walls of our cheerless quarters. (Divakaruni: 12)

The selection and interpretation of Draupadi in both the texts is unique. The authors have tried to bring to light the distress of female to the contemporary society through the character of Draupadi. They have proven that the sufferings of women are not only presented in the contemporary society but also from the centuries past. Their main intention is to change the attitude of the patriarchal society towards the women.

Vyasa has created Sri Krishna as hero in the epic *Mahabharata*. But Pratibha Ray makes Draupadi as principal character in her novel. She establishes spiritual love between Yajnaseni and Sri Krishna. Ray's interpretation of Draupadi's feelings towards Karna seems extreme imagination to the readers. For the depiction of love-hate relationship between Karna and Draupadi she has added incidents which have not appeared in Vyasa's text. In this concept Divakaruni's narration is also very close to Ray's version. Divakaruni portrays the secret love between Karna and Draupadi. For instance, when Draupadi looks at the portraits of the princes from various countries, Divakaruni magnificently creates Draupadi as an intelligent, educated and beautiful woman.

As Kavitha Nair says,

Draupadi in Chitra Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* journeys from being a woman repeatedly made the subject of narration by patriarchal narratives to becoming a woman who subjectivizes narration itself; in the process, over throwing the narratives that have constructed her womanhood through centuries. By becoming both the narrator and agent of action, Divakaruni's Draupadi recovers the voice of womanhood. (Nair: India, June 2011)

Generally, the stories of the Indian epics depict the lives of the heroes and their acts. They have not highlighted the lives and

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sufferings of the women. Even Kunthi, blind folded Gandhari and Draupadi occupied vital places in the original epic, Vyasa has not created these characters greatly.

It is said that without woman no country or society achieves an overall development. Though she is the backbone of her family and society, she is treated as secondary in this patriarchal society. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Pratibha Ray depict their female characters to react against classical patriarchal system. The thematic concerns of these two novels included domination of patriarchy, gender discrimination, divine friendship, women suffering, polyandry and myth. Both the authors depict Draupadi's secret love towards Karna which Vyasa doesn't describe in his epic. They bring to light the life history of tragic hero Karna. They have tried to show the greatness of this character. They explore another theme Draupadi's friendship with Sri Krishna. They have created fraternal relationship between Sri Krishna and Draupadi. They introduced new characters like dhai-ma and sadhubaba in The Palace of Illusions Neetambini in Yajnaseni which we have not seen in Vyasa's Mahabharata.

In the depiction of human relationships both Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Pratibha Ray compete with each other. The two novelists have tried to present a realistic picture of life, in its varied forms through different characters and situations. The relationship between wife and husband, brother and sister and Sakhi and Sakha has been depicted by the authors of *Yajnaseni* and *The Palace of Illusions*. In the epic *Mahabharata* Vedavyasa has introduced every woman as someone's mother, wife, daughter or sister. So, the woman does not have an identity of her own. But in these novels Yajnaseni and Draupadi's character has grabbed attention of the readers. Both the authors create her as inspirational and empowering woman to the modern society.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## English Language and Teaching Practices

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#### Abstract

Teaching English in schools and colleges leaves much to be desired. Today it is just one-way traffic sans students' active participation in the learning process. To remedy it emphasis should be on Task Based Learning, Inquiry Based Learning, Discovery Learning, Cased Based Learning, Project Based Learning. Communicative Language Teaching is particularly focussed on the learner which is by far much better than class room activities. Some other reading activities are suggested for example, Jigsaw Reading, Dramatic Reading, Dialogues, Letters, Diary, Dictations, Story etc. Improving speaking skill is as much desired.

Keywords: Colossal, Acquisition, Brochure, Autonomy

English language, willingly or unwill-ingly, has come to stay and is been taught in Indian schools and colleges for the last 150 years or so and for the last fifteen to twenty years the necessity to acquire the language has reached colossal proportions keeping in view the global employment scenario. In most of the cases desired

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results have failed to show up and the most prominent reason for the failure is that our students rarely get any opportunity or are never given an opportunity to use the spoken language. Our language teaching methodology has been besotted with the provision of content in the form of short stories, essays, poems and rules of grammar. Students generally get used to rote learning in any subject and reproduce it from their rote memory. They are attuned to this form of language learning as they are assessed and evaluated in this aspect only. A fleeting glance at the English language question papers at school and college levels ascertains the truth that the students are mostly tested for their memory and not for their creative and critical thinking as well as other language acquisition skills. As end products, our students miserably fail in using the language even after fifteen long years of English language learning at both school and college level and so struggle in the work environment.

Against this background there is a dire necessity to take a thorough introspection and reflection on our English language syllabus, teaching and learning methodologies. Within the constraints that one works in our educational administrative set up, as teachers, one has no say regarding what should go and should not go into syllabus. However, as teachers we have clear bearing on the teaching methodology that we adopt and adapt. Our Indian educational system as well as the classroom is undeniably teacher centered where the teacher is looked upon as the savior of students' academic life. Teacher is the doer, speaker, performer and what not. Teachers wallow in their demygod like status and also at the same time total responsibility of learning lies on the shoulders of this solo performer. Students are perceived as empty bowls, tabula rasa, which are titled up with teachers' scholarship. Cooperative participation is strikingly absent in the classroom. Hence a change towards better teaching learning scenario is the need of the hour. All over the world a paradigm shift is taking place towards student autonomy and lending importance to the authentic needs of student. This teaching learning process is widely acknowledged as Student Centered Methodology (SCM). The present paper attempts to look at the efficacy of these methods in an English language classroom.

The implementation of student centered methodology in a language classroom is carried out well with the execution of recent trends like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBL), Project Based Learning (PBL), Inquiry Based Learning, Discovery Learning and so on. After providing a brief idea of the methods listed here an extensive discussion on the practice of CLT in our English language classroom, the approach that provides far reaching solutions to many of the problems faced in a language classroom, is carried out in a detailed manner.

A task in **Task Based Learning** is defined as an activity "where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome"-Jane Willis. In a task-based lesson the teacher doesn't predetermine what language will be studied as the lesson is based around the completion of a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it. The teacher introduces the topic and gives the students instructions on what they will have to do at the task stage and might help the students to recall some language that may be useful for the task. The students complete a task in pairs or groups using the language resources that they have as the teacher monitors and offers encouragement. Students prepare a short oral or written report; practise what they are going to say in their groups and then report back to the class orally. After an analysis of the student presentations the teacher selects language areas to practise, based upon the needs of the students. The students then do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language.

The essence of **Inquiry Based Learning** is to make inquiry which implies involvement leading to understanding. Furthermore, involvement in learning implies possessing skills and attitudes that permit one to seek resolutions to questions and issues while he constructs new knowledge. **Discovery Learning** is an inquiry based learning method. Discovery learning takes place most notably in problem solving situations where the learner draws on his own experience and prior knowledge to discover the truths that are to be learned. Case Based Learning teaches important concepts and facts within the context of authentic or real-world situations. Further, this learning reduces the need for "inert" knowledge which is acquired information that is difficult or impossible to apply to realistic situations, because language was learned in a "chunked" fashion; based on context or in relation to reality. Project Based Instruction is a holistic instructional strategy that builds on children's individual strengths and allows them to explore their interests in the framework of a defined curriculum.

**Communicative Language Teaching** is in a way similar to these methods mentioned here as it also focuses on the learner. However all these methods mentioned could be used in other content based subjects while CLT has special focus on language and language acquisition skills. The basic tenets of CLT are that language is primarily for communication and so as per Hymes (1972), the goal of language teaching is to develop "Communicative Competence" that is, the knowledge and ability a learner needs to be communicatively competent in a speech community. It enables students to communicate in the target language by providing them with the knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings and functions. Students use the language to a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role-plays and problem-solving tasks. The main objective of CLT is to decrease Teacher Talk Time (TTT) and increase Student Talk Time (STT). Another characteristic of CLT is the use of authentic materials,

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as it gives students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used. Activities in CLT are often carried out by students in small groups in order to maximize the time allotted for each student for communicating.

Teacher in CLT is looked upon as an adviser, a facilitator, a 'co-communicator' (Littlewood 1981). Student is entrusted with responsibility of his learning in this situation. He /She co-operates with fellow learners thus leading to 'cooperative learning'. They work on all four skills i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening. The target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students team from these classroom management exchanges and realizes that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied. Both accuracy and fluency are evaluated. A teacher can informally evaluate his students' performance in his role as an adviser or cocommunicator. For more formal evaluation, a teacher is likely to use an integrative test which has a real communicative function. In order to assess students' writing skill, for instance, a teacher might ask them to write a letter to a friend. Errors of form are tolerated during fluency-based activities. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators. The teacher may note the errors during fluency activities and return to them later with an accuracy-based activity.

Communicative language teaching attains its authenticity and veracity through the class room communicative activities that are extensively used in teaching learning process. The activities are not just learner and learning centered but teacher oriented too. Teacher is equipped with many classroom management techniques while the learner is provided with cooperative learning techniques. To name a few, some teacher aiding techniques are eliciting, giving instructions, pair work, group work etc. The learning process also is strengthened with many communicative activities which are basically looked upon as fluency activities and accuracy activities. "Fluency is natural language use occurring when the speaker engages in a meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence", defines Jack C. Richards in his article. "Communicative Language Teaching Today". He maintains that a student negotiates meaning using communication strategies and he contrasts fluency practice with accuracy practice which focuses on creating correct examples of use. In fluency based activities focus is on natural and meaningful use of language, achieving communication, use of communication strategies and linking language use to context. The end product language of these fluency based activities is not always predictable. Accuracy based activities focus on classroom use of language, formation of correct examples of language, language out of context, small samples of language that may not require meaningful communication. The outcome is generally predictable as the output language is controlled.

Encompassing all the four language skills CLT activities that can universally be used with improvisations on the part of teachers are surveyed. Classroom management activities like pair work and group work certainly benefit the learner as well as the teacher. Two students doing activities in pairs or few students working in small groups inherently have the advantage of confidently trying out language they know in the privacy of peers. Further there is less or no fear of being wrong and the students benefit from listening to peers, negotiate turn taking, use language purposefully and cooperatively, try out communication strategies like checking understanding, paraphrase to get around an unknown word, reformulate other people's ideas, and supply words and phrases for other speakers. In group work, learners perform a learning task through small-group interaction. Learners in a class that is divided into five groups get five times as many opportunities to talk as in full-class organization. Other advantages are; it fosters learner responsibility and independence, improves motivation and contributes to a feeling of cooperation and warmth in the class. There is research that indicates the use of group work, improves learning outcomes. The success of group work depends on careful and effective organization. One important aspect to be taken care of is to give instructions of what is to be done and they have to be given before the commencement of group work. Both for pair and group work, a demonstration or an example of the activity helps the students to perform better. Repetition of instructions by students would be a useful strategy to check the comprehension of the given instructions. Time limit must be set and preview of language in terms of vocabulary and grammar would be highly substantiating the preparation of group work. The teacher has to monitor closely the work carried on by the groups and help the students when necessary. Allotting roles like time keeper, notemaker and presenter would check passive and hyperactive participation of students.

Eliciting means drawing out information, language, ideas, etc., from the students. It is a technique based on the principles that students probably know a lot more than we may give them credit for. Effective eliciting includes conveying a clear idea to the students, perhaps by using pictures or gestures or questions, etc. They then supply the appropriate language, information, ideas, etc., and finally teacher gives them feedback. Generally language ideas, feelings, meanings, contexts, memories, etc., are elicited. The language is learned through a process of guided discovery and it seems likely that it will be more memorable because of the degree of student involvement in the learning.

The teaching of basic three language skills i.e. reading, writing and listening in CLT follow PWP method. PWP method elucidates the process of pre activity-while activity and post activity. In case of reading, pre reading activities like prediction, using background knowledge and skimming are used. While-reading activities include chunking, scanning and organizing. Some CLT reading activities are:

- 1. Jigsaw Reading.
- 2. Dramatic Reading.
- 3. "Cast" the Story-Students choose well-known film stars to act in the movie version of the story. Students must justify their choices.
- 4. Movie Poster-Students design and draw a poster for the movie version of the story. Students present their poster and justify their design.
- 5. Dialogues: Between 2 characters who do not share a scene in original story; Student meets and interviews a character from the story; one Student becomes a character, the other Student(s) interview; one Student becomes the author of the story, the other Student(s) interview (Post reading).
- 6. Letters: As a character in a story; To a character in a story
- 7. Diary-Students write a diary as one of the characters.
- 8. Rewrite the Story-from a different character's point of view, or with a different ending, or with a surprise plot element.
- 9. Student-Made Reading Tests.
- Student-Made Cloze: Students in pairs, same paragraph; Pair writes 2 different clozes, same text; Exchange 2 clozes with another pair; second pair tries to complete orally, back to back.
- 11. Dictations: Classic, Missing words, Back to back, Shouting etc.

(Courtesy: ELF Work Shop, George Bishop Junior, Senior English Language Fellow. U.S. State Department)

'Listening' too follows PWP method. Prelistening activities help students use their background knowledge about the setting, topic and language associated with them so that they can anticipate and predict what they will hear. Purpose for listening is set in

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advance through visuals, topic related discussion, prediction and pre-teaching of needed' vocabulary and structures. While listening, students are expected to take notes, note down information, accomplish a task. Repetitive listening takes place during this phase moving from general to specific. While listening is followed by post listening activities like reading, writing or speaking.

Writing has five step writing process which once again falls into PWP model. Pre-writing activities like brainstorming, clustering, webbing, mind mapping, diagramming can be used to gather the needed information on any topic. While actually writing organization in the form of grouping and outlining takes place. It also includes rough draft, revision and the final draft. Some CLT writing activities can be:

- Paragraph, Essay and Ideas: Introductions, Interviews (Student descriptions)-An important person/favorite person/ friend; Favorite place or thing; Morning person or night person; Weekends / Weekdays; Recipes; Funny or Scary Story.
- 2. Relaying Instructions: Building models; Drawing pictures; Giving directions; Writing commands: "Mary, take off your left shoe."
- Exchanging Letters: Writing messages that ask for a reply: To John: What kind of house do you live in?-From Maria; Advice Column: "Dear Professor X"; Letters of Complaint: "Dear Complaint Department".
- 4. Group Writing: News broadcast, Class bulletin, Tourist brochure, Advertisements, Group fairytale.
- Other Writing Activities: Stories from pictures, I am the Curtain, Poems, Pen Pals, Journals (courtesy: ELF Workshop, George Bishop Junior, Senior English Language Fellow. U.S. State department)

'Speaking Skill' which has always been considered the most difficult one to be accomplished has been presented quite innovatively in CLT where meaningful use of language in real life is on the focus. This skill, as the other skills, is integrated into other language acquisition skills. Essentially 'speaking' is not approached through PWP model as speaking, in CLT, takes place continuously. However many effective speaking games and activities such as information gap activities (Student A has some information which Student B doesn't have), opinion gap activities (Ex. Starting a new civilization), preference line etc. can be employed to generate good amount of natural talking. CLT researchers and experts have worked extensively on communicative activities that could be used to teach vocabulary as well as grammar. Vocabulary may be presented through translation, pictures, realia, pictograms, mimes, synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, giving examples, providing definitions, providing a context and so on. While teaching grammar teachers should first show learners an example of how grammar is used to communicate information. The example of grammar structure that learners see before learning about the structure should have a context-a situation or theme that connects all the words or sentences. The example should also be interesting for the learners and give as much information as possible about the different forms of the structure. Some suggested activities for grammar practice are Picture Cue, Situation, Free Practice, One Word Substitution, Scrambled Sentences, Repetition, Cloze / Fill in the Blanks and Multiple Choice.

So in ELT, if the teachers follow a few teaching practices mentioned above, language learning will take place effectively.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Text to Screen: A Study of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and its Screen Adaptation

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#### Abstract

Partition Film can now be considered as an important genre in Indian cinema. This type of cinema is the representation of the tragedy of violent and gruesome turn taken by the history of Indian independence with the partition of the subcontinent in the form of two nation states-India and Pakistan. In fact, the genre comes out as a sort of discourse-cinematic discourse that undertakes reviewing of the historical discourse of the nation. Nationalistic historiography so far focuses upon the deeds of great men and few women so as to project them as makers of a nation, very conveniently speaking less about the slaughter and displacement of millions, and nothing at all about the violation of the dignity of women during the partition of British India into India and Pakistan. There are many writers who, very courageously and sensibly penned down milieu of that tragic moment in their stories, plays, novels, and poems. Apart from these verbal art narratives there exist equally strong representations of those moments in visual narratives-cinema too.

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The present paper is an attempt to discuss Pamela Rook's 'Train to Pakistan' which is the screen adaptation of Khushwant Singh's novel of the same title. Published in 1956, within a period of less than ten years of India's freedom, one of the earliest novels about partition, Train to Pakistan is considered as a classic in partition literature. As is the case with this literature, the writers, in a sense, try to rewrite the history of modern India from below, from the subaltern point of view: counter to the nationalistic school of historians where nothing or very less is said about the plight of masses during the bloody shift of power from the British to the natives. Khushwant Singh narrates the tragedy of partition from the perspective of a tiny village near the Radcliffe line on the Indian side thereby presenting partition from a very naive angle. The story is set in Mano Majra, on the bank of Sutlej with a small railway station nearby. It's a predominantly Sikh village most of whom are landowners along with a small number of Muslims who mostly are peasants, workers and only one Hindu family of the moneylender Ramlal who is killed by the dacoits in the beginning of the novel. Utterly oblivious of the attainment of freedom and the carnage going on, the simple Mano Majra dwellers experience the horrors only when the Sikh refugees from across the newly drawn border seek shelter from them, the corpses floating on Sutlej from the same direction not only make them aware of the slaughter but also put lives of the few Muslims amongst them on stake. Centuries of harmony and brotherhood between Sikhs and Muslims is shattered but 'love' between a Sikh goon Jugga and Nooran, daughter of the blind, old Mullah of the village emerges as saviour of the people when a bloody madness is unleashed all around them. Partition literature portrays these common people as heroes over the 'great', so far glorified by the historical records. Jugga, the dacoit, saves the train full of Muslims from a planned, deadly retaliatory attack by the angered and avenging Sikhs, safely seeing off the train to Pakistan in which there is his Nooran carrying their 'love' in her womb across the line into the newly formed state. As far as Partition Literature is concerned 'train' is a recurring motif since it were the trains that carried millions of refugees from both the sides; many of them dying during that journey which makes the title highly significant.

Being the daughter of an army officer who had escorted one such train across the border, Pamela Rooks could have felt it her responsibility to weave her cinematic narrative around a train. After having gone through the hurdles of censor board, with a few audio cuts, her film was released in 1998, the decade of the demolition of Babri Mosque in Ayodhy in 1992, Mumbai bomb blasts in 1993-the crucial decade in which the disruption of communal harmony became more and more visible hence making the film highly significant in the changing milieu at the dawn of a new century. One may claim it as an attempt so as to remind us all the warning by George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Narratives, be it verbal or visual, many times serve as reminders of our historical mistakes or wrongs through the stories they tell. Partition literature and cinema fall in this category, far apart from the mainstream cinema.

Broadly speaking, partition cinema can be categorized as historical films upon which Cinema Studies elaborates as:

Authenticity is the key term where historical films are concerned, at least in terms of the production practices... The narrative focuses on a real event in the past, or the life of a real person. Often highly fictionalized, the historical film invests the moment or person with 'greatness'. 'Authenticity' serves a different purpose in this context. In this respect, historical films have ideological function: they are serving up the country's national history before the eyes of the indigenous people, teaching us our history according to the 'great moments' and 'great men or women' in our collective past-our heritage on screen. (Rooks, 185) Applying this to the partition films one can say that these films are the authentic representations of that terrible historical episode but as far as the 'ideological function' and 'serving up the country's national history' is concerned, they come out as a sort of counter ideology and rewriting of history from below, from the common people's point of view and 'greatness' then, it becomes clear, goes to these human beings who, amid the chaos and violence, stood guards to the humanity. Rook's is an attempt that comes out as a bold statement upon communal forces disrupting harmony and national integration during the troubled last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The researcher here tries to understand significance of this film with the help of *mise en scene* analysis.

Analysing the cinematic narratives that is film criticism suffers from, to use phrase coined by the American New Critics, 'heresy of paraphrase' that is too much emphasis on what a literary text means than how it means. Most of the time, film reviews consist of just a summary of the narrative contents neglecting almost all its material qualities and here comes the importance of the French term mise en scene which literary means "putting into the stage". It was first used in 1950s by the French critics who borrowed it from the French Theatre. In film criticism it includes everything seen by the camera: the setting, the lighting, the actors, their performances, costumes, make up, props and also takes into consideration as to how these are arranged within the frame. In brief, mise en scene is the shot's composition. It enables a film critic to read cinema as a text in order to understand all the vital aspects of that narrative; how all the different elements and techniques work together and tell a story, evoke an atmosphere, give the audience information, provoke an audience response, and highlight key themes.

To begin the *mise en scene* analysis, one must take into consideration the settings-the places or locations where the narrative enfolds. According to Andrew Dix, "Whether expansive or narrow, magnificent or squalid, artificial or naturalistic, film settings require our close attention. They are not merely inert containers of or backdrops to action but themselves charged with significance at the basic level, locations serve in narrative cinema to reinforce the plausibility of particular kinds of story." (Dix, 13) What reinforces itself in front of the camera is the setting of which time, place and social environment are the main components.

Broadly speaking, setting for, Train to Pakistan is a tiny village Mano Majra near the newly drawn line of partition of British India into India and Pakistan. Specific locations where major sequences take place are the small railway station near the village, river Sutlej nearby, a bridge on the river, guest house where the district magistrate dwells, Chundunnagar district police station and jail, a small Gurudwara, a Mosque, house of the Hindu village moneylender Ramlal, village centre, sugarcane fields, the blind Muslim Mullah's house, and Jugga's house. The film is set in postindependence and post partition period as it becomes clear with the narrative voice over of Hukumchand- the magistrate who is worried about communal harmony in the disturbed time. With the titles accompanied by lively soundtrack, the director suggests how the village routine depends upon the train passing from the small railway station which Khushwant Singh has drawn in detail at the outset of the novel. This harmonious life of the village is disturbed when the trains go irregular and one day a train full of slaughtered Hindus and Sikhs stops at their small and apparently insignificant railway station from across the newly drawn border. The simple, happy villagers-Sikhs and Muslims living like brothers for centuries too feel the pangs of impending separation and the distrust intensifies when Sikh refugees start trickling there seeking shelter after having lost everything in their previous homeland. Administration, police convince the few Muslims to leave their ancestral village so as to save them from the wrath of these refugees bent on revenge. In this way Mano Majra which is at the crossroads of the newly formed states serves as a microcosm of the bloodshed and politics going on at the macro level. The otherwise cheerful atmosphere strengthened by the railway station and the regular passing of the train ironically culminates in cremation ground for thousands of people carried there by the ghost trains.

The next powerful element to be analysed during *mise en* scene study is that of the props which complement the setting as Dix says, "Setting functions of substantiating narrative, signalling genre and revealing character are also performed by props: objects of whatever dimensions that appear on screen.... Props or speaking less technically, things-have also been at the centre of long-running theoretical debates over film's debates film's realism or otherwise as a medium." (Dix, 14) In Train to Pakistan, train of course is the key prop that stand for death as well as life. As the title track suggests trains provide regularity and life to the village; ironically same trains create disturbance in that life: first going irregular and then bringing the dead from across the border. In fact for the whole body of partition literature and films trains are very significant: be it indicating their migration and displacement or killing on the way. Dried wood and oil collected from the innocent villagers too are important props used for cremating dead bodies brought by the train. Knife used by Jugga to cut the rope tied across the bridge in order to kill people on the train roof turns to be a saviour prop that saves hundreds of lives and the train safely crossing the border too is an important prop.

The next important element- lighting too is crucial for the film analysis since it also generates meaning with the help of two basic types-high key lighting and low key lighting; the former using even light spread on almost everything in a particular frame and the later having prominent dark shadows. The former is generally used for comedies, musicals indicating happiness whereas the latter for mystery, horror and thrillers. Rooks however goes for the high key lighting scheme for her rendering of the partition tragedy: may be keeping it simple and realistic to depict the detached stance that states facts about partition like a documentary and not a feature film meant for mere entertainment. Costumes and simple make up for some characters are also in tune with the realistic mode that is appropriate to the historical period, occupations and social as well as religious status of the characters. Majority of the actors are from theatre hence there are quiet good performances from Nirmal Pandey, Mohan Agashe, Rajit Kapoor, Smriti Mishra, Divya Dutta, Mangal Dhillon, and M.S. Sathyu.

In this way, *mise en scene* analysis of *Train to Pakistan* makes one aware of the transformation of a classic work of fiction from text to screen in its different nuances.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Voicing Black Consciousness: A Study of the Poems of Maya Angelou

\*Dr. Vinita Kumari

### Abstract

MAYA ANGELOU is an acclaimed name among modern American litterateurs. She was born on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1928 at St. Louis, Missouri. She had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actress, composer, and Hollywood's first female director, but became most famous as a writer, editor, essayist, autobiographer, playwright and poet. As a civil rights activist, Angelou worked for Martin Luther King, Jr, and Malcolm X. She was also an educator and served a Reynolds professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University. She died on May 28, 2014.

Angelou poetic output is prolific. She is a widely read poet and her fame has been growing steadily. Her poetry has been lauded for its concern for the black people of America. She turns her attention to the lives of black people in America from the time of slavery to the rebellious 1960s. Her themes deal broadly with the painful anguish suffered by blacks forced into submission, with guilt over accepting too much, and with protest and basic survival.

Angelou enjoys the supreme honor of being invited by President Bill Clinton to recite a poem at his inaugural function. Americans all across the country watched as she

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read out her poem 'On the Pulse of Morning' which called for peace, racial and religious harmony and social justice for the people of different origins, incomes, genders and sexual orientations. It recalled the civil rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's famous 'I Have a Dream' speech as it urged America to give birth again to the dream of equality.

Angelou's poetry often benefited from her performance of it, and during her life time Angelou recited her poems before spell-bound crowds. The present study proposes to make a study of Angelou's poetry from the racial viewpoint and to show how she fights for the freedom and equality of the blacks to build a modern America which is truly democratic and impartial towards all its citizens.

**Keywords**: Maya Angelou, Litterateur, Black People, Slavery, Civil Rights, Equality.

Maya Angelou is an important name among African American women writers. She was born on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1928 and died some years back on May 28, 2014. She was a woman of many talents. She had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actress, composer, and Hollywood's first female director, but she became most famous as a writer, editor, essayist, autobiographer, playwright and poet. She was also a civil rights activist, and worked with leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X for the freedom and equality of the blacks in America. She was also an educator and served as a Reynolds's professor of American studies at Wake Forest University. For her contributions to literature and society, she has received many honorary degrees and awards. In 1993, she recited her poem, "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's inauguration, the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961. She also read her poem, "A Brave and Startling Truth" for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations in 1995. In February 2011, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honour, by President Barack Obama.

So Angelou is a much honored name in America and her fame has been growing steadily all over the world. Her writings have been eulogized for giving the black people a voice against the system of slavery and racial discrimination which has gone on in a rampant manner in the so called developed and democratic America for ages. In her writings, she craves for equality and justice and freedom from exploitation for the blacks. Her most famous poem, "Still I Rise" rings with the rhythm of rejuvenation as the black people of America announce their strong will and determination to overcome all oppression and tyranny and carve out a just place for themselves and stand on the same footing as the whites in modern America:

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. Leaving behind nights of terror and fear I rise Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear I rise. The poem has been rightly called a proud, even defiant

statement on behalf of all black people. The message of the poem is loud and clear—no matter how much the cruelty and oppression, the victim will rise up, the slave will overcome adversity. The universality of the poem is such that Nelson Mandela read out this poem at his inauguration in 1994, after having spent 27 years in prison while fighting against racism.

In fact, the voice of pain and protest rings through most of the poems written by Maya Angelou. In the poem "Africa", she goes down the memory lane to recount the history of the African continent with its resources plundered by European imperialists and its people taken as slaves. In the first stanza, she compares Africa to a beautiful woman reposing peacefully, which gives us the feeling of the start of a fairy tale. Such was Africa before its plunder by the Europeans began. In the second stanza, she movingly describes how the white invaders captured her young daughters and strong sons at gun point and sold them as slaves:

Over the white seas Rime white and cold Brigands ungentled Icicle bold Took her young daughters Sold her strong sons Churched her with Jesus Bled her with guns.

However, in the last stanza, she talks about how Africa has managed to overcome all obstacles and is on the rise again. Despite all the cruelty she has been through, now she is striding taking big steps towards a brighter future, even though once she was lying prostrate with pain. The poem is a profound testimony of Angelou's love for the land of her origin as well as its people.

Another famous poem of Angelou written on the theme of oppression of the blacks in America is "When I Think about Myself." In the poem, Angelou writes from the perspective of an aging maid to make a statement about the blacks surviving in a world dominated by the whites. The central theme of the poem is self- pride that prevents one from losing one's will in spite of experiences involving degradation. The narrator has lived for more than sixty years in "these folks' world" and now she chooses to laugh at her painful past, albeit the laughter chokes, aches and makes her cry:

My folks can make me split my side,

I laughed so hard I nearly died,

The tales they tell, sound just like lying,

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They grow the fruit, But eat the rind,

I laugh until I start to crying

when I think about my folks.

While the aging woman bewails the pitiable condition the blacks were subjected to in America, the sad plight of the black children going through malnutrition and starvation out of acute poverty has been movingly brought out in the poem, "Televised":

Televised news turns

A half-used day into

A waste of desolation.

If nothing wondrous preceded

The catastrophic announcements,

Certainly nothing will follow, save

The sad faces of bony children,

Distended bellies making

Mock at their starvation.

Why are they always

Black?

"Caged Bird" is another significant poem dealing with the servitude and oppression of the blacks in America. The poem illustrates the differences between the blacks and the whites by comparing them with a free bird and a caged bird respectively. While the free bird is ecstatic and dares to claim the sky, the caged bird is tied to its cage and sings, not to express joy, but to express its longing for freedom:

The free bird leaps On the back of the wind Till the current ends And dips his wings In the orange sun rays And dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks Down his narrow cage Can seldom see through His bars of rage His wings are clipped and His feet are tied

So he opens his throat to sing.

The poem poignantly expresses the longing of the blacks for freedom from racial discrimination in America. Angelou believes that true greatness of human civilization does not consist in material development, building big monuments and making advancements in the field of knowledge; it consists in giving every human being the required dignity and respect and freedom for personal growth. As she expresses it in the poem, "A Brave and Startling Truth":

When we come to it

We, this people, on this wayward, floating body

Created on this earth, of this earth

Have the power to fashion for this earth

A climate where every man and every woman

Can live freely without sanctimonious piety

Without crippling fear

On the themes of human rights, social justice and peace, the poem was written for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations in 1995 and read by the poetess at the commemoration.

"Alone" is another evocative poem in which Maya Angelou stresses the need on the part of human beings to exist together in harmony and peace for mutual growth and benefit. As she says:

Now if you listen closely

I'll tell you what I know

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Storm clouds are gathering The wind is gonna blow The race of man is suffering And I can hear the moan, 'Cause nobody, But nobody Can make it out here alone.

The black people's thirst for equality and social justice finds a powerful voice in another poem, "Equality," where she exhorts the white people to come out of their shell and realize the pain and the agony of the blacks:

Take the blinders from your vision, Take the padding from your ears And confess you have heard me crying, And admit you've seen my tears.

Hear the tempo so compelling, Hear the blood throb in my vein, Yes, my drums are beating nightly, And the rhythms never change.

Equality, and I will be free.

Equality, and I will be free.

One of the major cultural movements in modern America was the "Black is Beautiful" Movement which aimed to dispel the notion that black people's natural features such as skin colour, facial features and hair are inherently ugly. First coined by John Sweat Pock, the movement asked men and women to stop straightening their hair and attempting to lighten or bleach their skin. The movement was largely responsible for giving the generations of African-Americans the courage to feel good about who they are and how they look. Angelou too, though initially doubtful about her looks, drew inspiration from the movement and tried to instill a sense of self-respect among the black people by making them assured about their beauty. Thus, in the poem "Ain't that Bad?" she elevates blackness to a new level of appreciation:

Puttin' down that do-rag

Tighten' up my 'fro

Wrappin' up in Blackness

Don't I shine and glow?

Taking a jibe at the established notion of beauty being equal to fairness, she questions it by throwing a challenge:

Now ain't they bad? An ain't they Black? An ain't they Black? An' ain't they bad? An ain't they bad? An' ain't they Black? An' ain't they fine?

The acknowledgement of her talent by the world as she went on to receive degrees and honours instilled in Angelo a sense of supreme confidence and positivity about herself which is very much apparent through her much celebrated poem, "Phenomenal Woman":

Now you understand

Just why my head's not bowed.

I don't shout or jump about

Or have to talk real loud.

When you see me passing,

It ought to make you proud.

I say,

It's in the click of my heels,

the bend of my hair,

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the palm of my hand, the need for my care. 'cause I'm a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

In fact, Angelou developed a pride in her blackness with each triumph of her talent and perseverance in the white world. She succeeds in presenting herself as a role model for the African-American women by reconstructing the African-American woman's image through her works. She has debunked the stereotypes of African-American mothers as breeders and has presented them as having a creative and personally fulfilling role. According to critic Mary Jane Lupton, Angelou's journey toward self-discovery takes her from ignorance to knowledge, from silence to speech, from racial oppression to liberated life. While the caged bird is symbolic of the African-American race being denied its freedom due to skin color, the phenomenal woman is symbolic of the journey undertaken by the caged bird in its quest for self-knowledge and self-identity in order to become phenomenal. Angelou's pride in being an African-American is best expressed in her poem "Weekend Glory" taken from the volume "Shaker, why don't you sing?" Angelou is so confident about herself that not only is she not frightened but even lectures white Americans on how to enjoy themselves. This is evident in the lines,

If they want to learn how to live life right,

They ought to study me on a Saturday night.

Angelou's deep concern for the cause of the blacks in America brought her in close contact with two leading black leaders of the times, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. She even helped Malcolm X build a new civil rights organization, the Organization of African American Unity. Honoring Malcolm X for his astute fight for unity and equality, Angelou eulogizes him in the poem, "To a Freedom Fighter": You drink a bitter draught.

I sip the tears your eyes fight to hold

A cup of lees, of henbane steeped in chaff.

Your breast is hot,

Your anger black and cold,

Through evening's rest, you dream,

I hear the moans, you die a thousands' death.

When cane straps flog the body

Dark and lean, you feel the blow.

I hear it in your breath.

Both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. had to sacrifice their lives while fighting for the cause of the blacks. Their death was a great setback for Maya Angelou as well as for the whole African-American community. She lamented their death in her poem "My Guilt," which appeared in the volume, "Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I diiie",

My guilt is "slavery's chains," too long The clang of iron falls down the years. This brother's sold, this sister's gone, Is bitter wax, lining my ears. My guilt made music with the tears.

My crime is "heroes, dead and gone,"

Dead Vesey, Turner, Gabriel,

Dead Malcolm, Marcus, Martin King.

They fought too hard, they loved too well.

My crime is I'm alive to tell.

To conclude, Maya Angelou is a representative African-American voice in English poetry. She was an institution in herself. Her life is an open book. Her six autobiographies reveal the pains she had to endure and the struggles she had to go through in order to reach where she stands now. Her versatility is amazing and the

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diverse careers she pursued prove her to be a woman of immense power and energy. Her achievements have made her a role model for the whole African-American community and done a lot in instilling in them a sense of self-pride and dignity. Her poetry voices the pains of the blacks in a white America. It voices their craving for freedom from slavery and discrimination and gives a call for the establishment of a just system where all human beings live in harmony with each other, bound together by the ties of love and respect, for the differences among human beings are only on the surface, in essentials they are all alike. As she says in her poem, "Human Family":

I note the obvious differences

Between each sort and type

But we are more alike, my friends,

Than we are unalike.

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# Self-Actualisation as a Tool for Survival in Chitra Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage

\*Dr. Venkata Ramani Challa

## Abstract

The varied literatures of the exploited peripheral races, communities and of subjugated women struggling to have their voices heard, are being included in mainstream literature as a welcome sign of comprehensive development. Among the gamut of women writers, Chitra Benarjee Divakaruni is a predominant expatriate novelist, poet, activist and teacher, settled in The United States of America. The themes in most of her writings represent her own experiences as an immigrant.

This paper attempts to study *Arranged Marriage* (1995) a debut collection of short stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The collection of eleven stories focuses on family-arranged matches, a centuries-old tradition in India. The short stories subtly deal with the accommodation and the rebellion of the Indian born girls and women in America who strike a balance between old treasured beliefs of transformed lives-both liberated and trapped by cultural transformation due to displacement. In most of the works Divakaruni's women struggle to shape out an identity of their own in an unknown land.

\*Dr.Venkata Ramani Challa, Associate Professor, Department of English, K.L.E.F (Deemed to be University), Guntur-522501 **Keywords:** Subjugated Women, Treasured Beliefs, Displacement, Cultural Transformation.

The 'Skilled Cartographer of the Heart,' the award-winning Indian American writer, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, proved her mettle as one of the most prolific and vociferous voices of the Asian American immigrant women. Her work is widely known, as it has been published in over fifty magazines, and thirty anthologies. They are studied essentially under different names: Racialism, Identity Crisis in Asian Americans after 9/11; Phenomenon of Ghettoization; Transculturation and Assimilation. Divakaruni once explained her reason for writing, she says that there is certain spirituality, not necessarily religious-the essence of spirituality-that is, the heart of the Indian psyche that finds the divine in everything. It is important for her to start writing about her own reality and that of her community. In almost all her novels she has explored the physical and psychological tensions and tortures caused by the angst of a transplanted life to which the Indian women are subjected. Her short story collection Arranged Marriage won American Book Award in 1995 and two of her novels (The Mistress of Spices and Sister of My Heart) were adapted into films.

Arranged Marriage (1995) is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's debut collection of short stories. This collection of eleven stories focuses on family-arranged matches, a centuries-old tradition in India. It appears that greater part of the central characters in Arranged Marriage confronts the issue of cultural dislocation. Arranged Marriage raises serious questions of identity, diasporic dilemma and cultural transformation and is a fine reflection upon the predicament of women facing the challenges of assimilation in the new worlds and leaving the old ones behind. Her stories depict the silencing of women, their conscious struggle to get rid of this logo-centric patriarchal discourse that makes them subordinate to men and liberate them to change the existing social order. These characters are captured in the complexity of dualism of tradition versus novelty. Divakaruni says that she writes to help tie individuals by breaking old generalizations

Divakaruni in an interview to *The Hindustan Times* January 31, 2011 says that she explores complex diasporic identities. She further states that many of us articulate in our books the deepest fear and trauma faced by women in India and America; and show them emerge, at least in many cases as stronger and self-reliant women. All characters in this collection of short stories are women of potency and energy, who in some way or other question the value and tradition of the age that has ended.

The present paper discusses the politics of resistance empowering women from submission to assertion in the three stories "Clothes", "Affairs", and "The Word Love". The short story "Clothes" deal with the patriarchal society where women are treated as 'goods' or 'commodities' traded and exchangedwhere one man purchases and another man pays for the transaction of marriage to take place. In this story, Sumita's marriage is fixed with Somesh. Sumita surrenders to Somesh only for the reason that she feels that it is her wifely duty. However, after marriage Somesh goes back to America, Sumita feels that she is not able to recall Somesh's face. Chitra Divakaruni shows the readers the paradox of an arranged marriage. As Mrs. Sumita Sen reaches United States of America, she oscillates between performing her 'wifely duty' of gratifying her husband's sexual needs and his demand to learn to blend in the new culture. Sumita's life in America is not different from the life led by other daughterin-laws in Indian society of these days. Her life as she says in the short story is frozen. Sumita who has constantly been fed on traditional ideas feels that it is her moral duty to act like a good Indian wife.... Serving tea to her mother-in-law's friends... covering her head with her sari.... Not addressing her husband by his name, etc. It is this syndrome of playing sati-savitiri, which does not allow her to be herself. The change in attire perplexes her, and the new emerging identity which is:

Caught in a world where everything is frozen in place, like a scene in a glass paper-weight. It is a world so small that if I were to stretch out my arms, I would touch its cold unyielding edges. I stand inside this glass world, watching helplessly as America rushes by, wanting o scream. Then I'm ashamed. Mita, I tell myself, you're growing westernized. Back home you'd never have felt this way. (18)

In this story, Somesh, Sumita's husband is also rapped into the deeply rooted cultural bashfulness. He is very much conscious about the American way of life -of impartiality and emancipation. Nevertheless, the fear to break the customary knobs does not allow him to articulate his views or disagree with his parents. He does not have the courage to break the sravan-image that is present in Indian traditional male. He is not prepared to live disjointedly from his parents as he feels that he could never abandon them (parents). He is stuck between his love for his wife and his devotion towards his parents. The story reaches its climax when Somesh is murdered by some unknown persons. This is an enormous shock to Sumita as she realizes that her life has also ended with Somesh's death. She further realizes that her life, her happiness, her sorrows, her clothes, her habits etc. had never been her own but always had been for her husband and his family. Sumita feels America that emblematically stands for liberty, gratification, and existence is calling her. She rejects what fate has given her and decides that she does not want to become a Dove with cutoff wings. Tradition asks her to wear white however, the mirror, as personified by the heart, shows a different image. She visualizes a new independent woman in the mirror.

I straighten my shoulders and stand taller, take a deep breath. Air fills me-the same air that travelled through Somesh's lungs a while ago. The thought is like an unexpected, intimate gift. I tilt my chin, readying myself for the arguments of the coming weeks, the remonstrations. In the mirror a woman holds my gaze, her eyes apprehensive yet steady. She wears a blouse and skirt the colour of almonds. (22) Not wearing this white sari is the final transition from submission to assertion, the politics of resistance and defiance and the final empowerment of the self. Thus, in this story she is able to reject the widow's clothes and position that the society and the family customarily impose on a woman.

"The Word Love" tours and unfolds the manifold dimensions of the word 'Love'. In this short narrative the word 'love' becomes a girl's journey from learning the traditional value system, to traversing and unlearning the accepted norms and conclusively, reaching the goal of self-discovery. The author begins her story by contrasting two worlds-one of the mother, who has lived an orthodox, conservative, confined role of a woman in a patriarchal hegemonic set-up; one who has "seen her husband's face for the first time at her wedding"; who lived the life of a widow when the protagonist had just turned two and could neither dare nor imagine to step out of the conformity. The other world is of the daughter, brought up in the established Indian value system, but becomes 'The Lady of Shallot' and steps out of her 'four grey walls and four grey towers' and chooses her Sir Lancelot, an American named Richard, with whom she falls in love, 'moves in' and makes love eventually. The protagonist's love for her mother as well as for the boy-friend, at times, becomes 'protective' and at other times becomes suffocating, making her apprehend the dangers of transcending the said norms of the society.

Chitra Banerjee dexterously plays with words and their impact. 'Words' don't get right when the mother calls to inform that her cousin Leela is marrying a good Brahmin boy and the protagonist is unsuccessful in either confessing or being apologetic or pleading forgiveness for being the Maggie Tulliver of the family.

But now of course need you not come. Her voice had been a spear of ice. Did you cry out, don't be angry, Mother, please? Did you beg forgiveness? Did you whisper (again hat word) love? You do know this: you kept talking, even after the phone went dead. (38-39) Love forms and breaks ties eventually. She notices Richard flirting and receiving more late night calls from other girlfriends. Love teaches new lessons and new meaning to the protagonist. She is left with two options—one is to die and the other to live a new life. However, the protagonist chooses otherwise—breaking free from the clutches of traditions and heteronormative relations, she decides to move out-out of the boyfriend's apartment, out of the socially expected role of a daughter and a woman, to unfetter the chains of the word 'love' and to find love—love for the self. The conflicting emotions that love brings result in the discovering of a new found love and the final stage of self-discovery, through the power of 'the word love'.

"And a word comes to you out of the opening sky. The word *love*. You see that you had never understood it before. It is like rain, and when you lift your face to it, like rain it washes away inessentials, leaving you hollow, clean, ready to begin."

In the following story, Affairs, Meena and Asha are two characters who are totally different in their nature. Meena feels that marriage for her is a miscalculated lapse of life. Asha too feels the same however the way she expresses is different. Meena and Asha, both in their own way are exploring their identity. On the other hand, Srikant and Ashok - the male characters in the short stories are also choked with their regular roles. Srikant-Meena's husband is aware and accepts the fact that they (Srikant and Meena) are not made for each other. He agrees with the truth that Meena is a falcon and he is a penguin. Meena also knows this; however, the conventional ties do not permit her the choice to be her own self. For her, her friend Asha is a symbol of Indian traditional womanhood. Her plight is that she is able to appreciate the qualities that she sees in Asha, but she couldn't be like her. As such, she is absolutely westernized and self-centered in her approach towards life and its problems. Nevertheless, she wants Asha's permission, that is to say gratitude of tradition that is built in the character of Asha, as she sees her. This mind-set of Meena is quite shocking for Asha, for her Meena is an embodiment of America and what America is known for. She does not understand why the most charming Meena whom she envied, admired, and cherished wants her acceptance.

On the other hand, Marriage between Asha and Ashok is also losing ground and has come to an edge. Their feeling of the emptiness is always felt by both of them. Meena's disappointment with her marriage has helped Asha to become aware that time has changed her preferences of life. She feels that tradition gives no scope for transformation. She understands that the old standards are not in every case right, not here or not even in India. To proceed onward in life old sleeves must be broken. Asha reflects back and she acknowledges the way that her own distinction has no place in the arrangement of marriage. Gender roles contradict with individual goals. Divakaruni addresses the essential manwoman connections. She brings up that marriage under such conditions is anything but an association of two spirits and people as it ought to ideally be, anyway it is where advancement isn't conceivable. Asha has developed with the encounters and with development, she invites with open arms all that she has denied herself of. Her journey for love takes her away from her emotionless lover and what she finds missing in her husband she gets it from her boyfriend. To quote Subhash Chandra,

"The picture of man as husband is determined by the dictates of the feminist ideology. An important form of feminist rebellion against the patriarchal structure is the attack on family, which gets manifested in sexual freedom that is extramarital relationship." (Jyoti Singh 124)

The three stories depict the transformation of women from a stage of 'internalization of dominant tradition,' to 'a stage of protest' and finally to a stage of 'becoming a woman'. To safeguard between old conventions and new prerequisites is a tricky task, yet with the moving occasions, this has turned out to be fundamental. An extreme change is occurring around us and the vast majority of the authors of today know about it. The arrangement of the issue might possibly be in sight, however the tremendousness of the conflict is without a doubt felt. Barbara Anna Barabara, the profound author says that bliss won't be our own until the point when we make the wisest decision for us. The journey for satisfaction and congruity is the thing that the characters in this accumulation of short stories–Mita, Jayanti, Meera, Preeti, Abha, Meena, Mrinal—are endeavoring to accomplish. They are also scrutinizing values of old conventions and looking to achieve something inventive and extraordinary.

Thus, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's feminist agenda becomes clear-to investigate the modes of dominance-of gender and nationality and transgress them thereafter. She belongs to the race of contemporary women writers who utilize their writing as a tool to express their long-suppressed anger and protest against oppressive power structures and to write stories where women seek their individuality and identity. This transgression becomes the key concern and the writer offers the readers a non-conformist and deviant world through the stories of Arranged Marriage. By rewriting stories from a feminist angle, the politics of resistance is manifested enabling women to rise out of their slumber.

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# Human Predicament in U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* and *Bharathipura*

\*V. Mallikarjuna

## Abstract

Are human lives ultimately meaningless? If not, what is the inherent meaning of this life of human beings? Is there nobody in this universe to rescue us out of troubles? These questions related to human predicament are open-ended and have been in discussion since ages. These feelings developed into a powerful revolt against reason, rationality, positivism and the traditional ways in which early philosophers portrayed man. However, modern philosophers have tried to theorize their notions on these questions coherently. Authors, particularly modern Indian regional language writers delineated the themes of human predicament, disparity and disillusionment in their fiction which is best suited to the Indian context. U.R. Ananthamurthy (1932-2014) is an author of such themes. He is a Kannada writer of fiction and the most important representative of the Navya Movement in Kannada literature. His two novels Samskara (1965) and Bharathipura (1973), written in Kannada and translated into English by A.K. Ramanujan and Deepa Ganesh respectively, are the best examples of the themes related to human predicament and disillusionment.

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Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man depicts the protagonist Praneshacharya's disillusionment and turbulence caused by the questions of accountability of his traditional beliefs. And Bharathipura sketches the protagonist Jagannatha's predicament in entering the upper caste Sri Manjunatha temple with the untouchable Holeyaru community is worth mentioning. His confrontation with the upper caste and his ventures in making the untouchables aware of their rights is also significant.

This article herein investigates the theme of human predicament that pervades in the two novels Samskara and Bharathipura of U.R.Ananthamurthy.

**Keywords:** Human Predicament, Disparity, Disillusionment, Samskara, Praneshacharya, Tradition, Holeyaru, Untouchable.

## Introduction

Human beings live in the ambiguous and uncanny world in a state of illusion that they can control and sway everything around them. But when things are out of joint they feel dismayed and calamitous. This dismay is because of indecisiveness and uncertainty in taking choices which, in turn, are ambiguous. People want to define the questions and resolve the doubts which are mysterious, but fail in their pursuit causing turbulence and upheaval in the minds of human beings. This is the root cause of Human Predicament. This predicament alienates him into nothingness and the individual feels absurd of his condition. The discussion of human predicament is open ended since there is no consensus between any two individuals. Philosophers have tried to theorize their notions on the subject of Existentialism which centres round the predicaments of human beings. Existentialism propounds the argument that 'existence precedes essence' for it is held that man fashions his own existence and only by so doing, and, in that process, and the choice of what he does or does not do, gives essence to that existence.

'In Sartre's vision man is born into a kind of void (*le neant*), a mud (*le visqueux*). He has the liberty to remain in this mud and thus lead a passive, supine, acquiescent existence in a 'semiconscious' state in which he is scarcely aware of himself. However, he may come out of his subjective, passive situation (in which case we would 'stand out from'), become increasingly aware of himself and conceivably, experience *angoisse* (a species of metaphysical and moral anguish). If so, he would then have a sense of the absurdity of his predicament and suffer despair.'

This absurdity and predicament were best interpreted by the Indian regional novelists like Munshi Premchand, Girish karnad and so on. U.R. Ananthamurthy was such a writer of fiction who pertinently portrayed the themes in the line of existential predicament of human beings in his fiction. His best novels *Samskara* (1965) and *Bharathipura* (1973) are the landmarks of Kannada literature which coherently delineate the themes of human predicament.

#### About the Author

Udupi Rajagopalacharya Ananthamurthy was born in 1932 in Melige, Tirtahalli in Karnataka state. He was a renowned novelist, short story writer, poet, playwright and literary critic. He is one of the most celebrated Indian writers. He is the recipient of India's prestigious literary award, the Jnanpith in 1995 and one of the representative writers of *Navya Movement* in Kannada literature. Many of his works have been translated into various Indian and European languages including English and many have been made into movies. He died in 2014 in Bangalore.

#### Works

Ananthamurthy published five novels, six anthologies of short stories, five volumes of poetry and a play besides collections of critical writings. His notable novels *Samskara* (1965), *Bharathipura* (1973), *Bara* (1976) and *Avasthe* (1978), his short stories like The Stallion of the Sun and Hunt Bangle and Chameleon have been popular far and wide. Most of his novels ironically explore the existential predicaments of the characters' political milieu and socio cultural and economic issues that are prevalent in the post-colonial India. His ideology of egalitarianism is pervaded throughout his works. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* as well as *Bharathipura* has multi-dimensional viewpoints through which one can interpret the themes of these novels. The most discursive element in these novels is its theme of human predicament. N. Manu Chakravarthy while writing the Introduction to the novel Bharathipura quotes that:

The first two novels of Ananthamurthy-Samskara and Bharathipura-deal with the existential predicament of two individuals located at different points of time and the moral choices they have to make to gain some authenticity of the self. The two have to transgress their social order if they are to arrive at any acceptable notion of the being.

In Samskara, a three-part novella, the protagonist Praneshacharya, the Crest-Jewel of Vedic Learning, does his daily-bound routine which is all for him who is living in a decaying Brahmin colony. From dawn to dusk he performs duties like cooking and giving medicines for his ailing, invalid wife, does his twilight prayers, crosses the Tungabhadra stream to the Maruthi temple for worship. The stillness of his routine is disturbed by three important predicaments which confronts him and puts him both in deep anguish and conflict in the course of the story. The first one is Naranappa's death. Naranappa who is a fellow Brahmin living in the same milieu, questions the age old traditions and violates the sanctity of the agrahara by adopting totally a free and wayward life and threatens to convert to Islam if formally ostracized. He discards his wife and lives with a concubine, Chandri. He eats meat, smokes, and drinks and does everything that an Orthodox Brahmin ought not to do. Now as he is dead, the question arises who would perform his cremation since he is childless and no Brahmin ever comes forward to perform his death rites due to his anti-brahmanical attitude. Even the outcaste Shudras scare to cremate the body of a high caste individual. So the duty to decide as to who to perform the death rites has now fallen on the shoulders of Praneshacharya, since he is a revered man in the whole agrahara for his mastery over Vedas and Upanishads. The Book of Dharma had no solution that questioned the authenticity of the texts he had learned and God Maruthi in whom he kept unwavering faith, had also failed to give possible solution leading him into deep anguish and predicament. He said:

I didn't get the answer in the Books, and didn't get it here (in front of God Maruthi), do I not deserve it then? - the supplicant doubted himself. (Ananthamurthy, U.R. *Samskara* p. 54)

The second one is Praneshacharya's involvement with Chandri, a prostitute and a concubine of Naranappa. The news of Naranappa's death is brought to the notice of Praneshacharya by Chandri. She acts as a turning point in the life of Praneshacharya in whom she invokes the carnal desire and that sensual act of touch made him bewildered, losing his path searching for the answer walking across the pathless woods. Of course, the act of touch is the focal point in the transformation of Praneshacharya into a real rational human being. In the meanwhile the torture he bore and the anguish he had to go through in the process of transformation is like a moth that comes out of its shell with full wings of experience of the pragmatic world. The predicament to go back to his asceticism or to live with Chandri torments him reaching no solution till the end. The dualities, conflict and distress rush into his life who is suspended between two truths.

I hung suspended between two truths, like Trishanku. How did the ancient sages face such experiences? Without dualities, conflict? One wonders. The great sage who impregnated Matsyagandhi the fisherwoman in the boat and fathered Vyasa- did he agonize over it like me? (Ananthamurthy, U.R. *Samskara* p.85)

The third is his encounter with the society. Praneshacharya, the godhead of his agrahara, is an esteemed man in and around the agrahara. He is also very well-known far and wide for his indepth knowledge of Hindu Scriptures. He even 'won so many honours in all sorts of arguments with all super-pundits.' All Brahmins of the agrahara would sit and listen to his divine speeches with austerity and devotion. But his authenticity calls into question when he seeks for the typical answer for the death rites of Naranappa in the texts he learned. He even failed in front of God Maruthi. His egotism was squandered in front of Naranappa's dead body. Besides this revered Brahmin has turned over his character losing his purity with the sensual touch and contact with Chandri. In spite of his rich knowledge of scripts he is at the brink of abyss with this act. He himself feels alienated and perturbed. His turbulence caused by the touch made himself out of joint and made him a pathless seeker of truth. Though he feels shy of his act and wants to reveal the sinful act before the Brahmins in the agrahara, he fails. He is frightened by the societal repercussions. Till the end of the story (which is an open-ended) he tries to conceal his identity form the society. This predicament is absurd as there is no way out except to live in this society. At last he comes out of that duality, conflict and resolve to live a new life that is rational. Putta, a young man plays a vital role in shaping Praneshacharya into a real being.

If Naranappa's body is not properly cremated, I cannot escape fear. If I decide to live with Chandri without telling anymore, the decision is not complete, not fearless. I must now come to a final decision. All things direct must become indirect. (Ananthamurthy, U.R. *Samskara* p. 113)

At last he overcomes the predicament with a clean new thought like a baby coming out of the womb of his mother.

We shape ourselves through our choices, bring form and line to this thing we call our person. (Ananthamurthy, U.R. *Samskara* p. 85)

In the subsequent novel *Bharathipura*, Ananthamurthy delineates the theme of existential dilemma of the protagonist Jagannatha. He, alike Praneshacharya, confronts with the society

to reach his intended aim. He wants to shake off the age old beliefs of the society by polluting the temple's sanctity with the entry of the untouchable Holeyaru community. He, being a modern man returned from England after his studies, thought of uplifting the lives of poverty-stricken and downtrodden people who are living in heinous conditions, deprived of their rights. But Jagannatha's inability is conspicuously seen in his failure to see the Holeyaru as human being is evident. As the translator of the novel Susheela Punitha observes in the novel:

He who is all set to initiate a social change and hopes to become a wholesome person through it, fails to transform his own attitude towards them; he could be anyone of us. Jagannatha's inability to realize that he does not see the Holeyaru as human being is the central to the angst in the novel. (Ananthamurthy, U.R. *Bharathipura*, Translator's Note p.xv)

Jagannatha, at first, observes the regular chores of the people and realizes that the people of Bharathipura are totally controlled and conditioned by Sri Manjunatha temple, which is situated at the heart of the town. The economy of the town depends on the pilgrims that visit the temple and the areca crop they grow in their fields. Jagannatha said,

Life has ceased to be creative here. Manjunathaswami is the cancer of our lifestyle; this very town is a cancer, growing for him. (Ananthamurhty, U.R. *Bharathipura* p.5)

Jagannatha's predicament further deepens when he realizes that the people are subservient to Manjunatha Temple which is meant for high caste Brahmins and the temple of Bhootharaya, the henchman of Manjunathaswami, is meant for the Shudras. He condemns the practice of untouchability from the beginning of the novel preaching equality among human beings. But he himself has the egoism and fear to touch the Holeyaru people in the beginning. As the practice of untouchability has been coming incisively from the ages, the Holeyaru people also fear to come forward to alter themselves into human beings. Jagannatha has this great challenge to make them over and hence starts to make them literate by trying them to learn reading and writing. But this is also obstructed by the hegemonic forces who try to manipulate the situation. This leads to people's estrangement against Jagannatha. Jagannatha, in spite of his indifferences towards politics and political leaders, takes their help in abolishing the caste system which obstructs the development of the town.

I don't know how to destroy the caste system that is destroying my humanity. It has created different worlds for everything we do; from the way we eat to the way we clean ourselves in the toilet... I've probably no choice but to go against my feelings; it's a necessity. (Ananthamurhty, U.R. *Bharathipura*, p.193)

## Conclusion

The human predicament that both the characters face in their lives causing them to evolve into rational human beings. To exist from the mire of absurdities, the protagonists of both the novels, Praneshacharya and Jagannatha had to go through anguish, dualities and conflict that all together make a man completely metamorphosed. Praneshacharya's strenuous struggle with himself while passing through the world of real life experiences in the company of Putta in their beauty, ugliness and ruthlessness, resolving to own the responsibility of his action boldly and his reaching the decision of living with Chandri openly like Naranappa as this way he will "remake" himself as a human being show him now a reborn person. Jagannatha's unwavering thought while bringing Holeyaru into the temple and his agony both within himself and with the hegemonic people renews him now into a new being.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Losing Roots While Discovering Routes: Diasporic Dilemma in Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and Uma Parameswaran's *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*

## \*Sweta Kumari Jha

### Abstract

In this era of constantly contracting and shrinking socio- cultural boundaries, diaspora reciprocation has emerged as an important aspect of the postcolonial complexity. It signals an engagement with a matrix of diversity of cultures, languages, histories, people, places and times. Diaspora writers depict the plight and problems they face in their adopted homeland, their fears resulting from this spatial dislocation and the struggles they face to discover their own identity in the unfamiliar environment. The present paper through the works of two major Indo-Canadian writers take a look at the kind of experiences the Indo-Canadian diasporic community generally have in Canada.

Anita Rau Badami one of the most acclaimed Indo-Canadian novelists in her novel *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*? portrays the story of three women linked in love and tragedy over a long span of time. Through her novel *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* Uma Prameswaran portrays the life of an Indian family settled in Canada leaving their homeland Indian. The diasporic crisis they face in a foreign land and the ethnic problems they encounter form the core of the novel .

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**Keywords:** Alienation, Cultural–clash, Identity crisis, Migration, Nostalgia, Spatial dislocation

The enhanced process of globalization, cross-fertilization and transculturation has brought many changes all over the world. In Clifford's words, "These, then, are the main features of diasporas: a history of dispersal, myths memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?), country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and as collective indentity importantly defined by this relationship" (305)

When people leave their native country to inhabit a foreign country, which becomes their host country, usually they long for the times spent in the former. The diaspora suffer from a sense of dislocation. This sense of dislocation is evident when people look for familiar faces in public places, speaking familiar languages. It is also visible when people belonging to the same country, community or religion gather and celebrate the festivals celebrated at home. From these gestures of the diaspora it can be understood that they seek to keep the part of their 'home' alive even in a foreign land. They try not to feel dislocated in space and time as a result of immigration. But memory is that catalyst which connects as well as disconnects. It is the memory of their experiences back 'home' that connects them to their pasts/ 'home', and again, the memories of immigration and experiences in the host country alienate them. They get alienated from their roots while trying to adapt to the culture of the host country. In this context Meenakshi Thapan comments, "The immigrant's experience of the present is coloured with a persistent desire for return, a sense of deep nostalgia for their homeland" (29). Unfortunately, due to their experiences at 'home' and with the baggage of their native culture they cannot wholly adopt the culture of the host country. In this regard, the story of king Trishanku, as illustrated in the novel Can You Hear the Nightbird *Call?* by Anita Raw Badami is a befitting example. This story, narrated by the character Leela, reflects how king Trishanku neither belongs to the land nor that in air. He occupies an inbetween space. Similar is the condition of the diaspora.

Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*? is the story of three women linked in love and tragedy over a long span of time The novel begins with the time before the partition of Indian and Pakistan, and ends with the explosion of Air India Flight 182 off the coast of Ireland in 1985. The novel provides kaleidoscopic picture of daily sights, culture and society of both India and Canada.

Bibiji, a leading character in Can You Hear the Nightbird Call? longs for her 'home' in Indian after she married Sardarji and went to Canada. To come to Canada was Child Sharan (Bibiji)'s fantasy. Hardly did she know that her fantasy would leave her with the feeling of being a displaced, dislocated being. Her sense of dislocation was accentuated by her inability to bear a child of her own. She longed for motherhood. Bibiji had nothing but the memory of her childhood cling on to when she thought about 'home' because her family got erased in the tumult of partition. For Bibiji again partition in 1947 was the historical event that uprooted her roots and she could not locate, other than her memory, where her 'home' lay. Her memory too deceived her in tracing her native place because she immigrated to Canada much before the partition. Although Sardarji has bought a bunglow for his wife, yet Bibiji was always disturbed by the fact that she has lost her 'home' and what remains are memories. To recreate her 'home' in Canada she gives shelter to people from India, who didn't' have a shelter there. They were mostly strangers and have been living at her place for years. She takes care of both fooding and lodging of those people. Still, the sense of displacement and dislocation for her all lost connections with 'home' gnawns her from within.

Another character who faces the sense of alienation and rootlessness is Leela. Leela shifts to Canada with her two children because her husband works there. It is her experience since her childhood that prompts her to understand the experience of the diaspora better. She has been labeled as "half-breed" (82) by her grandmother because she was born of an Indian father and German mother. She wanted to get out of the situation which was in-between, the narrator informs the reader that, "She also understood that to survive she would have to use whatever means she had to get away from this house to a place that she could own entirely. She would have to create, like the sage Vishwamitra has done for Trishanku, a heaven for herself" (87-88) Leela remembers her grandmother saying, "Nothing worse than to be dangling person, a foot here and a foot there and a great gap in between. Imagine how painful it is to stay stretched like that forever. Like King Trishanku, a floating, rootless, accursed creature, up-in the-air. (392)

It is evident from these lines that although Leela sought to find a 'home' or may be create one of her own, the memories of her experiences before marriage comes back again and again to displace her from her sense of 'home'. Even though she wanted to dislike Vancouver and think about her 'home' in Bangalore something bothered her, She thought: "I am going home. A doubt crept into her mind unbidden. Where was home exactly? Back in Vancouver or ahead of her in India? She had forgetten, lost her bearings". (391)

This "doubt" that bothered her, leading her to question herself about locating home tell the readers about her sense of displacement. She is unable to locate the 'home' that she has been longing for years. Thus, her sense of displacement doesn't find any reconciliation even at the point when she is returning to India, and that sense has multiplied in her.

Uma Prameswaran, an Indo–Canadian writer of plays and fiction presents her firsthand observation of diasporic life. Her work 'Trishanku' is a cycle of poems where fifteen different voices give expression to the immigrant experience of the diaspora in Canada. This collection is generally considered to be her major poetic achievement. "I have been there, my brother

The land is green but my heart was barren, Warm are the people but my heart was lonely, Money flows in rivers but my heart was dry Bereft of wants and tension Bereft of Comradeship My heart lost its voice, my brother It is not the land for you and me "

(Trishanku and other writing, p. 51)

Mangoes on the Maple Tree the very name is suggestive of the theme of rootlessness. It is a novel that focuses on the problems of the new Canadians, the Bhave family: Sharad Bhave has migrated from Pune to Manitoba hoping to improve his financial position; his wife Savitri and their children Jyoti and Jayant also come with him leaving their sparse comfortable living at their ancestral home. The royal treatment at their grandparents' house is replaced by harsh racial discrimination in Canada which makes Jayant decide to leave home in 1976 Pontiac Car to California for a year. Following Sharad, his sister Veejala, who is a scientist, also settled in Canada along with her family. Her son Vithal feels the same way as Jayant: "They-white Canadiansdon't want us to assimilate. They want us out. We'll be squashed like bugs soon" (81). Jayant recollects Sharad poornima nights in their ancestral house and wonders how "Hinduism has a place for everyone and everything" (103). His memory includes things that are very much Indian. "Ajoba's library, Aji's jasmine-scented saris, the stop sign across the street, Jyoti's denim jacket, the smell of camphor in the niche of the tulsi tree, the ridiculous oversized billboards on Pembina Highway advertising stanfield briefs and cougar boots" (113). He pities himself for the loss by his inability to use Marathi and Hindi words like 'raat-ki-rani', 'dhobi', 'charpai', 'jamun', 'rakhi', 'kabaddi', 'shehnai', 'tulsi'. Thus by recreating his personal pains he associates himself with his

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ancestral Indian past that has given him power to face the painful present of alienation and rootlessness in the host country. Jayanti's aunt Veejala resigns her job without the concerns of the family, for her professional life as a scientist is male–dominated; she decides to go to India, for she can enjoy more freedom and liberty at her homeland.

Though they are Indo-Canadian the Bhaves follow certain Indian habits and customs. For example, during dinnertime everybody should be home and no one should leave anything on their plate and Sharad would narrate Panchali Spoon story. Savitri's discussion with Sharad when they are alone includes matters that cannot be shared with the family at dinner is typical of an Indian wife. Jayant brings in a Christmas Tree and deliberates, "It is an evergreen tree.... and it will stand until the snow melts and then it will fall because it doesn't have roots". (220)

The metaphorical meaning is that Indians settled in Canada lead their lives like an evergreen tree without roots in Canada; however, they will survive until there is snow, which is again a metaphor referring to the trials and tribulations they have to undergo in the new land.

In the multicultural society "Food in used to reconstruct the lost culture. Here, the particularity of an ethic culture, a different culture, is highlighted rather than hidden or silenced" (Pivato 9). While Jayanti's friends visit their home mango juice is served; at that time. Vithal rightly observes, "....Mangoes and maples don't mix and whisk" (74) Indian cannot merge into the Canadian culture, for they can remain Indians in the salad bowl culture of Canada. Sometimes they shrug their Indian identity in order to be recognised as Canadians instead of Indo-Canadians, the hyphenated identity which is humiliating for them. For example, when Krish addresses Jayant *Bhau* he stopped himself, "realizing he had used a forbidden word" (11). Savitri's humming of *Meera Bhajan* during her household work to relax herself is a mark of Indianess that offers solace to these diasporic souls longing to be comforted.

The world is moving at a fast pace and people are exploring possibilities of settling down in different countries of the world with the intension of satisfying their intellectual, economical and psychological needs. With lots of hope and aspirations the immigrants try to adapt to the multicultural environment of their host country but they stand on the borderline belonging neither to their native homeland nor completely assimilating to the culture of their foster country. Inspite of their apparent integration into the Canadian milieu their umbilical cords with India remain attached and the gap that emerges from the spatial dislocation never gets bridged. Parameswaran refers to the Indian master poet Kalidasa to express the terrible despair of the immigrants.

Despair. A dull despair as at some inevitability. A primal feeling. A deer nimbly running towards the lake but breaking of a sudden, sensing a tiger near, then moving forward again, driven not by its parching thirst but by a sense of inevitability. (9)

## Note

1. The word home is put in single quotes to indicate the individual idea of home of the characters, the ideal place which they have painted in their minds, i.e., their native country.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Learner Centred Approaches: Improving English Communicative Skills of the Engineering Graduates

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## Abstract

Communication skills in English play a vital role in equipping students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for employability. In spite of many years spent in learning English, students fail to speak in English fluently. There is a need for curriculum change and innovative approaches-methodologies to acquire and learn English fluency and accuracy. New paradigms and competency based approaches have been rapidly becoming dominant in the field of knowledge transmission. The difficulties associated with the presentation of language use in various contexts are being faced by engineering students. Learning is a complex phenomenon. Learners learn the language in various styles like sensory, cognitive and personality related style preferences. Monte More (2009) has stated the tree Metaphor of English language teaching i.e. roots of the tree are represented as the concepts: Language, knowledge and pedagogy and the stem is represented as the teaching methods and the branches of the tree are represented as classroom techniques. There is a need to implement Learner

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centred approaches and techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. This enables the students to use language in various contexts confidently. Employers expect good communication skills in English which is one of the basic competencies that engineering graduates should perform at the time of interview and in the organization. This paper explores the use of innovative Learner-centred approaches and methods in English language classroom to master students' communicative competency and skills in English.

**Keywords**: ELT, Approaches, Methods, Techniques, Learner Centred, Learning Styles.

Language, as a social phenomenon, occurs within specific contexts (British applied linguists: Halliday (2014), Wilkins (1978), Widdowson (1981), Littlewood (1981), Brumfit (1979), Johnson etc.). English is the language of international communication today. It is the medium of instruction for higher education in India. It is a lingua franca and a language of opportunity and chance. It is the Latin of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (ubiquitous). India is a multilingual nation where globalisation has opened an access and made easier for students and scholars to study and work anywhere. Effective communication skills in English are important for the technical graduates in their academic as well as professional endeavour. Learning a language is a challenging task that entails a wide range of knowledge including new words and vocabulary, grammar, gestures, accent and pronunciation etc. for effective communication. There is a need to think of the innovative strategies, methods, tools, materials and techniques for teaching English. These elements of language can be learnt effectively through its functional aspects, activities and the applications of the technology rather than the theoretical rules.

Communication skills in English are the key to competitive prosperity. Competition in global job market has become more intense. Majority of the states in India have introduced English as a subject in primary classes. Unfortunately, it has proved ineffective due to lack of confidence and fluency in English communication among graduates. In recent times, things seem to have changed for the worse. English teachers still follow traditional teaching practices such as memorization, grammar rules, sentence structurespatterns and form-focused learning etc.

## Focussing on the Use of Language in the Classroom

The teacher specifically understands the use of English in the classroom.

- 1. What kind of language do my students use in class (e.g. classroom language, Telugu, English, "Tenglish" i.e. mixing Telugu and English)?
- 2. How often do my students speak in English to communicate?
- 3. What kind of speaking activities do I plan? Which one do my students enjoy?
- 4. How do my students feel when they speak in English?

## Following are the Important Interpretation of Language for the L2 (English as a Second Language) Students

- Greetings, gratitude, sympathy (Formulaic expressions).
- Advice, commands, cautions (Persuading).
- Appreciation, condemnation, approval (Judging & evaluating).
- Pleasure, surprise and stock (Expressing emotions).
- Informing, denying, and supporting (negotiation).
- Hypothesising, justifying, explaining and generalizing (Reasoning). Wilkins (1976)

Technical students are often unable to write simple grammatical English. There has been developing various types of approaches, methods and techniques of teaching English in the western part of the globe since ages. Hence, a drastic change has occurred in the development of language learning or teaching from a form based to a meaning based approach, the move towards an eclectic approach from a rigid method, the shift from teacher-fronted to learner-centered classroom are all subsumed under the broad term communicative competence and communicative approach. Curriculam around the world are currently undertaking reforms on their education and training systems to meet the demand for an appropriately skilled workforce in an evolving global economy.

## **Understanding Learning Style Preferences of the Students**

## 1. Sensory Style Preference

- a. Visual learner.
- b. Auditory learner
- c. Hands on learner (Kinaesthetic).

## 2. Cognitive Style Preferences

- a. Abstract intuitive learner (do better on reading comprehension: infer or guess which is not stated explicitly).
- b. Concrete-sequential learner (tries to find answer in the text itself).
- c. Global learner (tries to gist of the passage).
- d. Synthesizing learner (tries to rigorous summary of a passage).
- e. Analytic learner (does discriminating task involving word analysis and comparison of grammar).

#### **3.** Personality Related Style Preferences

- a. Introverted learners (difficulty performing when paired with others especially if those learners are extroverted).
- b. The impulsive and closure oriented learners (answer such items quickly in their desire to finish).

Majority of the ESL teachers are still practising teachercentered methods. A teacher devotes large amounts of time to explanations; learners are given less opportunity to produce creative language. Here, the students' main activity is sitting, staring and listening to, memorizing grammar rules, sentence

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structures-patterns and form-focused learning etc. Students are not provided to practice any of the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading or writing. But the teaching of English language cannot be conducted through lecture method. Students feel bored to listen to lectures and they are unable to read even quite simple English. Most of our syllabi fail to reach the objectives clearly. Students are absent themselves to attend the English classes regularly since they do not find relevant to their needs. However, the final examination requires them to demonstrate their competence through writing. Hence, they are forced to buy readymade material to pass the examination. The students aim to pass minimum without really learning English. English as Second Language (ESL) learning is not automatic. Indeed, it is very important that teachers should realize at the outset that what they are teaching is language, not the content of a textbook.

### Learner Centered Syllabi

Dr. N.S. Prabhu's procedural syllabus has mentioned a series of mind engaging activities of language learning. Among the various proposals for framing the syllabus, the following two stand out clearly:

- a. Content Based Syllabus.
- b. Task Based Syllabus

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is an approach to second language teaching which focuses on subject matter that it is learnt and communicated rather than the language used to convey it. Studies on CBI have revealed that the use of tourists guide books, technical journals, railway timetables, newspaper adds, radio, TV broadcast, audio-visual, computers, social media, electronic gadgets and so on are authentic and helpful material to do activities. Stryker and Leaver (1993: 295) have realized that the textbooks are contrary to the very concept of CBI. Brinton et al., (1989) has observed that the activities of language class are specific to the subject being taught and stimulate the students to think and learn the target language in a content based instruction. Such an approach lends itself quite naturally to the integrated teaching of the four basic and traditional language skills. Snow (2001) has asserted that "In order to develop communicative competence, learners must have extended opportunities to use the second/ foreign language productively. Thus, in addition to receiving comprehensible input, they must produce comprehensible output: in other words, explicit attention must be paid to the productive language skills of speaking and writing".

It is important to note that the content continues through the whole course, not just a handful of specific lessons. Conversations or dialogues of shopping on one day, using the bank on another day, making hotel reservations, requesting politely, offering help, giving instructions and directions, leaving a message in English at a different class session is an example of a CBI class. Content facilitates language growth. While students prepare certain topics, they should use not only their background knowledge but also to think, and solve tasks. According to Kennedy (2006) "Enriched experiences enhance neural growth and thus, enhancing learning, indicating that brains construct themselves through life experiences.... Emotion, experiences, and learning of meaningful information has strengthened useful connections and results in cortical pyramidal cell branching".

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a learner centred approach. It facilitates learners to express their own meaning in order to reach the goal of the task. They are free to decide and achieve the task in their own way. It creates essential opportunities for natural language learning in the classroom. The teacher in the learner-centred pedagogy is a facilitator and an explorer. Lessons are planned exclusively through the activities. The teacher should be able to generate interaction in the classroom. As a facilitator, he should plan a suitable activity for his class to manage the environment and material which help the learners become autonomous. Learners and teachers have to be equal collaborators in the task pertaining to the classroom for the successful language learning. The following instructions are needed to follow for the language generated purpose of the activity:

- 1. Prepare material in sufficient quantity.
- 2. Think out the 'procedure' how the activity is going to be introduced and whether the students need extra help.
- 3. Decide which role is going to be adopted and stick to it throughout the activity.
- 4. Let the students give feedback on the activity when it is finished.
- 5. Make a note of any problem arising as well as own comments and those of students, it is used to modify the activity when it would be used in future again.

Teacher needs to be careful to check and evaluate whether the determining frequency of utterances and nature of interaction generated successfully through the specific task and activity. In communicative based language testing: teaching paradigm, the focus would be on fluency and relevance in a particular functioning context rather than an accuracy of the sentences. Hence, the specific communicative criteria are to be prepared as important in the design of communicative tests. The following parameters to be considered:

- The task should match with the realistic situation.
- Processing of new content as in real life situation.
- Involving students as language receivers and language producers.
- The task allows learners to have a creative freedom and linguistic independence.
- Time constraints.
- Constructive feedback.
- Encourage to provide self-reflection, individual feedback, group feedback, and peer assessment etc.

The following changes are required for the L2 learners to communicate in English fluently in a learner-centered classroom:

- To change the examination system.
- To prepare the syllabus according to the needs of the students.
- To set out the objectives and purpose (listening/speaking/ reading/writing) of the each lesson.
- To modify the classroom layout.
- To maintain exclusively learner-centered classrooms.

## Findings of the Learner Centred Classroom:

- Majority of the learners frequently paid attention and followed instructions.
- Learners frequently finished the tasks in the given time.
- The teacher frequently used innovative strategies for class management.
- The teacher frequently got everybody on board.
- The teacher sometimes walked around the class, especially one specific side of the class.
- Teacher Talking Time (TT) was 40%. And students talking time was increased.
- Learners were aware of the class rules and some followed some of them.

## Conclusion

Thus, in the learner-centered classroom, teaching is based on enquiry-oriented where the teacher monitors and describes what is happening to the learners, analyzes why things are happening as they are, and in this content sensitivity and questioning of teaching, obviously improves teaching. Self-observation of classroom by a teacher leads to reflection about his teaching and more informed ways of handling a class. The cycle of action, reflection and improved action makes teaching highly challenging and

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interesting and makes the teacher professionally alive in the classroom.

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# Kuntala Kumari Sabat's *The Dark Bride*: A Feminist Intervention

\*Dr. Mary Mohanty

## Abstract

Mary Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) argues that femininity is 'too often an artificial, class-based gentility'. French writer Simone de Beauvoir in her landmark book *The Second Sex* (1949) makes the epoch-making statement, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman.' Woman is always the 'Other'. It implies women always occupy a secondary position in society, particularly in patriarchal society. Both of them argue that womanhood is a social construction. Girls learn to be women when they are merely babies. As they grow up they become complete women in the absence of any alternative.

Kuntata Kumari Sabat (1901-1938) was the first woman novelist in Odia. She was a poet, novelist, essayist, freedom fighter, orator, social reformer, feminist and physician. *The Dark Bride* is a translation of her novella, *Kalibohu*, published by Central Sahiya Akademy, New Delhi in 2014. This paper

\*Dr. Mary Mohanty is an Associate Prof. at P.G. Dept of English, S.C.S. (Auto) College, Puri, Odisha. She has translated five books from Oriya to English, of which three novels and a poetry anthology are published by the Central Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. She has also written a monograph, published by Orissa Sahitya Akademi. Email: <u>mary.mohanty@yahoo.co.in</u> highlights the place of women in traditional patriarchal society of Odisha in 1920s. It also probes how far Kuntala Kumari Sabat succeeds in depicting women's place in family as well as society, their desire, hopes and aspirations and how she negotiates it in this fiction.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Women, Place, Desire.

British writer Mary Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication* of the Rights of Woman (1792) argues that femininity is 'too often an artificial, class-based gentility,' (Walters 33-34). The most influential French writer Simone de Beauvoir in her landmark book *The Second Sex* (1949) makes the epoch-making statement, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, woman.' Woman is always the 'Other'. It implies women always occupy a secondary position in society. Both of them argue that womanhood is a social construction. Girls learn to be women when they are merely babies. As they grow up they become complete women. This is the picture of women in a patriarchal society. Throughout centuries patriarchal societies have been suppressing and oppressing women in the name of religion and social convention.

Kuntala Kumari Sabat (1901-1938) was the first woman novelist in Oriya. She was at once a poet, novelist, essayist, orator, doctor, social reformer, rebel and freedom fighter. She was deeply alert to the political and social issues of her time, particularly the problems of women in Orissan society. Her novels deal with the gender-roles at the time and question the hegemony of thought and social constructs of patriarchal society in Orissa so far considered sacred and unquestionable. Kuntala Kumari was a committed writer and her novels were written with a specific social agenda to make people aware of various social evils that plagued women in the patriarchal society of her time and to uplift them as well as the nation. *The Dark Bride* is an English rendering of her novel *Kali Bahu* (1925) by Mary Mohanty and published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi in 2014. It is a poignant story that deals with the suffering of a child-widow in Orissan patriarchal society and her empowerment. The protagonist Lakshmi is the only daughter of the wealthy Brahmin couple Achyuta Mishra and Kamala and is born eighteen years after their marriage, after 'Kamala performed many religious penances, pious charity and went on a pilgrimage' (3). The house is filled with great joy after the birth of Lakshmi, their only heir. Following the social convention, she is married at the tender age of seven to a ten-year-old Brahmin boy named Pitambara. But fate deals a harsh blow to her and Lakshmi is widowed at the age of ten. The child-widow is stripped of her ornaments forcibly. Kuntala Kumari vividly describes the grief of an innocent little girl when she is stripped of her ornaments:

Fun-loving Lakshmi was not aware of anything, she did not even know who her husband was. When ornaments were forcibly removed from her body; she cried so much, implored everyone to give them back, but who was there to listen to her? (4)

In Indian as well as Orissan patriarchal society a widow was regarded as a potential threat to social harmony and order because of her sexual energy and freedom. So the male society devised various ways to curtail her physical and economic freedom and to deprive her of womanly looks. The male-dominated Hindu society made widows look ugly by depriving them of ornaments, coloured saris and other decorative items that make them look beautiful. Kuntala is harsh on high-caste Hindu patriarchy in Orissa for prescribing horrible practices like *ekadashi* and *habishya* for Brahmin widows. On the day of *ekadashi* a Brahmin widow observes fast and is not allowed to drink even a drop of water. Only drops of water are put to her ears to wet her parched throat. *Habishya* is a religious vow observed mainly by widows. On this day, widows take sun-dried rice with certain vegetables only once before sun-set.

Widowed Lakshmi has to observe fast on the day of *ekadashi* without drinking a drop of water. So Lakshmi and her friend Durlabha are worried about it. Kuntala voices how all harsh conventions are prescribed only for women in Hindu religion

through the words of Lakshmi's friend Durlabha: 'Lakshmi, scriptures are meant only for us, the women. In Hindu society, scriptures are like knives at our throat' (6).

Kuntala Kumari blames the men in patriarchal society for the plight of women. In patriarchal society men write scriptures and prescribe restrictive and oppressive measures for women. Elsewhere in this novel, the river Yamuna, symbolizing Nature, sympathises with Lakshmi:

The Yamuna was weeping as though upset about the state of society! And she was brooding over man's selfishness, the vanity of scriptures written by men and the misfortunes of women (27).

Kuntala Kumari highlights the inferior position of women in patriarchal family and society in colonial Orissa. Girls were married off before they came of age and it was a strategy to socialize them not to raise their voice against the oppression meted out to them in the name of social convention and religion.

She makes scathing criticism of the double standard of the patriarchal society. It prescribed different conventions for men and women. A child-widow was not allowed to remarry; but a man could take as many wives as he liked. At the time there was the practice of paying bride-price to the bride's father among the Brahmins. Taking advantage of it, wealthy old men could marry young brides of their daughter's age who hailed from poor Brahmin families or whose fathers were greedy. Lakshmi's father Achyuta Mishra has four wives. There was bad blood among the wives of a person in polygamy. This is also reflected in this fiction in the envy of different wives of Achyuta Mishra towards Lakshmi.

While a child-widow like Lakshmi is denied all the comforts and fineries and leads a life of celibacy, her old father Achyuta Mishra leads a life of luxury and indulges in riotous merry-making with other women. Kuntala Kumari makes scathing criticism of gender discrimination of her time in the following words: Alas child-widow! Today you are a celibate; you are forced to observe habishya. And your old father is indulging in riot fun with a woman called Hira. You have fettered a fourteenyear-old girl with the prescriptions of scriptures and have caged her in a hell of agony. And you, a leader of the community, an old man, lust after Parvati, a beautiful woman. Your body smells sweet with sandalwood paste and perfume; your lips are red with betel juice; you cannot do without a pair of maniabandhi and tussar loin clothes. But your nubile daughter wears no ornaments and pale–faced, moves before you clad in coarse, white borderless sari (11).

All other women of the family decorate themselves and indulge in sumptuous food. Kuntala Kumari blames the cruel patriarchal society for the plight of widows. In her words: 'O cruel society! Don't laugh. Weep, instead. Teardrops from twenty lakh eyes of ten lakh widows are falling on you. If preserved, they would make the river Mahanadi swell' (12).

Grief-stricken with the plight of her only child, Lakshmi's mother breathes her last. Her father leaves the earth after a few years. Sorrow does not prevent Lakshmi to grow up and her beauty blossoms forth. She feels utterly lonely and desolate without her parents. All the joys of life are denied to her. Nubile Lakshmi ponders over her miserable life day and night. In the words of Kuntala Kumari:

Why was she alive today in this world, her life cursed with utter loneliness and desolation? Why were all the enjoyments of the world denied to her? Why was she deprived of the pleasure of womanhood and motherhood? What crime, what sin caused this burning? Day and night Lakshmi brooded over her lot (5).

The patriarchal society did not allow widows to inherit any property; they faced economic exploitation in one way or other. It was a recurrent theme in Indian novel written in the last half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. In the Oriya novel *Bibasini*, the shrewd Govardhan Das, a rich man of the village, deprives Sadashiva's widowed wife of her wealth. In Saratchandra's *Bada Didi* (*The Elder sister*, 1913) Madhavi is defrauded of a major portion of her husband's property by her manager. In Saratchandra's *Pathanirdesh* (*The Direction*, 1914) Hemnalini's brother-in-law does not give her money to go on pilgrimage and says that she is entitled to get food and shelter only. Rabindranath Tagore depicts the economic deprivation of widows in the character of Harimohini in *Gora* (1910). Harimohini's brothers-in-law take her share of the property by force and drive her out of the house. In *The Dark Bride* (1925), Kuntala Kumari portrays how Lakshmi's relations keep an eye on her property after her father leaves for heavenly abode.

Like her fictional sisters in Premchand's novels *Pratigya* (*The Vow*, 1921) and *Prema* (1907), Lakshmi flees her home in order to escape sexual threats from her step-mother's nephew. But to her utter dismay she finds the atmosphere of the ashram at Vrindavan equally immoral.

The Hindu society could not resolve the emotional problem of widows during colonial India. As the twentieth century advanced some male thinkers agreed that widows were exploited and needed protection, but they did not want them to remarry. Even after the passing of the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856 very few widows remarried. Men leaders laid emphasis on the essential capacity of widows for self-sacrifice and serving without asking for anything in return. The question of widow remarriage became a secondary concern. They laid emphasis on the widow sublimating her desires through social service in some ashram or participating in the nationalist movement for freedom. Some novelists portrayed the widow as committing suicide in order to escape their hellish life. In this novel, desperate Lakshmi jumps into the river Yamuna in order to put an end to her life. She is fished out of the Yamuna by Swami Sadananda and his disciple Chandrodaya. Swami Sadananda, an ardent follower of Gandhiji, believes in imparting education and training to women in order to uplift them as well as the country. She puts Lakshmi in the care of Shantilata, an elderly widow, who runs an ashram, 'Shanti *Kutir*', to impart education and training to destitute women and girls.

Kuntala Kumari was a committed writer who was worried about the uplift of women. Like Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone Beauvoir, Kuntala makes an urgent plea for education of women in order to subvert the oppressing conventions of patriarchal society of her time. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft argues that women are not inherently inferior to men. The cause of their inferiority lies in their lack of education. In her words: 'A rational examination reveals the real cause of the retarded state of many women's minds to be not their sex but their poor education.'

So Lakshmi is imparted education and training at 'Shanti *Kutir*'. She writes touching poems in journals. Her fame spreads and finally, she marries Chandrodaya and sets up her home. Lakshmi and Chandrodaya devote themselves to social service and uplift of women and downtrodden. During Kuntala's time widow remarriage was not often depicted either because of societal opposition or reluctance on the part of men to accept a widow as a wife. Kuntala breaks new ground by depicting the remarriage of a child-widow like Lakshmi. She was a feminist who voiced the grievances of women and their desire.

Like Mary Wollstonecraft, Browning's Aurora Leigh, Virginia Woolf's A Room of One'sOwn and Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, Pundita Ramabai's The High Caste Hindu Woman (1888), Tarabai Shinde's Istri Purush Tulna (1882) translated as A Comparison between Women and Men (1994), Kuntala Kumari Sabat questions the conventional values and structures of patriarchal society considered sacred and unchallenged and foregrounds her reformist agenda for the uplift and empowerment of women. It would be befitting to conclude quoting Jasbir Jain's statement in her 'Introduction' to the book Women's Writings: Texts and Contexts: Women's writing is engaged in changing the terms of these definitions. With all its variety, timidity and marginality it has been moving through self-expression and self-questioning toward self-assertion and redefinitions (xx).

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*–A Satire on Democracy

\*Manoj Kumar Jha

### Abstract

India has contributed significantly to the over-all World Literature. This contribution of India has been chiefly through Indian Writing in English, novelists being in the forefront in this respect. A good number of novelists like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Aravind Adiga, on the contemporary scene, have given expression to their creative urge in no other language than English and have brought credit to Indian English fiction as a distinctive force in the world of fiction.

Indian English literature has always been actively taking up challenges in the nation building process. The fiction of the three great novelists R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao can be regarded as path-breakers for their masterpieces which were written at a time when India was overwhelming her political, social, religious, cultural and ideological world to re-assert her latent identity. The fictional world of Aravind Adiga, as a continuation of that tradition, demonstrates how the Indian society has been heading towards moral/spiritual decadence, economic exploitation and a great social malaise.

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#### Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger-A Satire...

*The White Tiger* is the debut novel of Aravind Adiga. It was first published in 2008 and won the 4<sup>th</sup> Man Booker Prize in the same year. The present paper is a detailed satirical analysis of India's democratic social moral fibre delineated by Aravind Adiga in *The White Tiger*.

### Keywords: Roster, Coop, Corruption, Economic Exploitation

Indian writing in English refers to the body of work of writers in India who write in English but have one of the numerous languages as their native or co-native language. It is also associated with the works written by members of the Indian diaspora, who are of Indian descent such as V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. It is frequently referred to as expatriate literature and as a category, this production comes under post-colonial literature—the production from previously colonised countries such as India.

Aravind Adiga's debut novel *The White Tiger* won the 2008 Booker Prize. He is the fourth India-born author to win the prize after Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai. The present paper is an analysis of *The White Tiger* as a satire on the democracy prevalent in India. The writer maintains that the novel is about an India "that is two countries in one: an India of Light and an India of Darkness." (WT 14) The India of Light is that of wealth, strength, technology and knowledge while the India of Darkness is that of misery, weakness, destitution and illiteracy. The novelist articulating the voice of the silent majority strives to create a society based on principles of equality and justice.

*The White Tiger* is an epistolary novel. It was written in the form of letters to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel, introduces himself as a half-baked person who represents the entrepreneurs of modern India. He narrates the story in over seven days and nights. The story is the narration of the protagonist's interesting journey from Darkness to Light, from rags to riches, transforming from a village tea-shop-boy into a Bangalore entrepreneur. Balram tells his story

to an empty room as he stares at an ostentatious chandelier. As a great entrepreneur, he wants to keep in touch with "His Excellency Wen Jiabao" the Chinese Premier who is set to visit Bangalore to understand entrepreneurship in India. The volatile and captivating narrator provides the Chinese Premier with a compelling portrait of modern India.

The plot of the novel lingers around Balram Halwai, in Adiga's sample village Laxmangarh, where the villagers, family and friends are subjected to exploitation, torture and torment by the village landlord. As a half-baked person, he observes corruption in his school and says:

That was supposed to be free food at my school–a government programme gave every boy three rotis, yellow dal, and pickles and everyone knew why: the school teacher had stolen our lunch money.... Once, a truck came into the school with information that the government had sent for us; we never saw them, but a week later they turned up for sale in the neighbouring village. (WT 33)

Balram by nature is aspiring and strains to advance his societal position. It transports him to Delhi as the driver of one of the landlord's westernised son, Ashok. Delhi is the place where Balram senses the great fissure between the rich and the poor and also between those who eat and those who are eaten. Adiga considers education as the best solution to all these malaise rampant in Indian society when he maintains trhat "if the Indian village is a paradise, then the school is a paradise within a paradise." (WT 32)

The novel forcefully shows a corrupt culture and the dangers of mass migration as villagers are drawn to the city and then struggle to find work. It projects undoubtedly a lively image of India with its social reality and also strikes at India's present and future destiny. Every change that comes in a society creates a section of haves and have-nots as it happens in the western world. According to Adiga, it is bribery and corruption that smear the wheels of the great economic miracle of India. The picture of India that Adiga paints in *The White Tiger* is of a nearly feudal society discussed as a democracy.

Adiga's exposure to the Dark areas of India can be taken positively to cure the sick image of it. The political system and the autocratic set-up, according to the novel, refer to the darkest areas of our country which breed "rottenness and corruption" in our society, and hamper all developmental and welfare schemes. It restricts half of this country from achieving its potential. Most of the politicians are "half-baked". "That's the whole tragedy of this country" (WT 10). The story of Balram's emergence is the story of how a half-baked fellow is produced. Politics is the last refuge for scoundrels. Government doctors, entrepreneurs, tax payers, industrialists all have to befriend a minister and his sidekick to fulfil their vested interest. Mukesh and Ashok also bribe the minister to settle income tax accounts. Power gets transferred from one hand to another but the common man's fate remains unchanged. Adiga considers "typhoid, cholera and election fever three main diseases of this country and the last one the worst" (WT 98). Voters discuss the election helplessly as "eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra (WT 98). Balram reports: "I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of voting booth" (WT 102). Adiga observes that Indians are lagging behind China because of "fucked up system called parliamentary democracy. Otherwise, we'd be just like China" (WT 156). The writer inspires Indians to stand up against all those malaise which are responsible for their backward move in these words: "People in this country are still waiting for the war of their freedom to come from somewhere else-from the jungles, from the mountains, from China, from Pakistan. That will never happen. Every man must make his own Benaras" (WT 304).

In conclusion, the novel gives a detailed account of the Indian society–rural as well as urban and its various facets–in democratic parlance. Laxmangarh, Gaya, Dhanbad, Delhi and Bangalore are generic; they represent the portrait of India. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, caste and cultural conflict, superstition, dowry practice, economic disparity, zamindary system, and exploitation of marginal farmers and landless labourers, corrupt education system, poor health services, tax evading racket, embittered master-servant relationship, prostitution, weakening family structure, entrepreneurial success and its fallout etc. constitute the basic structure of Indian society which largely forms the Dark image of India.

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(Subsequent references are from this book)

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# A Comparative Study of Love Traditions in Vidyapati and few British Poets

\*Madan Mohan Jha

#### Abstract

Vidyapati is chiefly known for his love poems. He is a Maithili Poet as well as a Sanskrit writer. His poems are very influential and if studied deeply we can say that he was very far ahead of his time. He is a contemporary of Chaucer and has written poems on different themes. His love and devotional poems are still today sung with dignity in almost all the parts of Eastern India. We can compare Vidyapati to the Poets like Sidney, Spenser, William Shakespeare, John Donne, John Keats and several others. As far as I think his love poems are even better than the above mentioned poets if analyzed on the basis of lyricism and subject matter. It is not merely an exaggeration but it is the natural talents of this gifted poet who can parallel and exceed even the Petrarchan concept of Love. His sensuality is not less than the gaze of Cupid, who is also known as the God of Love. In describing the love songs of Radha and Krishna the Poet has poured the elements of Rasa in such a beautiful manner that it seems that he was already aware of the impersonality theory of T.S.Eliot.

**Keywords:** Love, Devotional, Lyricism, Sensuality, Dignity

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Love is a term which is very tough to define. Normally people take this term according to their choices. Vidyapati is a kind of poet who has given a very clear description of love in terms of beauty which can be internal as well as external. He is very conscious in choosing words for his poems. He tries to write accurate and matching words for a particular emotion. It is one of the reasons that in his songs there are preferences for tadbhava words. It does not mean that the *tatsama* words are absent from his songs. Tadbhava words are preferred in his writings because they bring out the linguistic peculiarity of any geographical region and thus it looks more real. During the time of Vidyapati from Gujarat to Bengal Apabhramsa/Avahatta was the most famous literary language which had some local variations. There also the tadbhava words are widely used. It is interesting to see that it parallels to the sonnet tradition. The sonnet came out from two strains of language and literature. One is native which started from the feudal courts of province whereas the other started from the regions of thirteenth century Italy. Any provincial reader can find out the images and attitudes which got vanished with the time. The local languages and dialects were changed by the poets and authors according to their own interest. Even Chaucer has tried and experimented linguistic variations in his own writings. In English Literature we can find so many words of different origins. Some are French, some are Italian and it shows how language evolved in any particular area. With the adaptation of new words the religious views of the people also changed drastically. Language is a kind of identity and if we do some addition or subtraction of words from a particular dialect or language then it also changes the identity of a particular region. Thus there is a constant influence of language over any form of writing. There are occasional touches of gaiety which is a result of surviving lyrics in any genre of literature. It seems that love in the form of poetry has become frail which is pitiable and it is flourishing over the mercy of readers"Mirie it is while summer ilast With fugheles song; Oc nu necheth windes blast And weder strong. Ei, ei, what this nicht is long! And ich with wel michel wrong Soreghe and murne and fast."<sup>1</sup>

The above lines are provincial in origin and the poet is feeling sad because it is spring time and he is feeling secluded. The nightingale sings in the moonlight. It seems that the language used is of Troubadours who were famous at the time of Angevin England. With the advancement of time the lyrics also changed. Either it is Maithili Literature or English Literature in both of them we can find evolution and there are drastic changes in the use of words, metaphors and similes. I am writing this article to encompass style and features used by Vidyapati and some British Poets. In British poets I shall try to compare and contrast poets from different ages. I have already mentioned that Vidyapati followed a very different style of writing but still there are some similarities between him and few British Poets. When I write about the features I mean stylistic features of different poets which will be focused in this chapter. While reading the poems of Vidyapati I was surprised to find that there are similarities in terms of style and features between Vidyapati and Romantic poets especially of John Keats. In Endymion John Keats has said that happiness is a state of our mind. It means that our mind has the capacity to decide our happiness and our minds are raised to a certain kind of fellowship filled with essence and we are left alchemized-

"feel we these things? that moment we have stept Into a sort of oneness, and our state Is like a fleeting spirit's. But there are Richer entanglements, enthrallments far More self-destroying, leading by degress To the chief intensity."<sup>2</sup>

It is well known to the world that John Keats got carried away into the realms of ecstasy whenever he witnessed the beauty associated with visible things. He was such a poet who considered truth as beauty and beauty as truth. In case of Vidyapati we can find that he was also a kind of poet who always gave priority to truth. He was also considered as a sensual poet who wrote several songs and poems on the topics like love and beauty. He has presented a beautiful picture of a beloved in terms of her physicality. She was beautiful enough to make her lover stand alive from his grave. He has also written devotional songs of Radha and Krishna but to him truth and beauty was always a chief concern. The understanding of reality for John Keats was unique. In comparison to William Blake this understanding was narrow. According to Blake the realm of imagination can also be real. Thus William Blake presented an active understanding of reality whereas John Keats presented a passive form of reality. We have already talked about the role of imagination in case of Vidyapati. Truth and beauty are two different things. There can be a truth which can be bitter. This bitter truth is beautiful or not it depends upon the given situation. Sri Aurobindo has translated the poems of Vidyapati in English language and in one of the songs he has associated the beauty of a lady with brightness. Few lines from the song needs to be quoted here:

"How shall I tell of caanou's beauty bright? Men will believe it a vision of the night. As lightning was his saffron garment blown Over the beautiful cloud-limbs half shown His coal-black curls assumed with regal grace A peacock's plume above that moonlike face. And such a fragrance fierce the mad winds wafts Love wakes and trembles for his flowery shafts."<sup>3</sup>

The above lines project the clear picture of beauty associated with natural things. It is like a vision of the night. This vision is so clear that it has been associated with the brightness of the nature. Sometimes scholars have also said about Vidyapati that he is a kind of poet who loves to write about nature. This nature is both the nature of human being as well as the external form of nature. There is a kind of fine balance between the internal as well as the external form of nature. This kind of imagination where the internal form of nature fuses with the external nature is not wild. They are controlled through poetic justice. It is very interesting to see that Coleridge one of the other great Romantic poets has justified this by his paradoxes. It is to be noted here that there are not much comparisons between Coleridge and Vidyapati but what gave an upper hand to Coleridge was his trust on his imagination. This trust was deeply rooted in him and he often thought that the shape of life is given through imagination. In his poem Dejection he has tried to explain that imagination is a kind of nature which acts like a faithful companion to all the living beings. It lives inside a normal human being and from there it creates several external images. These images play a vital role in understanding the values of life. Thus Coleridge always considered imagination as a superior form to all the living forces. Few lines from the poem can make us understand his views which matters a lot to him. It needs our attention when he writes:

"Ah! From the soul itself must issue forth

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud

Enveloping the Earth-

And from the soul itself must there be sent

A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,

Of all sweet sounds the life and element!"<sup>4</sup>

It is very unusual to quote Vidyapati and Coleridge together as they hardly have any form of comparison but their stylistic features are striking and noteworthy. I have tried to measure the brightness of imagination associated with Vidyapati with the fair luminous cloud of imagination associated with Coleridge. Both are the poems of different genres but it looks that somewhere they think alike. Their style of writing is also different and in this regard Vidyapati exceeds the limits of Coleridge. It is a fact that Coleridge does not think so far as Vidyapati in the claims which he shows for fanciful imagination. He gets hampered by the external world and the balance between the internal and external form of nature is broken. His imagination is shapeless and thus his use of symbols and images are also not concrete. It is a kind of shapeless creation. There are other comparisons also but they are not worthy enough to be mentioned here because this chapter is dedicated to style and features only. In terms of intonation we can see that Vidyapati has successfully written his poems which can be sung beautifully as there is a kind of proper rhythm and pattern in his poems. He hesitates to write free verse and he has discovered his own style of writing which is certainly unique but still inspiring. He begets his inspiration from God and it proves that he is far better than almost all of his contemporaries. The devotional songs of Krishna and Radha are still today celebrated and sung. It seems that these songs and poems are new and fresh. Every time when we read the poems of Vidyapati we find something new as there are numerous references to Indian mythology and philosophy. They are not only philosophy but they present the stark reality of life. These realities are not applicable to only a particular place but they are universal in appeal as well as tone. They are the rare collections of Indian tradition and culture. Apart from these facts we can also notice some linguistic peculiarities in the writings of Vidyapati. In most of his poems and songs the third person narrative form has been used.

We can find third person verbal form in several other poems of Maithili Literature. It shows that poets are literary genius and they have very special kind of knowledge. It is one of the reasons that they are known as the creators. Shelley has written in his *Defense of Poetry* that poets are not common and their knowledge is really praiseworthy. He has tried to convince that a poet is a "forseer"<sup>5</sup>. Shelley considered a poet as a seer who has a peculiar insight and thus he is a kind of gift to the world. It is the nature of reality that gifted minds have peculiar insight as well as habits. A normal man cannot perceive the world like a poet and it does not mean that poets are not normal. They have something very special to them. Shelley has used the theory of knowledge given by Plato and he has applied it to the beautiful mind of a poet. This concept of Shelley is equally applicable to poets like Vidyapati. Shelley and Vidyapati have nothing to do with each other. They both belong to different ages yet the poems written by Vidyapati prove that he was a creator. The theory of Shelley is applicable to all the poets who are acting like a source of inspiration for the coming generation. It is the beautiful mind of a poet who gives life to images and symbols through the use of his creativity. We have talked about the use of verbal forms by Vidyapati. It is a kind of tool which has been used by Vidyapati in his poems. It is derived from the past participle form of archaic transitive verbs. It also justifies the gender used in the poetry. It was a popular mode of writing because several popular poets have used this form extensively in their writings. The adverbial forms of the poems dedicated to spirituality have also been used by the poets like Vidyapati. It is one of the reasons that songs of Krishna and Radha got popularity in almost all the parts of India.

Although Vidyapati has been admired by different critics and scholars but Pandit Janaki Vallabh Shastrijee has a different view point. He says that Vidyapati has written different poems on Radha and Krishna but in all of his poems he has depicted Radha in terms of beauty and desire. Radha as depicted by Vidyapati is a figure of *Vasna* or desire but in the poems of Surdasa the same Radha acts like an epitome of firmness. Now, we have two forms of Radha one is beautiful but weak but the other is not ugly but strong. Thus there is a view point that beauty is associated with weakness. A lady who is beautiful and submissive is weak or we can say that she is considered as the weaker section of the society. As far as I think Vidyapati has no doubt portrayed Radha as a beautiful lady but no where it is refereed that she is weak. She is soft but not weak. She is submissive but it does not mean that she is weak.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Articulation in Feminine Voice in Anita Nair's Lessons in Forgetting

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## Abstract

Anita Nair is an internationally recognized name in the contemporary literary world. She is a bold and straightforward writer who never hesitates to speak the truth. She shows in her novels the bitter realities of women in the society and also depicts how they are self-sufficient and struggle for justice, equality and liberation. Nair is the writer who has broken the chain of social stereotypical norms and never confines her women characters to the domestic boundaries. "Lessons in Forgetting" presents the audacity of female characters, Meera and Smriti. It is the elaboration of the exposure of urban middle-class family and social life. It has many connotations dealing with ordinary characters with common issues. It is all about love and betrayal. Meera is a very gracious lady, a writer of a cookbook. Giri, her husband, marries her for property, and at a social party, he abandons her because of her denial. She shudders thinking of the responsibility of her family. The circumstances were not in favour of her. Her confidence is shattered when her books were not getting published. Later, she gets a job as an assistant of JAK, a renowned expert of cyclones and whose daughter is Smriti. Smriti is

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a rape victim. She gets a fatal freak accident named rape. She protests against female infanticide in the village, Minjikapuram but a few men come forward and harass her to shut up. She is thrown into the sea. Her zeal vanishes as fear captures her. There were strict laws for women in the ancient Vedic period, and some of them are still prevalent. The problem for women in male chauvinistic society is monolithic. Their suffering increases from generation to generation, caste to caste at the stratification level. But Nair's women characters struggle for their identity till their last breath until they have it. It is the identity which makes the women confident and jubilant to shape their lives in a stunning way. They march forward to claim their independence and space in the male-dominated world, challenging the traditional role models.

**Keywords:** Identity, Dignity and Decorum, Inexorable, Adamant, Emancipation.

With the advent of women writer, the prevalent trend has been to portray the women mainly as victims of the atrocities by men, society, ideology and culture. (Sree, 122)

The paper intends to articulate the women's awakening consciousness and their confrontation against the patriarchal society. There are a number of female victimized characters in Indian writing in English and Nair's women are among them who reveal their sufferings and ultimately breathe high crooning their victory. The women characters of Anita Nair have a strong consciousness of feminism. They are progressive and diligent trying to make their self-identity.

Anita Nair (26 January 1966) is an excellent and well-judged novelist of 21st century. She has a solemn sense of equivalence. Because of her punctilious and penetrating style of writing, she has great impact on readers. The author has given us an outstanding piece of writing. Her second novel *Ladies Coupe* (2001) is the story of self–actualization. Her next novel, *Mistress* (2005), exhibits the strong passion and posture of Kathakali. *Lessons in*  *Forgetting* (2010), is the eye wide open story. Her many more novels, poems and short stories won the heart of million readers.

The paper throws light on two vehement women characters who begin their lives with elation but end up in a tremendous way. The story has many connotations dealing with the people of page three. Where the first part of the novel is the exposure of urban middle-class family and society, the other part is expressing the merciless people of Minjikapuram (an imaginative village in South India).

In the novel, Nair depicts Meera, a very gracious lady for whom family comes first. The other flashy character is Smriti who protests against female foeticide and for which she had to pay the price. Meera is a patronizing woman. Under the roof of Lilac house in Banglore three generations live together, Meera, Saro her mother and Lily, her grandmother. She has two children, Nayantara and Nikhil. With the eyes of Nair, Meera is Hera in the novel, a wife of Zeus. She is considered god of god and believed to be the queen of the world. Hera stands for an ideal woman. She is honest about her marriage and family. She is considered monogamy because of her faithfulness in the novel. She has many responsibilities like she is a wife, a mother of two children, caretaker of two decrepitude ladies, a writer of cook-book, a friend of rich and poor and a mentor of corporate wives of the tabloid society.

Once Lilac House is chosen for a photoshoot and Giri was one of the members of it. He meets Meera and decides to marry her. Meera wants Giri, but Giri wants Lilac House, her ancestral property. Giri was a greedy fellow who satiated himself with the thought of getting power of attorney and full command over Meera's property. He turns pale and suddenly abandons Meera for not giving him the full authoritative rights. Meera believed her husband a trust worthy man. She compared herself as Hera but didn't call Giri, Zeus as Zeus is frolic with nymphets. Meera does not believe her luck. She reads the mail, having the confession of Giri, again and again. She is astonished by the audacity of Giri. She is broken when she finds Giri a hypocrite, selfish man. Meera is bewildered. She doesn't understand how to react. She is full of grief, betrayed, anger, fear, loss, resentment and hatred. Giri doesn't respect Meera and her family. He only wants their wealth and prosperity. The denial of Meera turns him into his actual colour. From beginning Giri deceives Meera, but her light-heartedness fails to recognize his mystifying nature:

When Meera wanted to share a moment of distress triggered by them carelessly and with little malice, nevertheless painful-when Meera turned to Giri for handholding and sooth, he removed himself from her bafflement and hurt. (*Lessons in Forgetting*, 74)

Responsibilities are heavy on Meera whether it is Giri's Official work, Saro and Lily's health check-up or even the frequent over the flow of septic water tank. She has to take care of everything and everyone in the family. The things turned amiss when her daughter Nayantara blames Meera not her father for everything. Meera is so disheartened that even she is failed to establish her daughter-mother relationship. Giri compels Nayantara to think of evil facts of her mother.

Meera is determined to stand by the side of her family. She knows that she is the only one who has to look after everything. She has to maintain her family reputation as well. So she puts up with the pain rendered by Giri:

Meera never dreamt big dreams. She had no desire for designer clothes, diamonds or expensive holidays. In those hard years after her father's death, she learnt to worship at the altar of enough. That was all she ever hoped for. Enough to keep the roof over their heads and food in their bellies. Enough to retain dignity and not have to ask reluctantly removed relatives for a temporary handout. Enough to live as they did. (41)

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Nair's women characters are brave enough to fight with the circumstances. Akhila from *Ladies Coupe* and Meera from *Lessons in Forgetting* to try harder to balance their family without expressing their own agony and aspirations. They don't let anybody know what they want actually; neither their families bother to know their deep desire. They don't care for their own happiness, passion and dreams. Their main concern is to make their family happy. The fact is that Meera is the replica of a new woman who has learnt not to be tormented but to face the blizzard of tough and cajoled situation. She has confronted the obstacles in her life, and there is no space of commiseration in her life:

Meera looked away and said, 'Do you know what Keats thought? There is a sigh for yes, and a sigh for no. And a sigh for I can't tolerate it.what can be done, shall we stay or run?' (78)

Meera was suggested by the women who believed to worship their husband even if they are not competent to you. They elucidated, sensibility is to strike a balance between spouses, whether compromisingly or remorsefully:

You see Meera; we are brought up to believe that our husband is our god. His wishes are ours, and without him, we are nothing. There is a saying, Kalanalumkanavan, pull analumpurushan. Whether he is hard as a rock or as worthless as a weed, a husband is a husband. Can you make a life without your husband? (178)

But Meera is not ready to beg or plead. She bears humiliation for her mother and grandmother. Giri's callousness develops apathy in their relationship. She gives admonition to Giri not to rob their son, of his childhood. She becomes rigid and audacious to live without Giri who gave nothing but a perturbing life.

Giri enables himself as an ample aristocratic. He wanted Meera to be in the light of pomp and show. He wanted Meera to be perceptible too. As Meera is amiable, she believes in veracity. Attainment and nice pertinence cherish her. When Meera studies Jak (J.A. Krishnamurthy), she finds him illustrious and more conclusive than Giri. The circumstances were not in favour of Meera. She was facing difficulties to manage financially. She was more depressed when her Cook-Books had not got good responses. Then Meera switched to another job offered by Mr. Krishnamurthy to be his assistant.

Jak is a renowned expert of cyclones and has a daughter, Smriti. Smriti gets a fatal freak accident. Jak is an NRI; he comes to India and is inexorable to get the truth. Meera helps him to get the fact with the delicate clues.

Smriti, an anticipated delineation of Nair, wants to exterminate 'female foeticide' from the society. If we articulate, abortion is a medical termination in which some firm steps are taken adamantly to end up the pregnancy, but for a woman, it is detrimental suffering from her body as well as her emotions. No one can measure the adversity of a woman when she is told to abort her foetus forcefully. The women like Karuna, Ida and Virmati from *Difficult Daughters* by Manju Kapur, also get hurt after their abortion:

In Margret Atwood's surfacing, the unnamed heroine suffers psychologically when her lover induces her to abort the baby. In fact, care and nurturing are so basic to the female psyche that any conscious or unconscious disruption of these tracts leads to psychological and behavioural problems. (Singh, 50)

Smriti and her group start their mission on girl infanticide and choose Minjikapuram, known for its brazenness. Their mission was to remove female foeticide. Smriti was chosen as the leader of the team. They wanted to represent 'Stree Shakti' in towns and villages to spread the awareness of the evils of the dowry system and bride burning also.

Smriti meets a woman named Chinnathayi, whose daughter dies during the abortion. She has some papers what Smriti wants to use as evidence. She decides to tape her statement and determined to present to the higher authority. Smriti finds that the doctors of Minjikapuram has a mobile scan and they tactfully reveal the foetus of the pregnant woman to their family. Smriti had denouement what unfortunately becomes the main cause of her own annihilation. It was inevitable that the seed what Smriti was sowing would be sprouting in a dire consequence. Smriti was protective for those women who were afraid of their husbands, who considered a girl as a burden and who threatened to leave their wives if they would give birth to a girl child:

'She was never good at giving up on things or people. And she was a great one for causes....' (*Lessons in Forgettin*, 296)

In spite of the controversial law, the people of Minjikapuram take unabashed way to know the sex of the unborn baby. If they fail to know, the people of Minjikapuram kill the child when she is born and sing of their eminence.

Smriti was at the stage of letting the deceptive world win against her. The shameless people of the village wanted her not to open her mouth against their crime, but Smriti was not afraid of them. To give her a lesson, some men came forward and harassed her. They did what no one had expected. They trapped her in delusion and crossed all their effrontery:

In the end, all that Chinnathayi could do was watch. Muffling her horror by stuffing the end of her sari into her mouth and pressing Vana's face into her side, so the child saw nothing, heard nothing. (316)

The intentional accident emaciated her and graved her in bed. The fatal freak accident turned her cadaverous. She used to do all her assignments meticulously. Her single approach for the betterment of society demolished her. There are many practices what people do not like and often despise, but Smriti was the one who not only despised but also took the things into action to solve it. She could not bear unfair affairs happening before her eyes. She was afflicted with the thought of killing a female foetus. She was not the one who only talked of the evil of society, but she had the courage to confront with the problems and fight with it until it is eradicated she had seen the deformation of the Minjikapuram people and their exasperation for female. She was desperate to expose those deleterious people, but she did not know that debunking their reality was not easy.

The daughters may be out of the lap of their fathers when they grow up but never be out of their heart. For Smriti, Jak, her father was the perfect image of a masculine role model. Jak serves a colossal role in Smriti's life. He was aghast to see his daughter:

But this creature isn't really his daughter. What lies on the bed is an ugly twisted doll, the handiwork of evil magic. And yet, it is Smriti. He isn't offering obeisance to memory. This is his child he is tending to. (250)

Smriti was intensely in pain. She tried harder to speak. Her eyes were open and staring, and it seemed they wanted to reveal something. Her jaws were inflexible, and teeth were showing dreadfully:

An animal howl layered with pain, grief and anger, horror and disgust. An animal howl that goes on and on, snaring his soul and jerking him up from where he sat, pushing him out in blind panic. (256)

Jak wanted to know the cause behind Smriti's deadly condition. He was peremptory to get every single detail. The reason perturbs him. He meets the friends of Smriti, the villagers of Minjikapuram and the doctor who witnessed the tattered condition of Smriti and examined her.

The doctor detailed:

'How can I forget? How can anyone forget? We were all baffled by the state they brought her in. You know how it is usually... we have to cut the clothing off an accident case, but in her case, someone had just flung a cloth over her. It was quite obvious that she didn't have a stitch of clothing on her when she had the accident. It makes you wonder what she was up to. (53) The government doctor turned it to be an accident. When Jak insisted them to tell the fact, they blamed Smriti and Jak too for his upbringing. Smriti was bold and lived life longingly. According to them, a bold and vivacious girl is supposed to face such problems. Even there is a transparent and fair enough situation to believe, but in spite of that, they blame women first. Even no one came forward to support Smriti. But it is she only who raised her voice and protested against the crime, but unfortunately, she had to pay the price. She was thrown in the sea. Her zeal vanishes as fear captures her:

The sea Papa Jak. The sea. I can smell it. It is a violent sea. The waves crash Boom, Boom, Boon. I wanted to do something real. I wanted to stop what they were doing-see, mom; I wanted to say, I didn't squander my future when I chase to come back. (328)

The mission 'Female Foeticide' ends up with Smriti's predicament. The entire problem starts with a trivial topic. I wish people may understand a deep sensational feeling of a girl foetus while it is destructed. A poem by Sujata Bhatt is the *Voice of the Unwanted Girl* is a heart-melting composition suits the situation:

Mother, I am the one you sent away when the doctor told you I would be a girl-In the end, they had to give an injection to kill me.... No one wanted To touch me- except later in the autopsy room when they knew my mouth would not search for anything-and my head could be measured and bent cut apart. I looked like a sliced pomegranate. The fruit you never touched. Mother, I am the one you sent away

When the doctor told you.

I would be a girl... (Bhatt, 165-166)

It is an embarrassing moment for the Indians that at the one way they demand dowry on the compulsive basis and another side they refuse of a girl child and take every possible step to turn the things in their favour.

I am startled with the mindset of the Indian people. It is an irony that it is the only girl who gives them dowry and they want to demolish the girl only in the womb of the mother.

These people who claim and talk of their dignity and decorum are nothing but a large, heavy shoe. Destroying female foetus is just canasta for them. Only because of these people, female foeticide in India is increasing by leaps and bounds. We cannot say that illiteracy is responsible for this because it can be seen that there are a higher dominance and prevalence of female foeticide in the urban society than the rural one especially in the year 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Some rigid thoughts have completely grabbed the Indian society. One of them is the births of a girl child, which gives them badly made grumbling topic. If Indian people don't wail on the birth of a girl child, they don't get happy, too. It will not be an exaggeration if we say that the mother of a male child gets more love, honour and materialistic pleasure than that of the mother of a female child. Some equitable reasons came forward if we comprehend and analyze the thought of Indian people on a global basis. The first working out reason is generation. A boy will maintain a line of generation. The generation is the prevailing thought from down to upper-class people. Another cause may be the disheartened dowry system in India. Because of this, lowermiddle-class people don't want a girl as their child:

Distinguishing between sex and gender, Robert J. Stoller asserts that gender "has psychological or culture rather than

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biological commutations. If the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female', the corresponding terms for gender are 'masculine' and 'feminine'....' (Singh, 34)

Time has high healing power, and it is the time only which made a big difference between women of early and modern time. We have Characters like Kasturi from *Difficult Daughter* by Kapur, an example of a submissive wife. She is knackered out of her pregnancy and ashamed of breeding like animals but didn't gather the courage to refuse her husband. And now we have Smriti a philanthropic girl takes strict steps against female foeticide.

What William Rose Wallace puts the thought of the Indian patriarchal society is, a woman completes its womanhood by rocking the baby in the cradle and especially when the child is male:

When a woman is in dilemma whether to continue or abort her pregnancy, she contemplates a decision that influences both self and others and engages directly the critical moral issue of hurting and also that "women may even perceive some situations as a moral crisis that men do not" (50)

The conservative upbringing of girls encircled them with suppressed thought and lack of confidence for self-assertion. In dogmatic families, girls are learnt to be sacrificing and culpable. A woman has to be evaluated at every level. If she is sympathetic and compassionate, she will be tagged with dull-minded chickenheated woman. If she is tolerant, she is called fearful. If she works for her family and spends time in household duties, she is given the title of less-confident. If she is busy in her official duty, she is showing off her excellence by sinking her decorum, and if she raises her voice, hearing all the sarcasm upon her, she is called an aggravated lady.In a nutshell, a woman will be blamed in every condition, and people raise objections over her:

Today, we may boldly assert. A woman writing is a woman fighting. She is fighting for her rights, for truth, for honesty, for identity, for freedom and for equality. The muted voice has freed itself and came on stage to air the concern of the hitherto neglected; ill-treated and ignored "other gender". (Sree, 55)

A woman must live for herself for the sake of her happiness and contentment. She never has to shatter her zeal and enthusiasm, and she does not have to prove herself for others. If she values and respects herself, the world will respect her. By letting herself down, she gives an opportunity to the world to push her in the grave. So the new women are the Nair's women who are not perplexed with the tremendous diversion of their life. They are helpful and solve their troubles skilfully, artfully and sensitively.

The author has written these beautiful and profound words in the concerned novel, "The butterfly flaps its wings, again and again..." which has the emotional note. Here is a metaphorical sense where a woman is called a butterfly. Like a butterfly, a woman has also different and vibrant shades, and in every shade, she has to perform different duties, and she will certainly flap its wings if somebody suppresses her and tries to crush her because she is born to fly, not to be captured.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Diasporic Consciousness: A Comparative Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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# Abstract

Over the last few years there has been a proliferation of literature over the notion of Diaspora. The creation of Earth after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden is the opening facade in history, when this great odyssey of diaspora began. The experience of exile, the tendency to remember the past may induce an ambivalence, which in turn determines a kind of writing that transcends geographical and national literature. An expatriate writer at every step is called upon to create and reconstruct imaginatively his/her roots. Such 'return to the beginning' is symbolic representation of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery which cultivates the sense of 'cultural identity' in the Diasporic writers. Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai are no exceptions to the set norm, but what ranks them above other writers of exile is their metaphysical union with the concept. A modest attempt is being made in this paper to delve deep into the issue of migration and to present the pain, problems and trauma faced by the immigrants by comparing the theme of diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake and Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss.

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Diasporic Consciousness is a complex term as it encompasses ideas including exilic existence, a sense of loss, consciousness of being an outsider, yearning for home, burden of exile, dispossession and relocation. The lives of immigrants do not have straight lines. They live centuries of history in a life lifetime and have several lives and roles. They experience a sense of alienation in the host countries. Inspite of their attempts of acculturation, they do remain at the periphery and are treated as others. "Migrants," says Salman Rushdie, "...straddle two cultures... fall between two stools" and they suffer "a triple disruption" comprising the loss of roots, the linguistic and social dislocation." (279) Trishanku, the character from the Indian epic Ramayana, who went embodied to heaven but had to settle at a place midway between the earth and the paradise, serves as metaphor for the modern expatriate inhabiting the contested global local space. For a comparative study, on the treatment of the theme of Diasporic Consciousness in both these novels, the paper portrays the differences present in the novels regarding the setting and background, types and phases of migration and the techniques employed by the novelists.

"Boast of Quietness", a poem by Jorge Luis Borges serves as a fitting epigraph for *The Inheritance of Loss*. The poem speaks of loss, of universal human feelings and of the difficulties in achieving contentment. The novel also meditates on loss as an emotional location. A retired, reclusive Judge, Jemubhai Patel lives with his orphaned granddaughter Sai, his beloved dog Mutt and his cook Panna Lal in Cho Oyu, a crumbling house in Kalimpong. Lack of human warmth, love of family is the loss in the Jemu's life due to the ills of colonization. Sai waits in the shadow of the house, hungrily reading old issues of National Geographic longing to get out and see the world. The poem speaks of the ambitious whose day is greedy, as a lariat in the air and in the novel it stands for the cook and Gyan's parents who want their children to achieve

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what they haven't gained in their life due to poverty. Biju in other part of globe leads the life an immigrant to fulfill his father's dream and Gyan after deserting Sai in love tries to search his cultural identity in the Gorkhaland Movement without realizing that they are all voices of the same poverty. Biju on reaching Kalimpong is robbed of all his possessions and hard and money in America by the G.N.L.F. boys and as the epigraph mentions he walks slowly like one who comes from so far away he doesn't expect to arrive.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* being with a date, 1968, to be precise, takes the reader back in time to examine the tension between past and present. The novel spans more than thirty years in the life of a fictional family, the Gangulis. The parents Ashima and Ashoke, each born in Kolkata, immigrated to the United States as young adults. Their children, Gogol and Sonia, grow up in the United States and the novel examines the nuances involved without being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social and ideological differences. The novel uses Gogol's struggle over his name as a jumping off point to explore large issues of integration, assimilation and cultural identity.

The Namesake deals with only international migration moving between the events in Kolkata, Boston and New York City. Kiran Desai's creation deals with both internal and international migration. Geographically the novel oscillates between the kitchen of New York, where Biju is a migrant worker, and the Gorkha insurgency in Kalimpong in 1986, capturing the nativist spirit of both the regions. The Namesake examines only one phase of Indian migration to European countries, the professional Indians, who left in the early sixties. In the novel Ashoke Ganguli leaves Kolkata and reaches America in pursuit of higher studies to do research in the field of fiber optics. After staying two years in the U.S.A. he comes back to Kolkata and marries Ashima. The diaspora depicted in this novel shows that voluntary migration induced in them the feeling of the other in the host country mainly due to cultural disorientation. Jhumpa Lahiri has used food, clothing, language and rituals to explore cultural diversification of Ashima and Ashoke.

The Inheritance of Loss examines different phases of Indian migration. The first wave of migrants reaches European countries for higher studies. Jemubhai Patel leaves for Cambridge in 1939, but his dilemma is different from Ashima's or Ashoke's as he had stepped in an England where Victorian values still lingered. His identity crisis is mainly due to his color and he becomes the victim of colonization. Even after spending a lifetime in the host country Ashima and Ashok respect their culture and Indian heritage but Jemubhai Patel returns with hatred for Indian culture. After banishing love, human earth and every relationship from his life, he live in a dilapidated house (Cho Oyu) and considers himself more British than Indian. The second wave of immigrants in the novel The Inheritance of Loss, leave their homeland in the quest of better living. They are further divided into Green card holders and illegal immigrants; tourist visa facilitates the immigrants to reach their dreamland easily. Kiran Desai has used humor and satire in the episode where Biju succeeds in attaining the tourist visa. He asked the watchman, "Is this the American embassy?"... "Amreeka nehi... This is U.S. embassy!"..."Where is the American embassy?" "It is there." The man pointed back at the same building. "That is U.S." "It is the same thing," (182) said the man impatiently. But Biju, the luckiest boy in the whole world, lived in a miserable condition in America. He is not only exploited by Americans but by Harish Harry an Indian in the guise of free housing.

Thus Kiran Desai has explored the pain of an immigrant and the unfairness of a world in which one side travels to be a servant and the other side travels to be treated like a king. Jhumpa Lahiri, on the other hand, has completely neglected the trauma of illegal immigrants, their efforts to acquire Green Card and the exploitation of Indian in the host country.

Though the questions of identity and homelessness are raised throughout in these novels, their treatment is marked by striking contrasts. The dilemma of second generation immigrants has been portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri very elegantly, by grouping them under the tag of ABCD (American Born Confused Deshi). Gogol, Sonia and Moushmi never considered India as, Sare Jahan Se Acha Hindustan Hamara. They are fascinated by American culture and try to adopt it, which compels them to make a frantic search for their personal and psychological identity. Sonia overcomes her divided identity by embracing American culture. Moushmi immersed herself in the third culture and language, French. Gogol tries to search his roots by connecting himself with his father after his sudden death away from home. A glimpse of such fascination for West is also found in the characters of The Inheritance of Loss. Lola and Noni stuff their suitcases with Marks and Spencer panties, eat jam and read Jane Austen. Sai preferred cake and English, but they do not fall under the label of ABCD; they are rather Anglophiles.

Harish Harry is a mammon worshipper but he is against serving beef. The ironic laugh of Odessa and the remark "nobody eats beef in India and just look at it–it's the shape of a big T-bone" (Desai 135) revels the duality of Indians who in India worship cow but in the host country eat it. Biju leaves his job at Briggitte's when made to choose between serving beef or to work by killing his religious consciousness. But in *The Namesake* it is not represented as a major issue as Ashima makes sandwich with bologna or roast beef for Gogol. Thus Kiran Desai's creation clearly reflects that identity refers to the various ways we position ourselves. A mere possession of the Green card places a mortal equivalent to God. If Indians are treated as others in the host country due to their color then the same Indians consider Nepalese inferior who are also a part of India.

The concept of homelessness has attained new dimensions in the skillful hands of Kiran Desai. *The Namesake* circumscribes only migration and death as the sole reason for homelessness, but The Inheritance of Loss encompasses broader issues ranging from ills of colonization, Gorkhaland agitation, deportation, refugees, to homelessness by choice and death. Jhumpa Lahiri has captured the acute loneliness of Ashima, perseverance of Ashoke and the anguish of Gogol's mind in a very effective, life like manner. Ashima after struggling to make the USA her home for more than thirty years, Ashima in the end decides to divide her time between Kolkata and the USA. Gogol could never free himself from the tag of ABCD but has the desire to have a family. Ashoke and Ghosh leave all the homes behind as death takes them to the other world but others would also follow them at their fixed time. Thus the theme of dislocation gets deeper, more philosophical, and the existential dimension with which the novel remains imbued which reflects Lahiri's philosophical maturity. Kiran Desai has presented India as a concept, and a land of hope and desire rather than a home like Jhumpa Lahiri's. Jemubhai Patel's moral maiming by colonialists made him admire the Whiteman for everything and undervalue India which thwarted him to enjoy the bliss of marital life with Nimi. After banishing every relationship from his life he is homeless due to his own choice. There are people like Sai, Lola and Noni who harbor the vision of India of cheese toast and rum cake but Sai is homeless through no fault of hers, except that of birth. The Bengali sisters see beyond their own concepts of India when they witness the rebellion and when the Gorkhalis poach their property and build hutment over it. Gyan and Budhoo are

Indians but in their own country are treated as others under the tag of Nepalese. For both Biju and father Booty India is land of hope and desire. 'Home is where heart is' fits on Father Booty aptly. He gives his whole life to India only to be told that he does not belong here anymore and is sent back to England he does not recognize. For Biju India is the final homecoming. He constructs a notion of home in a foreign land and returns to find that what he claims to be a home is a contested territory. Thus for all these characters home is elsewhere.

There are also striking similarities in the perspective and techniques of both the novelists. Stream of consciousness technique is used by Lahiri to present the painful accident and enchanting return of Ashoke leading to his betrothal with Ashima. Similarly Jemubhai's hideous past, Sai's parents' untimely death is depicted through this technique. The characters in both the novels are so real that one can meet them in every nook and corner of life. We understand each other for what he or she is: their triumphs and frailties, their emotions and convictions, along with their principles and prejudices. But it does not mean that they are stereotypes. Nalini Iyer considers that the strength of Jhumpa Lahiri as a story teller lies in her characterization. "The people she creates are real, alive, complicated, and individual. She never descends into stereotypes nor does she engage in grand generalizations about social and political relationships. Instead, she sweeps her reader through a range of emotions and experiences and let her characters speak for themselves" (Lahiri). Similarly in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss from Lola and Noni the two anglicized middle aged sisters living at Mon Ami to tipsy Uncle Potty, Kalimpong is populated with a set of highly evolved individuals, with their own complicated histories. In much the same way the people Biju meets in New York are individuals' not cardboard stereotypes. By dissecting the stereotype she gets right at the heart of the contradictions that riddle modern prejudices. Both the writers have also shown another side of immigrants, as the people who somehow get through. Sonia's decision to marry Ben, a half – Chinese boy indicates the spirit and optimism of a successful immigrant.

Both these novels have open endings and do not seek a solution, but Jhumpa and Kiran put away their pen with an aura of hope. Gogol's desire to have a family and rise professionally indicates his quest for the new route which will dawn on him after his reflections in the company of the stories by his namesake, Nikolai Gogol-gifted to him by his father. Similarly the running of the cook Pannalal and Biju into each other's arms leaves the reader with a smile on the face. Desai conveys to her reader that in spite of the bloodshed, the hypocrisy, the lies, the hatred, the helplessness there still runs in the world a common thread of love, of bonding, of companionship, a softness that no amount of human degradation can abolish. Thus both these novelists have presented a realistic and touching picture of the palpable life of the Diasporas, who are on a river with a foot each in two different boats, and each boat trying to pull them in separate directions. But every coin has two sides to it. It is an enriching experience if taken in a positive way. Being an immigrant teaches them much about the world and about human beings. It enlarges their consciousness about things which they would never have understood if brought up in one place. It enables them to speak concretely on a subject of universal significance and appeal.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Shobha Rao's *Girls Burn Brighter*: A Psycho Analysis of Women's Inner World

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#### Abstract

In the post modern scenario, the discourse on feminism stirred the imagination of creative writers to make authentic and emotional representation of the annals of exploitations, marginality, social segregation, physical mutilation and psychological suffering of woman bearing the wearisome burden of the canons of patriarchy. The writers were inspired to share annals of love and longing lurking inside the psyche of women who are destined to survive in the invisible space and are deprived of the ultimate realization of their human self. The traditions of social order in context of feminist discourse admits of humiliations and injustice. However, Shoba Rao's present novel Girls Burn Brighter that came out in 2018, can be placed in the category of realistic feminist fiction but it is a novel with a difference. It has been appreciated as "powerful and unforgettable narrative" set in the remote village of South India. The narrative is focussed on the struggle for two friends Poornima and Savitha who survive under the dark clouds of poverty and deprivation.

*The Girls Burn Brighter* follows an unconventional trend where Savitha and Poornima moves in unconventional

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directions but to draw a comment conclusion of pervasive burden on feminine psyche of the oppressive mechanism of patriarchy. The novel is constructed in the backdrop of Realistic grounds beyond the sentimental and radical canons of patriarchy. The protagonist follows the mechanism of affirmation deviating from the tradition of non-conformity. Shobha Rao establishes that woman surviving in poverty essentially share the psyche of suppression.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Remote Village, Deprivation, Unconventional, Protagonist

In the postmodern scenario, the discourse on feminism stirred the imagination of creative writers to make authentic and emotional representation of the annals of exploitation, marginality, social segregation, physical mutilation and psychological suffering of woman bearing the wearisome burden of the canons of patriarchy. The writers were inspired to share annals of love and longing lurking inside the psyche of women who are destined to survive in the invisible space and are deprived of the ultimate realization of their human self. Such a paradigm of speculation paved a way for the exceptional achievements of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Nargis Dalal, Kiran Desai and others. The compulsive urges of these writers both as an insider and outsider encouraged them to break the long existing ethics of 'silence' as metaphor for female subjugation and endurance of patriarchal authority. It is said:

"Postmodern feminists are so profoundly feministic that they transcend the boundaries of feminism and offer to women freedom from oppressive thought." (Prabhakar: 19)

The women novelists are desperate to search out human potentials of women beyond gender-centric identity and it is an inevitable quest to eliminate the boundaries of distinctive spaces. Through one of her protagonists, Indu in the novel *The Roots and Shadows*, Shashi Deshpande comments:

"Women, women, Women... I got sick of it, there was nothing else. It was a kind of narcissism. And if we had looked on ourselves in a cage, and thrown away the key." (*Roots and Shadows:* 78)

The traditions of social order in context of feminist discourse admits of humiliations and injustice. However, Shoba Rao's present novel Girls Burn Brighter that came out in 2018, can be placed in the category of realistic feminist fiction but it is a novel with a difference. It has been appreciated as "powerful and unforgettable narrative" set in the remote village of South India. The narrative is focussed on the struggle for two friends Poornima and Savitha who survive under the dark clouds of poverty and deprivation. Poornima's mother faces her unfortunate death as the victim of cancer and she was to bear the infliction of her cruel father. For reckless father the only option remains to get Poornima married as soon as possible. Her father hires Savitha who turns out to be the counterpart of father and takes the responsibility of the family as a bread-earner. Sharing the unprotected and insecured life conditions Savitha and Poornima become good friends but gloomy shadows persist as they are treated as the objects of public use. Shobha Rao passing through the inner consciousness of these two women constructs an effective and power edifice of woman's suffering. She investigates their life as deal, "a deal for her body, yet for its blooming and then for its bleeding and then for the virginity and then for her being and then for her widowing." (25) This anticipated structural growth of the idea of women's suffering denotes the rational understanding of the issue involving deep felt emotional dimensions.

The novel *Girls Burn Brighter* is set in Indra Valli. At the outset of the novel the focus is on Poornima's relation with her disabled mother and just at the edge of death, she minutely observes the reactions of mother and father. Mother's suffering and father's self-pleasure are the two dimensions to weave the fabric of her consciousness. The novelist comments, "But Sunlight, and moonlight weren't Poornima's only consciousness." (7) Poornima has a realization of this loss and her eyes are filled with

tears. She manages to go to Indra Valli temple to offer prayers to her mother and further she passes her time in "dreamless sleep." Poornima survives with the latent insecurity if she gets married, who would look after Charkha, the emblem of her mother's memory. Poornima suddenly finds a strange lady in her household brown as Savitha. She develops emotional bonding with her without any inhibitions. Poornima whose marriage was settled shares all her pain with Savitha because in her impoverished position, the marriage was only a safe remedy. Revealing her insecurity amid hardships, Savitha admits, "don't look at death, don't look at poverty, don't look at how they crawled through life, how they wait for you, walk you, before they end you." (31) Poornima gets married and her insecurity increases with the cult of self-adjustment in undesirable marriage. Poornima asserts her resistance against the demands of dowry in marriage because she is worried about security in marriage for her sister. She declares, "I'm not getting married." (33) On her resistance, there comes the proposal of marriage with the anticipated possibilities of second marriage. Amidst gloom and despair, there occurs the occasion of Poornima's Bride-viewing ceremony. Shobha Rao presents elaborate picture of the rituals full of securities to be performed on the occasion of engagement ceremony and it was a disgusting affair to Poornima. With deep consolation, she admits, "That's it! That's how we do, that's we're safe." (41) Poornima's marriage brings domination and humiliation. Her husband declares, "It's the audacity of you girls, you modern girls, that will be your ruin, that will be my ruin." (43) Entrapped in the odds of life, the greatest despair in Poornima was the possibility of separation from Savitha. Gradually, she starts naked tedious menial labour from morning till night to keep the body and soul together but always seeks consolation in her company and makes an emotional tribute, "Are you the full moon." (53) With commencement of matrimonial ceremony, Poornima finds herself stupefied with the horrors of existence. Agony and suffering seem to be the culmination of her desires. Revealing her physical and mental state, the novelist comments:

"Poornima wake that morning and realized there was a breath. Not a cool, not a cool breath but she rejoiced. Her mother must be watching. She must be speaking. She must be saying, Poornima I'm happy." (61)

However, crude reality behind this illusion proves hostile and weak. Poornima in the care of her wear remains in dismay for her poverty expressed in the form of dirty smells and thatched houses. The crisis and confusion persist in the life of Poornima and Savitha because they have encountered several evils attending their poverty. People are busy in drinking. At this juncture, the novelist presents minute details regarding the impact of poverty on psyche of woman and ultimate effect on there consciousness. These impressions become the integral part of conscience and they are not to be forgotten. Regarding the sensibility of Poornima, the novelist observes:

"Poornima felt herself sink and sink as storm, she knows she was asleep but she could still hear Savitha's voice. It seemed to go on and on like the murmuring of wind, the fall of rain. And she hears her say don't forget a thing. Not one thing. If you forget a thing, it's like you have joined the storm at the bottom of the sea." (73)

Bitterness of conditions helps them to frame a definite psyche of Poornima and Savitha. The ultimate news of the death of her mother diverts Poornima's consciousness into other world. Poornima is lost in the clouds of nothingness but both Poornima and Savitha with the identical set of memories divert in the different directions with their identical set of memories.

The novel *Girls Burn Brighter* moves in two distinctive directions separately operating on the consciousness of Poornima and Savitha. The next part of the novel is the exclusive construction of the life of Poornima. For poverty and the sudden death of mother, Poornima's marriage is postponed for indefinite period of time. She remains confined to her lust. Amid chaos and confusion Poornima's marriage takes place but she remains indifferent and hostile to the rituals of marriage. Her disgust is well expressed in the following confession:

"No, I don't want this Sari. I don't want this day, I don't want this father. What do I want, what do I want?" (93)

She raises interrogations but remains silent on alternative solution and it becomes an interrogation on woman's predicament. In all panic, she admits to her father, "I want to stop." The burden is even on the mind of father who admits, "Don't be absurd, don't be absurd, don't be absurd." (95) It was a forced marriage in which there was little space for her choice and, therefore, she makes a confession, "She understood in that moment she was married." (92) After marriage, she was forced to live in the filthy hut in inhuman conditions and there she was subjected to sexual colonialism expressed in the form of the humiliation of her self-respect and mutilation of her body. The novelist comments:

"It was the look of man: undressing her, tearing off her clothes her innocence, ripping it with his teeth, biting at the tender heart of her and then laughing and cruel and savoring the completeness of his inquisition. Its terror and its desire...." (99)

This abuse in marital relationship fills her with horror and spoils the inner reservoir of her fortified self. In the fact of this filthy condition, she reminds of her past when she used to nurture the dream of going back to office. Her freedom is restricted with the authority of Kishan, "Don't get exercised. It doesn't work." (104) In sex relation, Kishan abuses her imposing his wild passion and laughs with regular intervals to increase the intensity of his treacherous act. All the physical pain remains unexpressed. In poverty, Poornima gets a dowry of five thousand but she is not permitted to ask about it. In the family no one cares her sentiments and ailment including that of Kishan, her husband. She feels isolated in her mental relationship and comes to a painful realization, "I can't help it. I can't help it if my father doesn't have money." (113) Under the pressure of oppressive thought, she remains awake.

Savitha's suffering is no way different from Poornima. Her life too begins in poverty and uncertainty. She didn't have any money, not a single paisa to get access to the main stream of life. The experience of Savitha in Vijaywada was horrible, sexually tortured and obscure. Shobha Rao presents a deep account of her suffering in the hands of lorryman who looked into her eyes, almost "kindly into her and then he spite in her face." (179) Here she was destined with team leader known as Guru. The residence of Guru was brothel where girls get shelter to be a commercial parterns. She minutely watches the reactions and responses of these girls and Savitha unconsciously identifies herself with them. Guru in this brothel led them to undesirable and forced sexual relations. In the brothel Savitha comes in contact of various absurd customers and each deal intensifies her weariness and she realizes the awkward burden of her own existence. Novelist records the oppressive mechanism ruining the peace of her mind.

She is so engrossed in her thoughts that in her consciousness even the thoughts of Savitha remain fragmented. She only finds suffocation and passivity in her personal life. Lost in her private spaces, her mind and ear are enamoured by the sweet sound of garland seller of Jasmine. She starts thinking beyond the domains of the conventions of matrimonial ties. She starts clamouring for emancipated spaces essential for growth. With Kishore, she starts learning and thinking differently. The novelist admits, "Poornima... began to see the world differently, she began to see it with a kind of clarity, there was what you owed and thence was what you could sell to pay off what you owed." (123) The frustrations of life dictate to realize the rational understanding of the complexity of life. In her marital life she didn't recall the single day of contentment and self-respect. She is encouraged to break perpetual silence, "Poornima wanted to say, but she didn't." Recollecting her consciousness, she asserts, "I won't go." It was her affirmation of voice in the family of Kishan. Under disgust she starts withdrawing herself from Kishan's life. Instead of going to Kishan's bedroom, she prefers to move on the terrace. With the realization of oppressive mechanism, she starts constructing her voice. For her independent thinking, the conspiracy of the family left her to burn with oil to crush the sparks of life within her. After being admitted to the hospital, she was left to the mercy of God because Kishan and his mother refused to pay medical bills. It is only Divya, Kishan's sister brings a glass of milk for her. As a consequence of this abuse, with the bandages off, she looked "even more grotesque than she did with them on." Withdrawal from Kishan's life makes her restless to search out Savitha. She comes in contact of Rishi, one stranger and seeks his help to search for Savitha and he reveals burden of her wounded psyche and admits:

"She was tired. She was tired of deals. Every moment in women's life was a deal, a deal of her body; first for its blooming and then for her wilting, first in her bleeding then for her virginity and then for her being and then for her widowing." (194)

Savitha expresses her anxiety for the security of wounded women but without least shame Guru comments, "What do you mean. You won't go? Think of all money." (197) Being disgusted with these oppressive idea Savitha decides to move to America to get rid of her henious life conditions in India. Her old mother in her simplicity intends to migrate to America. Even after migration, Savitha fails to accommodate unhealthy life condition and starts nauseating and her memory turns back to the childhood cousins. In America, she resides in a camp. Here she comes in contact of Mohan. In the camp, there were several abuses on the widows and it generalized a pervasive psyche on Savitha. In the brothel, that Savitha has a job in Vijaywada. It provides a direction to the swinging spirit of Poornima. As a compensation for her terrible anguish, she determines to move to Vijaywada in search of Savitha. She comes in contact of Padma and Geeta who were sufferers in their own way. Geeta and Padma assisted by Mohan used to work as a cleaner in an apartment and here there were all sorts of abuses and miseries that petrify. Savitha arrives at Seattle. This travel was nothing but a chair of afflictions.s She states, "The second helping Geeta's kindness, Mohan's kindnessmade her think of Poornima and more tears come to her eyes, through these she knew were for different reason." (223) For a while in the company of Mohan, she diverts in the world of beauty and happiness but it was only a temporary respite in her life. While working in the apartment, she finds a long arrivals of sexual multilation migrated from other world. There are filthy remarks on the lips, breasts, skin and other secret body parts that make their life hell. When they entered the room, "he kissed her roughtly and than handed her the bottle clear liquor." (194) There she was amazed to find Geeta and Suresh and is gripped in the anticipated fear. She survives under the persistent fear sexual mutilation. Emotional conflict grips her consciousness and inspite of having a realization of the suffering of Geeta and Padma she secretly escapes from that place.

Poornima as soon as gets intimation of Savitha's arrival, she becomes desperate to search out for Poornima. As soon as she gets information, of her escape to Switzerland, she becomes restless to migrate to Switzerland. She dwindles in diverse commitment for obtaining appropriate Visa. For assimilation in the climate of Switzerland, for Poornima the learning of language skill seems to be great challenge. Besides that of language, she sees possibilities of merger in personal relations. Poornima encounter a widow who was looking like a dool with negative impression, she gradually turns into her inner consciousness isolated and and depressed. Poornima after coming back to settle again mingles in her own loneliness but she comes in contact of Mohan. Poornima's search was futile and depressing.

*The Girls Burn Brighter* follows an unconventional trend where Savitha and Poornima moves in unconventional directions and draw a conclusion of pervasive burden on feminine psyche of oppressive mechanism of patriarchy. The novel is constructed in the backdrop of realistic ground beyond the sentimental and radical canons of patriarchy. The protagonist follows the mechanism of affirmation deviating from the tradition of non-conformity. Shobha Rao establishes that women surviving in poverty essentially share the psyche of suppression.

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# Jayanta Mahapatra as an Advocate of the Marginalized

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#### Abstract

The basis of any literature deals with the writer, his work and the society he lives in. He stands as a representative of the society in which he dwells. He is like a mirror reflecting the ecstasy, agony, bitterness and hostility that he sees and acts as an index of our society. The writers of various eras have vouchsafed voice to the marginalized of the society of their own. Jayanta Mahapatra is a man of the voice of the voiceless. He speaks for the marginalized. He expresses how sex and hunger toss men and push them to the level of being inhuman. All his poems sprout from the soul of humanity and touch each corner of our conscience. The characters in his poems question and wake our inner consciousness and whip up our senses. His poems depict his land as bloodstained and disintegrated one and at the end leave our conscience dumbstruck. His poems have the scattered figures of women playing different roles as mother, sister, friend, wife and daughter. This paper focuses on Jayanta Mahapatra as an advocate of the marginalized women. It echoes the silent sufferings and

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sacrifices of women and the unseen thread that prevents them from stepping ahead.

Women for ages have suffered and battered by the patriarchal society and by their own gender. Seldom a few had the guts to come out of the shell and registered their existence and had laid a path. But the majority had drawn within the shell designed by men and believed that they cannot break the invisible cordon. In due course, these women had gone voiceless and forgot to remember that they have a voice of their own. The world of Jayanta Mahapatra is filled with women who like tortoise carry the burden on them. He as a representative talks for them and about them. He infuses his soul into women and treads into the dark corners of their minds. His poems advocate for these marginalized creatures whose presence is hardly noticed.

#### Keywords: Patriarchal, Austerity, Alienation, Satiate, Shroud.

Jayanta Mahapatra, a Professor of Physics has secured a place for himself in the history of Indian Writing in English. He started writing poetry only in his late thirties. Arora says that "his fractured identity (Christian and Hindu) makes him able to feel in English and Oriya both" (Arora 82). Though he is a Science Professor, he has an aesthetic approach towards his theme. Shyam Sundar Padihari praises him as a successful writer "in bringing a native tradition alive in his poetry" (Padihari 77). He thinks that poetry is the best tool to whip the society. He unveils the brutal reality of the society that we live in. Since he is a part of patriarchy, he feels that he is also responsible for the happenings. So, he tries to stand as a father figure for this underprivileged gender. He owes much to his place Odisha, the then Oriya for enabling him to see the true colours of his people.

In his poem "A Missing Person", Mahapatra presents a typical Indian wife who stands in front of a mirror and searches for her image. She is waiting for her husband to return home. Though she finds it very difficult to stay awake in the late hours, she could not sleep. Myles opines that "The woman in the poem is physically nonexistent due to living in a patriarchal society and hence, not only the room is dark but the very personality of the woman is 'dark', that is, emotionally dead" (Myles 3). The tradition that she had followed all these years prevents her from sleeping before the husband's arrival. She cannot question her husband. In that dark room she searches for her identity. The woman in the poem is physically invisible due to living

In the darkened room a woman cannot find her reflection in the mirror Waiting as usual at the edge of sleep In her hands she holds the oil lamp whose drunken yellow flames know where her lonely body hides. ("A Missing Person")

In "Dawn at Puri" Mahapatra senses the pain of a widowed mother. He registers a scene that he encounters in Puri Jagannath temple. He reads the pain of her heart and voices out her wishes that her heart aches for.

White-clad widowed women past the centres of their lives are waiting to enter the Great Temple their austere eyes stare like those caught in a net hanging by the dawn's shining strands of faith. ("Dawn at Puri")

He depicts a clear picture of a widow in white attire waiting to enter the temple. Dr. Suresh Chandra Pande views the great temple and comments, "where faith and austerity walk side by side" (Chandra Pande 101). They have the 'austere' eyes that stare like a fish caught in a net. They show only one faith that she wants to get cremated in that holy place; it's believed that they get salvation and reach heaven when they are cremated here. They suffer alienation and are left alone in this unkind society. The poet has entitled it as 'dawn' to imply that he expects a dawn in the lives of these unattended mothers.

Hunger, the source of all evil deeds is exquisitely handled by the poet. His clear depiction of hunger feeds our soul as it feeds the little girl in the poem "Hunger". It skins out the society's crooked deeds of hunger. The poem throws open the severity of hunger that men and women are forced to sell themselves. No one is spared from its cruel sight. This very true nature of hunger is clearly stated in the poem:

I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen... feel her. I'll be back soon, your bus leaves at nine. the sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wile. long and lean, her ears were cold as rubber. she opened her warmy legs wide. I felt the hunger there, the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside. ("Hunger" 24)

Father is the hero for any girl. But in this poem the father is forced to exploit his daughter and pushes his daughter for prostitution to satiate his hunger. The father, a fisherman requests a stranger to take his daughter. By saying that his daughter has just turned fifteen, he is tempting the man to give a try. The father talks about the heaviness on his back. Here the word 'heavy' has different connotations like misery, guilt, family, responsibilities etc. He asks the stranger to feel her and to fulfil his sexual thirst. When the father sends the man in, the girl remains silent. Her consent was not required and she takes the orders of her father as an obedient girl. Here Mahapatra sympathizes with the father and grieves for that adolescent girl.

In "The Whorehouse in the Calcutta Street", Mahapatra puts forward the plight of women who due to various circumstances are thrust to play the role of prostitutes. All through the history, they were kept aloof and treating them equally was termed as blasphemy.

Dream children, dark, superfluous; you miss them in the house's dark spaces, how can't you? Even the women don't wear them-like jewels or the precious stones on the throat; ("The Whorehouse in the Calcutta Street" 17)

He comprehends their silences and gives shape to their thoughts. These women have families to look after. They need to feed the hungry children they had born. The family pressures, male exploitation and deprivation of self have driven these women to this street. The poet refers these little innocents as the 'dark children' of that dark life. The darkness is perpetually set on them and they were denied of the right to stay in light. Their lives are filled only with still silences. Even the prostitute mothers don't hug their children. The poet tries to break this silence and poses various questions to men who come to satiate their sexual pleasure.

Mahapatra reads the loneliness of woman who lost herself. "The physiological and psychological loneliness of such women who live life shrouded in darkness as they are perpetually confined to their dark, dingy abodes engulfed in a solitude which will perhaps, never be thrust aside" (Myles 4). She is like any other old thing in the house. Even in solitude she has been watched and could not make any attempt to step out of the house. Her life is confined in this room and she has to perform only the duty of an obedient wife.

On most nights there's a woman

who just lies in her bed, open

like any old thing in the house she lives in

Like time, that pours over her. ("On Most Nights" 33)

Mahapatra's grief grows deeper and deeper when he sees the women of his own land struggle from the hands of patriarchy. In "A Summer Poem", the man thinks he can control a woman when he marries her. The women think that they are mere puppets in the hands of men and they don't have any voice of their own. They go wherever they are dragged in by the men they were tied in marriage.

Mornings of middens smoke under the sun The good wife lies in my bed through the long afternoon; dreaming still, unexhausted by the deep roar of funeral pyres. ("A Summer Poem" 35)

Everything is hot during the sunny afternoons and even her dreams. She can see her wishes fulfilled in dream and mete it out only in 'funeral pyres'.

In "Summer" the poet sees more than a summer. He not only portrays the usual day of a summer but he sees between the lines of the summer day. He asks a question 'Who needs a future?' the mother or the daughter. The mother is like a mango tree and she cannot keep her daughter with herself forever. She might drop her daughter from her hold any time from now, since she is a 10 year old girl. The little girl though she is playful, knows well that she doesn't belong here. The home will never be hers. Like a green mango she has to lose this warmth and be dropped from the attachment.

Who needs the future?

A ten-year-old girl combs her mother's hair, where crows of rivalries are quietly nesting. The home will never be hers. In a corner of her mind a living green mango drops softly to earth. ("Summer" 18)

The poet says that the rivals i.e, the men, are surrounded by them and she cannot stay there for quite long. The poet is unhappy for the women who leave everything and go and adapt to the place where she had never been to.

Jayanta Mahapatra is true to the land where he was raised. He could witness "the wind dying in the shadows, in the soil" (Meena Alexander 42). He takes Odisha as a representation of whole India. He witnesses the brutality that is exercised on women

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of his land. He thinks poetry is the right medium to express his pain and finds it as a right platform to take it to the world's ears. He sees his own mother, sister, daughter in every woman he encounters and experiences the pain personally. He stands tall and advocates ending their untold pathos. He puts forward innumerable questions but in vain. Mahapatra grieves that "Only the silences stare back at us, like the sound of the waves beating against the wall of the sea" (Mahapatra 18). He attends to the call that rises from his deep consciousness and tries to sort out solutions through his poems.

In one of the interviews with Mahapatra, Swapan K. Banerjee says "it is the only means through which he could take his heart out to his fellow men" (Banerjee 83). He writes that "he relentlessly probes the actual role of poetry in the present day society being plagued by the grievous ill as never before." (Banerjee 83). It is true, since Mahapatra uses poetry as a powerful weapon to annihilate the stale society. His poems are those of cannons that aim at the malevolent society that oppresses its own female counterparts. He could not withstand that women are often being victimized and nobody cares about it. He wants to register the anguish of the victims through his poetry or at least submits the torment of these marginalized women in front of the world, so that the world will know 'the pain'.

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# Voice of Margin: Anita Desai's Cry, The Peacock

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#### Abstract

The paper focuses on marginalized voices. The role of prophecy and Psychology is very important in the novel Cry, The Peacock. It explores the human values present in the society. These values can be seen as a misguided experience of superstition. There is hardly any rational approach to study such kind of expression of intellect. In this novel the central character Maya is affected by a prophecy that her husband or she herself is going to die during the fourth year of her marriage. This prophecy keeps on haunting her all the time. When her married life enters the fourth year her consciousness starts declining. She is dutiful and loyal towards her husband Gautama but she is unable to forget the prophecy and her behavior starts changing. Her continuous thinking convinces her that her husband is ill fated and he is going to die. Now a question arises that this superstition of Maya is her foolishness or a kind of cruel instinct? As a wife also she is an ideal so it would be not judicious to accuse her of designing criminal impulses. There is also an argument that it can be her fear. She loves her husband but she also loves her own life. She

\*Dr. Susanta Kumar Sahu, Lecturer, Dept. of English, Narayani Science College, Athagadapatna, Ganjam, Odisha. Email: susantakumarsahu883@gmail.com cannot see either of them in danger but the prophecy says that one has to die. The prophecy can be wrong but the fear associated with the prophecy is real. She believes in this prophecy and her behavior is guided through this belief system. It becomes her voice which seems marginalized in her married life.

**Keywords:** Prophecy, Psychology, Superstition, Marginalized, Submissive.

In this novel Cry, The Peacock the name of the central character is Maya. From the beginning of the novel she is obsessed with the prophecy of an astrologer. This prophecy says that she or her husband will not survive during the fourth year of their marriage. Her father treats this prophecy as baseless but she believes in the prophecy. This prophecy is repressed in her conscious mind but not forgotten. It is further triggered by the death of Toto, her pet dog. This prophecy keeps her disturbed all the time and she becomes restless. Initially she talks to herself and thinks that it is she not here husband who ill fated. She is going to die soon as the marriage has reached into the fourth year. Later we find that she starts loving her own life and thus she is in a state of dilemma that is she or her husband is ill fated? According to Freud if a person is superstitious it means that there is some kind of suppressed hostility around the person. It can be understood by a quotation:

It can be recognized most clearly in neurotics suffering from obsessional thinking... that superstition derives from suppressed hostile and cruel impulses. Superstition is in large part of expectation of trouble; and a person who has harbored frequent evil wishes against others, but has been brought up to be good and has therefore repressed such wishes into the unconscious, will be especially ready to expect punishment for his unconscious wickedness in the form of trouble threatening him from without.

Now a question arises that these symptoms can be seen also in those characters who feel marginalized. Is the superstitious belief of Maya an outcome of her repression? Is she feeling repressed? She is an obedient daughter and a submissive wife. She has been treated and taught like this. She abides by all the rules and regulations of a patriarchal society where women who are submissive and obedient are considered as fair ladies. Then we are bound to think from where she has begotten such cruel impulses? It seems that she accuses her husband Gautama responsible for her plight. Her instincts are unfulfilled and she is not happy in her married life. To solve the problems of her life now she wishes that he is going to die. The analytical mind of Gautama is countered by her emotionality. Freudian theory also says what critics would find that Maya is not satisfied with her husband. In the beginning of the novel it has been admitted by Maya that she is sexually not satisfied.

It clearly shows that she is searching her satisfaction and these findings give her a symbolic satisfaction. In spite of all these things she does not try to find her happiness in any kind of extra marital relationship. Her moral scrupulosity does not even allow her to think of such issues. She is also not strong enough to sublimate such powerful biological urge. It results into her hallucinations. This continuous frustration of the biological need can be catastrophic to the characters like Maya. A healthy emotional and sexual fulfilment would have given her a meaningful life. This could have healed her and the prophecy might have decayed with time. But it is not normal to her. She is frustrated and unhappy and it leads to her hallucinations and imaginations.

It is not only the physical satisfaction but also the emotional as well as mental satisfaction which is the matter of concern for Maya. Anita Desai has tried to portray a very realistic character which can be found anywhere in a typical Indian society. Women who are marginalized or who are not given any chance to speak or prove their worth feel oppressed. Similar thing happens to Maya. Initially it has been shown to us that she is a perfect lady as she is a very obedient daughter and a submissive wife but her words are very limited. She cannot live beyond the four walls, she feels frustrated. Her husband Gautama is also a typical representation of a patriarchal society. He is busy in his own work and thus he hardly cares for his wife.

In Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*, other female protagonists are tolerant and submissive but do not seem to be ready to sensibly record the critical familial situations, especially in husband-wife relationship. They sacrifice their identity and individuality and they suffer from intense isolation because they could not reconcile with the demands of their psyche and with those of the world around them. They view the world as a hostile place and often take a negative stance, which generates psychic states of fear, guilt, anger, bitterness, anxiety, helplessness and depression. These women writers question the need to accept the man made image of a woman.

*Cry, The Peacock* is mainly concerned with disharmony between husband and wife relationship. The incompatible temperament between Gautama and Maya results in tension Maya is poetic, high–strung, dreamy, sensitive and emotional, while Gautama is realistic, insensitive, rational hard and cold, detached, philosophical and remote. Maya and Gautama are poles apart and lack of interaction between them leads to loneliness. There is a break down in communication and Maya gets isolated and detached. The matrimonial bonds that bind the two are very fragile and tenuous, the growing tension between them reaches its climax when Maya kills Gautama and then commits suicide.

Indian society which, definitely, is marching ahead towards development still women are assigned traditional roles. They cannot come out of these customary roles because of conservative outlook of the male hegemony. She is imprisoned within the four walls of the house and remains isolated because there is no one to share her grief. Even if she is provided with the material comforts, she tries hard to let others listen to her agony which goes unheard in most of the cases. This is exactly what we see in Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock.* The identity of a woman is generally connected to and defined by societal and cultural norms, she is defined only in relation to a man as she is deprived of an identity of her own. Simone de Beauvoir puts it in a right way in her *The Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,".

Anita Desai's novels are the manifestation of female predicament and her preoccupation with the woman's inner world; frustration and storm raging inside her mind intensify her predicament. Desai's concern with the emancipation of woman is vividly manifested in her novels. Cry, The Peacock primarily is not only the story of Maya, the heroine but it also contains many other female characters that represent different problems. This novel is outstanding and is considered to be a trend-setter in feminist writing. Desai portrays a hyper-sensitive, and cultured Maya and explains in detail her trapped feminine psyche right from childhood to her untimely death as a youth. She is a victim of many social and psychological predicaments. Her social status affects her psyche to the extent that she becomes an easy victim of many known and unknown inner traumas. There is no denying the fact that Maya receives a comfortable upbringing. She has no shortage of material comforts, but the high intensity of pain she faces at mental level takes her to a tragic end.

Maya suffers day in and day out from certain obsessions and an astrologer's prediction of the death of one of the two- her own or her husband's-after four years of marriage. Her obsession with death, her father-fixation and her marital discord are the three strands around which the plot has been woven. *Cry, The Peacock* describes the complexities of modern Indian culture from a feminist perspective while highlighting the female predicament of maintaining self-identity as an individual woman. Desai makes Maya her mouthpiece to express her views about woman.

There are other women in this novel apart from Maya but hers is the heart- rendering story. Nila, Gautama's sister and his mother these two are the women who symbolically present positivity and strength. Nila has the ability to fight the odds which come into her life.

She represents a class of women who silently suffer at the hands of men. Her actions and reactions may not always draw one's sympathy and can be dismissed as the useless thoughts of a luxurious mind. Her suffering is also a luxurious suffering but the demands of the social changes put forth by the novelist can't be ignored. The life style and fashion of living away from the parental house, the mother living away from the children and the increasing busy life, are some of the fractions of changing patterns. The novelist thus clearly depicts the female predicament in various aspects and excels, particularly in elaborating the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women tortured through domination, negligence and loneliness in their interface with men in their life. Certainly the novel is about Maya, but all the secondary characters like Nila, Pom, Leila, the mother etc. contribute to the poly timbered voice of the women and the issues related to them.

In this novel *Cry, The Peacock* Maya the protagonist is constantly seized by fear of death, loneliness and alienation from her husband Gautama, who preached detachment. It describes the alienation in the relationship between Gautama and Maya and the consequences they face due to alienation. Alienation refers to estrangement that occurs in the relation between Maya and Gautama. Maya experiences a strange feeling of not belonging to anybody. It can be considered as a trend setting novel as it deals with the mental rather than the physical aspects of its character. Maya wants to be attached to the world and its abounding charms, while Gautama wants to remain aloof and detached so as to attain 'peace of mind' This attitude is the main reason to alienate them from each other.

In a male dominated society women are only marginalized and sidelined. According to Meenakshi Anand and Umesh Prasad.

She is a puppet in the new masters hands, he handles her as he likes. It does not occur to him that she is a living being and

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as such she has her own desires, aspirations and dreams. Her cries and emotions go unheard and un noticed and her pain goes unfelt. But enough is enough. Unable to bear this time comes when her anguish becomes too pronounced to submit to repression and it manifests itself in trauma, suicide and death. This symptom generally remains unnoticed by male writers, but female writers x-ray the genuine feminine anguish. It is an integral part of their lives. Anita Deasi's novel *Cry*, *The Peacock* depicts the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that rumbles like thunder and suddenly blazes forth like lightning. It is more compelling than the outer weather, the physical geography or the visible action. Since her preoccupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge the style, supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fearfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters.

Despite her marriage with Gautama Maya suffers from isolation. She felt desperate and disappointed in her marital life. In such a situation it is obvious that husband and wife drift far apart due to loveless marriage, life gets crushed as their marriage is based on compromise rather than on affection and understanding. There is no communication and companionship.

For Maya also the solution is neurotic but this solution is not enough and as her marriage crosses the fourth year she desires the death of Gautama. She believes in the prophecy very much and imagines that one has to die and it is not she but her husband is going to die and thus grants her the freedom to live. Several critics have said that in the works of Anita Desai we can figure out the elements of existentialism. This term existentialism is a philosophical idea which is modern and it emphasizes on life experiences. It says that we ourselves are responsible for our action. Two great philosophers like Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus view each and every individual as an isolated person who are present in the universe which is alien. In this alien world the individual conceives nothing. Thus there is nothingness in life and it seems that there is a void. Today we are living in a wasteland which is spiritually barren. Today modern man keeps on searching nothing in life. They are barren and simply absurd. In *Cry, The Peacock* the central character Maya is a perfect example of barrenness. Her condition is existential and she is preoccupied with the prophecy of death. She is a marginalized woman who speaks less.

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## Jhumpa Lahiri: A Diasporic Writer

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#### Abstract

Jhumpa Lahiri (1967), born of Bengal parents, was awarded Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2000 for her debut collection of short stories entitled Interpreter of Maladies, (1999). Her very first novel The Namesake (2003) made her more popular. Her second short story collection Unaccustomed Earth (2008) has again established her as one of the most excellent and commendable fictionists of the world. Not only a Diaspora writer of Indian origin, but she can also be called an American writer, because of her constant obsession with the American way of life. Her narrative world shuttles between India and the U.S.A. The imbibing of influences of various cultures and knowledge about contemporary authors and her excellent narrative technique establish her as one of the towering figures in the World Literature. Jhumpa Lahiri is the kind of writer who makes one want to grab the next person one see and say Read this! She is a dazzling story teller with a distinct voice, an eye for nuance and an ear for irony. She is one of the finest short story writers, who is able to draw her readers into the story not only through her details and description but also by making them feel the emotional,

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physical and mental needs of the characters. She has a rare gift for tucking away memories and observations in the back of her literary mind and churning them into a mixture of sensitive and thought-provoking stories. Jhumpa Lahiri has become internationally famous. Her works portray the lives of Indians in exile, of people navigating and negotiating between ethnic culture and traditional culture they have inherited.

Shilpi Ahuja says: The stories are on-the-face direct and embrace you in their warm folds without you even being aware of it. She has helped in throwing clearer light on the Indian's perspective of life in an alien land. However, the book does not reek of ethnocentricity-it has a universal flavor and appeal that an immigrant from any corner of the world would be able to relate to. (2001: 148)

Keywords: Diaspora, Identity Crisis, Culture

#### **Diasporic Elements in Her Works:**

A transposition of a subjective experience, Lahiri's The Namesake is a narrative which evaluates the nuances of American social life and the attempts by the migrants to replace the same on a par with their native or 'root' culture. Within the framework of familial lives of Bengali immigrants in the U.S., the novel explores and exposes the deep schisms behind the veneer of equality and uniformity in America, marked by its shopping malls, suburban housing, etc to a more poignant and startling cultural depths-a hiatus too wide to bridge. However, it is in The Namesake, her first novel that a sustained attempt is made to deal with these concerns of two generations of an immigrant Indian family. What emerges at the end of this deeply psychological study is the hybridity and luminal existence of the diasporic community, what with the ubiquitous conflict between strong ethnic ties and a matching resolve to settle down in the New World. In the process, the feeling of 'neither there nor here' spills over into the lives of the second generation also. It is a deeply moving and finely wrought family drama centered around the Ganguli couple, first generation Indian immigrants, whose experiences in the U.S. are pitted against those of their children, complicated further by the choice of name for their son-all of which leads to the clash of cultures resolving into a sense of hybridity and in-betweenness.

She has a rare gift for tucking away memories and observations in the back of her literary mind and churning them into a mixture of sensitive and thought-provoking stories. The collection of her nine distinct short stories titled *Interpreter of Maladies (1999)* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the Hemingway Foundation and/PAN Award. It was also chosen as *The New Yorker's* Best Debut of the year. This debut work addresses sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indians or Indian immigrants. The themes of these stories include marital difficulties, miss-carriages, and the disconnection between first and second generation immigrants in the United States. The stories are set in the north-eastern United States, and in India, particularly Calcutta.

For example in *A Temporary Matter* the relationship between the Indian couple Shoba and Shukumar begins to break up after Shoba delivered a stillborn child. There is incompatibility between them and they try to avoid each other. She is very busy with her work while Shukumar neglects his Ph.D. work sleeping most of the day. They discuss and debate on certain serious events in their life. They seek to find consolation in the dark when the scheduled power cuts occur between 8 to 9 PM. "He wondered what Shoba would tell him in the dark. The worst possibilities had an affair. That she did not respect him for being thirty-five and still a student.... I cheated on my Oriental Civilization exam in college.... It had happened over fifteen years ago. He felt relief now, having told her." (IM-16, 17).

Lahiri as a Diaspora writer deals with the multicultural society both from *inside* and *outside*, seeking to find her native identity as well as the new identity in the adopted country. This brings in a clash of cultures and dislocation and displacement. It is the predicament of people in Diaspora that the fictionist attempts to analyze through her oeuvre of fiction writing. According to A.J. Sebastian: Lahiri as the omniscient observer applies the predicament of her characters to interpret the maladies gnawing into their immigrant life. She also attempts to cope with the dynamics of culture as well as Diaspora in each situation. Her stories, thereby, provide a powerful healing touch to immigrants caught in alienation, exile and isolation. (2010: 8)

The Namesake describes the story of an individual named Gogol who detests and fails in accepting his peculiar name. He endeavors to be detached from the ultimate reality, a fact of his life. JhumpaLahiri takes a complete new approach to present the identity clash of that character and manages to trap the person in his own name. Gogol realizes that his name is not an Indian, where his parents belonged, nor American, where he was born. When he finds that he was named after a Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, who was an eccentric genius, deeply paranoid, frustrated man. The detail of his namesake disturbs him a lot and suddenly he starts hating his name more than anything else. He then realizes that Gogol was the last name of Nikolai Gogol and even he was not having the name of Gogol. The more he knows about Gogol the more he feels betrayed by his parents. Here the parents act according to Bengali tradition. Over their pet name had a function to play.

Jhumpa Lahiri writes : Pet names are a persistent remnant of childhood, a reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder too, that one is not at all things to all people. (2001: 26)

### Smita Mohanty says:

In love and marriage they think (the young lovers) their parents are more tabooed and demonstrate physical affection publicly in 'uncelebrated' and 'depressing' manner. Gogol's affairs with Ruth a hippie girl and Maxims the Manhattan girl, is not liked by his parents on moral grounds since in Indian context love and marriage are taken as a sacred bond... Maxim confesses her affairs with her ex-boyfriends before Gogol. (2010: 58) In Lahiri's Unaccustomed Earth, the first generation migrants remain clustered together, showing their collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland. Though they left it for the possibility of distinction life in a tolerant host country, yet they know that they are not accepted by their host society and therefore feel insulated from it. For this insecurity they are constantly on the lookout for people belonging to their own community, searching for epidermic and cultural similarities. In order to avoid undesirable conflict with the norms of the host country the Diaspora, especially the men who are compelled to enter the mainstream through their jobs try to camouflage. In Unaccustomed Earth Ruma's father manages to look like an American.

She has become internationally famous. Her works portray the lives of Indians in exile, of people navigating and negotiating between ethnic culture and traditional culture they have inherited. They have to encounter everyday a baffling new world without any bias. Her thematic concerns include physical and emotional displacement, assimilation, loneliness, rootlessness, linguistic barriers, failed relationships, marital difficulties and misunderstandings. With a remarkable perception and insight, she delves deep into the psychological depths of her characters and reveals the inner world.

We realize that in their emotional displacement, the border between home and world becomes confused Lahiri's first collection of stories; *Interpreter of Maladies* is subtitled as "Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond." The present collection of study *Unaccustomed Earth* portrays the beyond. It goes beyond physical and psychological borders. These stories describe life as a whole and various relationships which are part and parcel of one's life. Lahiri has shown clearly that these bondages and vicissitudes one comes across in life makes the person a complete social being. The protagonists and other characters in these stories represent the diasporic struggle as well as journey of the self in quest of the lost identity. The meaning of one's existence lies not only within him but also related to the world and the fellow beings. This awareness makes one "strike roots into Unaccustomed Earth."

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, the title story deals with a second generation immigrant, Ruma, who is happily married to Adam, an American and they are settled in Seattle. Her son Akash is a perfect synthesis of Ruma and Adam. When Ruma was waiting for her father who was travelling a lot after her mother's death; "The sight of her father's care... upset her, freshly confirming the fact that she lived on a separate coast thousands of miles away from where she grew up... where neither of her parents... set foot." Moreover, in old age, her father resembled an American, with his grey hair and fair skin. By presenting this contradictory mindset the novelist shows where exactly the two different feelings of alienation and assimilation are amalgamated. Ruma's reflecting over her father's habit of gardening, the way he toiled in an unfriendly soil to cultivate the vegetables her mother liked to cook is symbolic of the process of acculturisation. Ruma along with her supportive American husband, offered her father to stay with her. The old man retired from a pharmaceutical company and now he is keen on his tours and doesn't like to forego his freedom and "live in the margin of his daughter's life, in the shadow of her marriage" (53). But he is very much delighted to see that his daughter is happy with her American husband. He too wants to heal his wounds of loneliness in his new-found passion in the company of Mrs. Bagchi. In a very short period he is able to bond with his half American grandson Akash, who is the third generation immigrant. Akash who completely immersed in the new culture, develops a strong fascination for his grandfather's habits that are foreign to him, including a foreign language. This interesting turn and twist to the story highlights the universal bond between a child and a grandparent.

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most eminent and accomplished writers of Indian Diaspora:

The works of Jhumpa Lahiri has led her to be counted among the leading writers like Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Amitav

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Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Gita Mehta, Shashi Tharoor, Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Rohinton Mistry, Kiran Desai and others. The basic theme of her writings is migrant experience relating to different sociological components. They include religion, race and culture based upon loneliness, homelessness, rootlessness, nihilism, existentialism, cultural confrontation in the globalized society, inter pooling, inter netting cross culture, search for root or identity, above all diasporic dilemma.

In the works of Jhumpa Lahiri comes up conjoining of ethnic identity with that of the national culture (which) is not an attempt at assimilation within the dominant culture but the preservation of an imagined homogeneous ethnicity attached nostalgically to a distend homeland. Here is involved a unique in between sensibility created from the conjoining of the two cultures—the native and the alien. Diaspora Protagonists are divided between two conflicting and contradictory cultures—that is, the native culture and the accultured culture. Their nostalgia impels the contra-acculturation as they become unable to resist the temptation to celebrate their native cultural practices.

Jhumpa Lahiri in her debut novel *The Namesake* weaves a story covering three decades. It is about the Ganguli household in the U.S.A. and shows a fine-tuned sensibility along with psychological realism. The Ganguli couple's immigrant experience is contrasted with the acculturation of their American-born children. The naming of their son as Gogol and later as Nikhil represents a conflict among different identities. Lahiri also describes Gogol's relations with his American girl friends and his short-term marriage to a Bengali girl also born of Indian immigrant parents. Through her tender narrative, JhumpaLahiri underlines the strenuous efforts needed to mediate between cultures and social practices.

The description of artificial ecology of beauty in cute language is an attribute in Jhumpa Lahiri's narratives. An example from her famous story *Interpreter of Maladies* shows her observation of details: "The temple, made of sandstone, was a massive pyramid like structure in the shape of a chariot. It was dedicated to the great master of life, the sun, which struck three sides of the edifice as it made its journey each day across the sky. Twenty-four giant wheels were carved on the North and South sides of the plinth. The whole thing was drawn by a team of seven horses, speeding as if through heavens". (Lahiri 1999:56)

### Jagdish Batra points out:

In the process, the in-betweenness spills over into the lives of the second generation also. It is a deeply moving and finely wrought family drama centered around the Ganguli couple, first generation Indian immigrants, whose experiences in the U.S. are pitted against those of their children, complicated further by the choice of name for their son– all of which leads to the clash of cultures resolving into a sense of hybridity and inbetweenness. (2014: 151)

Artificial ecology of beauty in cute language can be cited from *The Namesake* in the description of the household. The place is nicer than the expected from the grimy look of the lobby. The floors have been redone, the walls freshly painted, the ceiling dotted with track lights. The living room has a square dining table in the corner, and a desk and file cabinets set up in another. Three particle board bookcases line one wall. On the dining table, there is a pepper mill, a salt cellar, bright, clear-skinned Clementine arranged in a bowl. He recognizes versions of things he knows from home: a Kashmiri crewelwork carpet on the floor, Rajasthani silk pillows on the sofa, a cast-iron Nataraj on one of the bookcases.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Gerontological Ethos in Karnad's Yayati: Interrogating Ageing in Indian Culture

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#### Abstract

*Yayati* is Girish Karnad's debut play. It was published in 1961. The play is centred on the personal crisis of the playwright which emerged because of his parents' reluctance to send him abroad in order to pursue higher studies on Rhodes Scholarship. The parents feared that he might settle in Britain after completing higher studies there. To Karnad, such a mindset of parents might doom his illustrious future waiting in Britain. If one reads the dialogues of the text and delves into the psychological conflicts to be found in the interstices, one may conceive that the young author, in his attempt to showcase his own anxiety, has sidelined the need of the proper assessment of the ingenuity of the grievance of his parents.

**Keywords:** Gerentology, Culture, Ageing, Psycho-analysis, Metanarratives, Myth

The play prominently speaks about the changes that the relationship between younger people and their old parents was undergoing at the time when the play was written. Underneath

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the narrative that tells us the story of Yayati, there is another narrative that deals with how the meanings associated with ageing have been constructed, communicated and understood across times within Indian culture. In Indian literatures, there are a number of narratives which openly interact with the processes of the generation of meanings in old age. Ira Raja has edited an anthology of such narratives and the title of the anthology is *Grey Areas: An Anthology of Indian Fiction on Ageing*.<sup>1</sup> The present paper aims to interrogate different aspects of ageing in Indian culture in the light of instances from Karnad's *Yayati*.

The play begins with Sutradhara announcing the return of King Yayati's son, Pooru, to the palace after a long time. Pooru has recently completed his education in the hermitage under the guidance of renowned teachers. He is now coming home with his bride, Chitralekha, the princess of Anga. People assemble around the palace to see the newlywed couple.

The ambience external to the palace is quite festive. The interiors of the palace are filled with tensions. Devyani, the wife of Yayati, is found involved in a verbal scuffle with her slave and demon princess, Sharmistha. Devyani is the daughter of the guru of demons, Shukracharya. Sharmishtha is the daughter of a demon king. King Yayati, who belongs to the glorious Bharata dynasty, develops illicit relationship with Sharmishtha before the arrival of the newly married couple in the palace.

At the same time, we come to know that Shukracharya has also come to the palace in order to bestow his blessings upon Pooru and Chitralekha. Devayani catches the king along with Sharmishtha red handed. She complains to his father about Yayati's moral transgression. Listening about the adultery committed by Yayati, Shukracharya becomes so angry with him that he curses him with instant decrepitude.

At one time, Yayati had rescued Devayani from starving to death in the well. So Shukracharya takes a softer line and says that his curse will not work on Yayati if a young man accepts it and gives his youth to Yayati in exchange. Pooru suffers from a sense of alienation from his public identity. He has turned indifferent to the privileges of a prince. He is a typical existentialistic persona who prefers remaining engrossed with the memory of his dead mother to succeeding his father and much glorified forefathers. When no youth of the king's state turns ready to embrace the curse, Pooru offers his own youth to his father. Initially, Yayati shows his disapproval for this decision of him.

POORU: There is one person who is willing to take on the curse.

YAYATI: There is? Why didn't you say so? Who is it?

(For a moment, Yayati states uncomprehending. Then as the import of Pooru's remark strikes home)

YAYATI: Shut up, fool, I...I refuse to talk to you. (Karnad 49)

In the absence of Yayati, Pooru exchanges his youth with the curse of instant decrepitude.

Chitralekha refuses to accept an old man as her husband. She registers a strong protest against the way this exchange has ruined her marital life. Significantly, the exchange between the father and the son is not a forced one. She even makes Pooru a party to her accusations. About Pooru's action, Yayati says to Chitralekha, "He has taken the curse upon himself to come to grips with some inner turmoil of his own" (Karnad 64). This stand of Yayati turns him into a selfish villainous father.

Chitralekha commits suicide as a mark of her refusal to accept the ordeal imposed on her by the two men. Yayati, with a sense of remorse, requests Pooru to take back his youth and rule the state. Along with Sharmishtha, he goes into the forests as an old person.

The play, which has the function of showing how parents, sometimes, may be complicit in the dooming of their child's fortune, thus ends. Karnad hardly intends to cover psychological state of old parents who come to know that their son is going to Britain for higher education. One of the possibilities in such a case is that the son may settle abroad considering illustrious opportunities over the responsibility of taking care of the dependent father and mother. The playwright deems the vulnerability of his parents hidden in this possibility to be a case of selfish parents who decide not to allow their son to do something which is crucial for the future prospects of his career.

In *Grey Areas: An Anthology of Indian Fiction on Ageing*, arguably the first collection of its kind, Raja has classified the collected narratives on ageing into three categories: "The Allegory of Age," "Re-storying Lives" and "Cultural Narratives." The first category, The Allegory of Age, consists of literary narratives that are about how aging body in literature engages the discourse of Indian social gerontology. The second category, Re-storying Lives, focuses on how a single story contains multiple levels of narratives that facilitate deep knowledge about the psychological states of the elderly in the times when they struggle to come in terms with her children and other acquaintances. The third category, Cultural Narratives, belongs to ageing narratives which deal with the reduction of the older people to the position of subjects within a social system regulated by the interplay of religion, nation and colonial modernities.

While Raja clarifies in the introduction, that the motifs of one category may be found in the narratives belonging to another category, Yayati has been placed in "Re-storying Lives." The narrativity within Karnad's play works at three levels. The story of Yayati, drawn from "Adiparva" of the *Mahabharata*, serves as the pivot on which the basic frame of the play stands. The play has incorporated two other narratives: one that is concerned with a young son's ambitions, and another that keeps the old parents at the centre and is at the core of the present paper.

The stories/myths collected in the religious-cultural texts such as the Mahabharata, on account of being an integral part of the collective memory of human beings, have played an important role in the making of the psyche that regulates the modern modes of living. In modern Indian literatures, the myths of Ahalya, Draupadi, Savitri, Yama and Yayati have been instrumental in the revelation of the multiple complexes inherent at different levels of modern Indian society. Often,

[t]hey become literary "prefigurations" that may help comprehend the significance of "repetitive action" in different historical and political contexts over time. They may also reveal fresh dimensions of existence through a perceptive understanding of the digressions, adaptations, modifications of the original myths. (Kumar 1)

In the context of Indian social gerontology, the myths drawn from metanarratives like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* operate in two ways. First, they consist of normative urgings regarding respecting one's parents. Indian gerontological discourse uses these urgings as evidence for a gerontological consciousness that stretches itself from Vedic age to the postcolonial times. The myths also encompass a detailed description of the decrepitude and humiliations of the aged body, an emphasis on Ayurveda for the longevity of life span, and an extensive inquiry into the nuances of body as a sign of the materialist fallacy (Cohen 93).

Second, myths from ancient Hindu scriptures, to a large extent, control and regulate the cultural lives of the majority of Indians right from birth to death. Raja considers these myths to be important examples of what James Phelan calls "cultural narratives." Cultural narratives are those "narratives which are so widely circulated that their author may be legitimately identified as a larger collective entity rather than a specific individual" (Phelan, quoted in Raja xxiv-xxv). Raja talks about how a person's drive to conceive his life as a narrative greatly conforms to these cultural narratives.

Somewhat akin to the same narrative tendency, in Karnad's *Yayati*, the myth of Yayati makes presence as a cultural narrative

that tells the story of a villainous king who exchanges his old age with his youngest son's youth. Like other ancient Hindu textual formulations, this narrative also postulates that the human lifecourse should be bifurcated into four ideal life-stages or *ashramas*: *brahmacharya* (a knowledge seeker), *grihastha* (a married person who performs his household duties properly), *vanaprastha* (a forest-dweller who has renounced the material world) and *sanyaasa* (an ascetic). Yayati's act of exchanging his old age with Pooru's youth does not go well with the life course which *ashrama* system prescribes. Karnad exploits the selfishness of a father involved in Yayati's moral degeneration in order to express his resentment with his old parents and his immediate anxieties. In the afterword of the English translation of *Yayati*, Karnad says,

While I was writing the play, I saw it only as an escape from my stressful situation. But looking back, I am amazed at how precisely the myth (the story of Yayati) reflected my anxieties at that moment, my resentment with all those who seemed to demand that I sacrifice my future. (Karnad 73-74)

A more typical appearance of this myth as a cultural narrative in a literary work gets manifested in a Marathi novel of the same title by Vishnu Sakharama Khandekar. In the introduction to the novel, Khandekar writes:

The original portrait of Yayati in the Mahabharata is very representative...Inspite of much varied happiness, he is always dissatisfied and is blindly running in pursuit of new pleasures...Pleasure, momentary animal pleasure, is mistaken for eternal happiness and he is pondering over how to get it all the time. The common man of today is groping like Yayati in the twilight of a world in which the old spiritual values have been swept away and new spiritual values have yet to be discovered. (Khandekar 7-8)

A postmodern reading of Karnad's *Yayati* gives an altogether different set of implications. In a way, both Karnad and Khandekar accept the renouncement of material pleasures as an "essentialized" aspect of old age. Their works, titled *Yayati*, assert a normative way of life marked by four *ashramas* on the basis of the use of the myth of Yayati.

Three powerful motifs that constantly participate in the making of ageing narratives in Indian literatures are memory, home and death (associated with the attainment of *moksha*). Out of these motifs, death and home are quite tangible in Karnad's *Yayati*. If memory, at all, has any role in the play, it works at the level of collective memory that motivates the modern psyche to interpret personal experiences on the basis of stories from the archives of the past.

Yayati wants to escape death in any way. Shukracharya knows 'Sanjeevani' vidya—"the art of reviving the dead, which promises release from the limitations of the fleeting life this self is trapped in" (Karnad 6). Search for immortality has always been a matter of fascination for human beings. Even in the premodern west, scholars, be they philosophers or physicians, could never come together on the issue that whether aging should be considered an irreversible phenomenon or it can be reverted. Caught in such a serious scholarly crisis, they could never decline the possibilities of extending one's age and rejuvenating the passed-off youth. These "far-fetched" possibilities were assumed achievable either through alchemy and magic, or through the gradual cultivation of virtue and health. Referring to the same fascination, Sharmishtha argues:

I have seen my father drugged on that ambition, panting for that supreme privilege. And now I see him in Yayati, who has the world in his palm. And your father, the great Shukracharya, has the means to keep it here. For eternity. That is what he lusts for. (Karnad 12)

In the prologue of the play, Sutradhara says:

Sadly, we aspire to become immortal but cannot achieve the lucidity to understand eternity. Death eludes definition. Time coils into a loop, reversing the order of youth and old age. Our certainties crumble in front of the stark demands of the heart. (Karnad 6)

Beyond the moral angle in the bartering that takes place between father and son, Yayati's pining for youth after the curse is afflicted upon him carries a sense of non-conformism towards the normative code of conduct prescribed by religious-cultural metanarratives. Recent approaches in modern gerontology have focused on how various forms of normalisations, which are basically social constructions, have led to the marginalization of the elderly in different cultures. These approaches do not only promote ageing gracefully but also interrogate how disengagement with the coming of age became an essential part of old age in the east as well as the west. Even Pooru defies the order of life prescribed by *ashrama* system. He is expected to perform the duties of a grihastha but talks like an ascetic. He opines, "[m]y forefathers were the great eagles, keen-eyed, hovering regally in the clouds. I shall seek to be a worm." (Karnad 37)

One narrative that counters life-narratives based on *ashrama* system is Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's "Drabomoyee Goes to Kashi." Drabomoyee is an old woman. She resides in an isolated place where no one comes. When her grandson decides to send her to Kashi to spend the remaining days of her life, she turns overjoyed. According to Hindu culture, spending last years in Kashi with spiritual restrain ensures the attainment of *moksha*. Addressing a crowd of the elderly, the *kathak*<sup>2</sup> in the story affirms, "Lord Vishwanath himself whispered mantras to the dying at the Manikarnika Ghat; those who died in Kashi went straight to heaven" (Bandyopadhyay 99).

In Varanasi, there are institutions like *Mumukshu Bhawan* (situated at Assi) which exclusively shelter the older people so that they may die in Kashi and attain *moksha*. In the sociology of ageing, such an arrangement is called "emplacement." "Emplacement" is closely related to the identity of the elders. According to Glenda Laws, locating elders in places considered

appropriate to their age and condition authenticates wrong association "between body and landscape; embodiment and emplacement, in the creation of identity" (Laws 254, quoted in Hepworth 78).

Seemingly familiar with the rituals performed before settling in Kashi for *moksha*, Drabomoyee happily distributes all her worldly belongings so that she may devote herself completely to spiritual quest. When she starts living the life of disengagement, she finds that her attachment to her jackfruit tree, her cucumbers, and her cow, Mungli, still haunts her mind. Fortunately, her grandson rescues her from this situation and takes her back to village.

The traumatic experiences in Kashi facilitate Drabomoyee an opportunity to look at her run-down home from a new point of view. The emptiness and isolation of the old home do not depress her anymore. She accepts the neighbours who have taken care of her for years as "her new family" in which she is going to spend the rest of her life gracefully. Drabomoyee's return to her home is emblematic of the acceptance of a new meaning of being aged, and her refusal to embrace "a socially scripted old age" (Raja xxii).

Both Karnad and Khandekar hinge upon the myth of Yayati to comply with the life-course governed by *ashrama* system. "Drabomoyee Goes to Kashi" counters *ashrama* system by saying that disengagement or engagement should be left to the personal choice of an old person. Any institutionalization of ageing, be it the concept of old age homes in west or *ashramas*, blocks the opportunities of creating new meanings (meanings which suit elders' own choices and conveniences) within the lives of the elderly.

The playwright of *Yayati* undoubtedly tends to keep the youth's aspirations at the centre and relegate the parents' mental set-up to the periphery. The scope of the critical designs inherent in the text lingers far beyond its authorial subjectivity. By touching different shades of the metanarrative of ageing in Indian culture,

the play has created within itself a space where new meanings of growing old can be explored.

#### Notes

- 1. An excerpt of Karnad's *Yayati* has been included in *Grey Areas: An Anthology of Indian Fictions on Ageing*, edited by Ira Raja and published by OUP in 2010.
- 2. In Hindu culture, *Kathak* refers to a spiritual figure who tells stories from Hindu scriptures before devotees. The name of the *kathak* in the storyis Upen Kathak. He speaks on the *Kashi-khanda* at Kedar Ghat (Varanasi). For each sitting, he charges at least eight annas per devotee.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# The In-Betweenness of Postcolonialism and Postmodernism in Boman Desai's Servant Master Mistress

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### Abstract

Boman Desai's Servant Master Mistress, deals with triangular love story of two generations of Sanjanas. At the surface, their story spans the years from 1910 to 1945, encompassing scenes in which a yogi's 'spirituality' is exposed by a monkey; a ten-year-old English girl seduces an eight-year-old Indian boy; and a young Englishwoman meets her first lover at the Silver Jubilee of George V. But in-depth it brings out the themes of race and class explored through the relationships between England and India, man and beast, colonizer and colonized, rich and poor, master and servant. Throughout the novel, the novelist does not directly address the British Empire and its former power over India. Instead his focus on 'postcolonialism' is a deconstructive enterprise in which notions of fixed centres and margins are questioned and undermined so that what corresponds to a 'postcolonial' status becomes itself a space of shifting references and meanings, and it is not represented by a fixed or single idea. This is again a postmodern element. Hence, the novel projects the inbetweenness of the postmodern and the postcolonial, through multiple references of meanings, the destabilization

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of binary terms, the inclusion of local allusions and culturespecific knowledge introducing a literary postcolonial Indian aesthetic that displaces a hegemonic Western literary tradition, while acknowledging its cultural legacy. The present paper attempts to enlarge upon the same viewpoint.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Postmodernism, Centre, Margin, In-betweenness.

Boman Desai, novel Servant Master Mistress, is a family saga of two brothers Kavas Sanjana and Savak Sanjana falling for the same girl Dolly Dalal. On the wide canvas of the novel, betraval, ambiguity and murder are boldly highlighted to build up an atmosphere of suspense and thrill. At once one finds oneself in a minefield but on a larger view Desai's immersion in Parsi life, gives the novel a personal and autobiographical touch, about the marginality of the Parsi community. The novel opens with a plot of Day of the Tiger I, II, III, & IV and includes individual character stories thus creating a metanarrative on narration. The opening scene takes us to a typical Parsi family set up with an English influence. The U-shaped bungalow is named TRUTH, with an emblem of Zoroastrianism, rising Sun, the religion of Parsi, but the story ends with a conviction that 'All debts are paid where that is concerned'. (Desai 423). The Sanjanas has a tiger cub as a pet which they thought to surrender as an adult. The opening scene shows the family is breakfasting in the compound of their bungalow when the cub gets its first taste of blood from a cut on Sohrab Sanjana's hand. Also in attendance are Daisy (Sohrab's English wife, married when she was stranded by World War II in India); Rustom (Sohrab's brother, infatuated by Daisy, challenging his brother for her affection); Dolly (their mother, afraid the rivalry between her sons may erupt into violence echoing the rivalry between two brothers whom she had married in succession); and Savak (Dolly's husband, still paying the price for his own infatuation thirty years earlier).

The question arises here that why would a postcolonial novel reflect the ideas of postmodernism? Perhaps, the two different

movements are not so different in their aims. Roger Berger also notices that a relationship exists between the two when he says:

Postmodernism is simultaneously (or variously) a textual practice (often oppositional, sometimes not), a subcultural style or fashion, a definition of western, postindustrial cultures and the emergent or always already dominant global culture. At the same time, postcolonialism is simultaneously (or variously) a geographical site, an existential condition, a political reality, a textual practice, and the emergent or dominant global culture (or counter-culture). (Berger 1992)

In this passage, Berger mentions that postmodernism and postcolonialism converge in some respective purposes. First, both are a "textual practice." Second, the two movements examine an "emergent or dominant global culture." However, they do differ in that postcolonial novels usually have a geographical nature to them, while expressing an existential condition. Also, both explore the idea of authority or as Berger says, a "dominant global culture," and perhaps this is why there is yet no definite "boundary" drawn between the two movements. However, Richards does attempt to draw a clearer line between the two with respect to the idea of authority. He says that postcolonial writers attempt to "unmask European authority" while postmodernists attempt to unmask authority in general. So it seems that both movements investigate the ideas of "control" in different settings.

In Dolly's story, though Dolly loved Savak but she marries Kavas because he was ambitious. Also she was infatuated with his 'Emerald eyes'. Her liking of Kavas is an inclination of a margin to become a centre. Kavas, too marries Dolly because he cannot go for an English girl. He says to Dolly:

But I do not want an English girl. Why should I want a girl who will let other boys kiss her? That is not what I want. My experience with English girls has taught me one thing, that one is better off with one's own kind. There is less chance of misunderstanding. With English girls one is always left guessing whether or not they will sooner or later go back to their own kind. (Desai 98)

Kavas is English in his look but typical Parsi in his outlook. He is proud of being a Sanjana, a moneyed- person and wants to marry Dolly but he explains it in a way as if he is helping Dolly by getting married to her.

Of course, there are Parsi girls in Bombay, but they know I am a Sanjana, and that is the main source of their interest. You, on the other hand, stand no chance with a Sanjana. You became our friend almost by accident. That is why I trust you. When we get married it will be because I wish it, not you. (Desai 98)

This speaks of postmodern psychology as summed-up well by Walter Truett Anderson, "All ideas about human reality are social constructions" Traditionally, we understood our personal identity as what we are born with—a stable, unified soul including mind, heart, will, and conscience. Yet, in recent years, our postmodern condition has made the concept of a "soul" obsolete. Now, instead of being a soul, we are confronted with a multiplicity of "selves."

The whole narrative projects the fact that past cannot be ignored. In Dolly's story we find that her mother was killed by a servant and later in Daisy's story we find that Alphonso, the servant dies so that his son might live. So there is a balancing of events—in two ways. First the postmodern way, as the readers get to know that history is not repeated but recreated and second, the postcolonial way, as the voiceless has been voiced here.

Postcolonialism and postmodernism are also engaged with the aspects of language and power because they allow us to reconstruct history and literature through language. The term reconstruction is very important over here because through language when it becomes possible to reconstruct our history or reconstruct literature it also gives us a possibility to reconstruct different forms of identity and also to question different kinds of authority. And in these ideas of language power and the

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reconstruction through and literature they operate to reach of a common end. Throughout the story, English with a Parsi accent or tone has been used. Sohar, Kavas's son too has a fancy for English lifestyle. Besides, his father he has also a feudal outlook. Knowingly he troubled the servants and made them feel that he is the master. When he asked Gracie, the ayah to make some chips it was only to put her to unrest, but when he realised his mistake he called Gracie to sing him a lullaby, just his own way to make things right. And the lullaby is:

Ek, doan, teen, char

Moag yamcho tor par

Potta jatta gadda guddu

Tu mujha mogga cho ladu ladu ladu

Tu mujha mogga cho ladu ladu. (Desai 139)

Desai visions a literary canon, as Raymond Williams defines it, is nothing but "the selective tradition". Here tradition may be understood as "an aspect of contemporary social and cultural organization in the interest of the domination of a specific class" (The Voice in the Margin 23). Canonical texts per se have "no inherent authority or value; rather, they are socially authorized and institutionally legitimated" (The Voice in the Margin 23). These texts do not make "their own way into our hearts by appealing unmistakably to an intrinsically human longing for truth, wisdom, beauty, order". Instead, "they are regularly and insistently urged upon us" so that they may be promoted and sustained by cultural means (The Voice in the Margin 23). Such an act is definitely political. And this implies that texts gain power and acceptance because they originate from dominant power sources. And postcolonial theory exposes this notion.

Both the theories desire to bring the marginal to the centre in literature as well as in history. When we talk about post colonialism and post modernism regardless of the boundaries within which they operate regardless of the frameworks from which they emerge it is important to notice that the desire in both postcolonial and postmodern frameworks is to bring the marginal to the centre. It is this transformation, it is this move, from the marginal towards the centre is what becomes interesting when we talk about both of these concepts. Besides, the shared prefix 'post', both the theories are concerned with the representational discourses and offer second-order meditations upon real and imagined conditions; only by appropriating each other can they "fully explain the state of the contemporary world." This state is explained ironically in the story by shifting the centre to margin and vice versa. Sohrab, the master hates Alphonso, the servant. Also he finds it painful to say that Savak is his stepfather and Rustom his stepbrother. But the end shows paradoxically that he himself becomes a stepfather as Daisy's son Nauzer is Alphonso's son.

Besides, the above- mentioned aspects, Post-Modernism and Postcolonialism theories have offered new way of thinking: Post-Modernism with its enjoyment to see the past and the life, to celebrate every kind of human capabilities but in a way that experimentations should come to an end; and Postcolonialism comes up with its proposal that this world cannot be measured with such universalism, because unitary view will just marginalise some people or nations that have different way to live. Savak holds the same view when he says to Dolly:

More important is to know what holds us together than what tears us apart. More important to know how we are all same than how we are different. More important to know who and what we really are. Law does not tell us that. (Desai 35)

Just think! What is the signification of our courts of Law in a universe so big? When the universe is our university what does it matter if you go to England or to America or to the moon?...In a universe so big we are all relatively in the same place. It is only our vanity that says I have been to England and I have been to Europe and all the rest of it. The important thing is to know where you are, and if you know where you are it doesn't matter where you are going-but if you don't know where you are you will never go anywhere anyway. If you don't know where you are you will always be nowhere. (Desai 37)

Savak words show that the novelist has tried to explain a common aspect of postcolonialism and postmodernism i.e. the attitude to abandon any kind of universalism as "everything new that is discovered is tested against the body of knowledge that has already been verified, either to confirm our understanding or to change it." (Desai 70)

This logic also explicates Bhabha's concept of the 'in-between space' as the Third Space that disrupts the politics of polarity and allows for the possibility of resistance towards nationalistic and ethnocentric ideals and discourses. In his argument the in-between space is connected to the postcolonial notion of 'hybridity' whose perspective insists that cultural and political identities are constructed through the process of alterity. Bhabha writes, "it is from this hybrid location of culture—the transnational as the translational that the postcolonial intellectual attempts to elaborate a historical and literary project." Consequently, his argument opens up the understanding of what postmodernism means and maintains that "the very language of cultural community needs to be rethought from a postcolonial perspective".

The postcolonial experience and especially the diasporic experience is often characterized by a co-existence of opposites which is a feature of consciousness, which exists along with other co-existence of silence and dynamism, singularity and multiplicity, manifest and unmanifest (Grace 2007: 4). There are three silences that are expressively deployed on the post-colonial stage: inaudibility, muteness, and refusal to speak. Inaudibility becomes obvious when the body's language or the proxemic signifiers are more expressive than his\her voiced utterance, for example 'when a character cannot be heard by others on stage, but can be heard by the audience. Muteness may be symbolic, in the sense that a character refuses to speak, and not that he cannot speak, or a character continues to suggestively but effectively *speak*, in spite of physical muteness. It bears noting here that the most interesting feature of the use of the language in postcolonial literature may refer to the way in which it also constructs difference, separation, and absence from the metropolitan norm. So silence with all its forms shows the difference and the separation and also the gap between the *Self* and the *Other*. Throughout the novel Savak is the only one who apparently remains silent. He never reacts to a situation rather he acts on it. When Guy offers a business proposal for his honesty, he replies:

If I am honest, it is only because I have learned nothing else. They say it takes three generations to make a gentleman, but only one to unmake him, and I find myself on the cusp: too refined to be useful, but not spoiled enough yet to be ungentlemanly. (Desai 162)

Savak's reply shows that he is not only self- reflexive but also aware of the historical and political actuality. It also emphasise on the notion of hybridity as defined by Nikos Papastergiadis who has pointed to the fact that through the use of the term it ispossible to address the role of contradictions and difference in the making ofidentity by saying that hybridity 'openly acknowledges that identity isconstructed through a negotiation of difference, and that the presence offissures, gaps and contradictions is not necessarily a sign of failure.'

Desai unfolds the existential traits of man in society. All the characters of the novel show that one aspires for one' own longing and that makes us different. This is best understood by Savak's comment while describing his war story. He says:

They saw I was different from the start. I kept to myself, I was a Parsi–my speech, my mannerisms, my education, my complexion, everything was different. Rajan called me their token Angrez. I took it as a compliment–not to be counted as an Angrez, but to be accepted by them–for the generosity with which they accepted someone whose life had been so much privileged than their own. (Desai 412)

To conclude, it can be said that the in-betweenness of both the theories is to find a zone where people can meet-themselves or each other-and 'where our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light.'(Fanon)

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Trends in African-American Literature

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#### Abstract

African-American literature is a contribution of the USA by the writers of African descent. Beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it has travelled a long journey and now it has established its independent identity. Philis Wheatley, W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are some of the important writers. Toni Morrison is a Nobel Laureate and Alice Walker is the winner of Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award. This article discusses the Harlem Renaissance and the theme of emancipation from slavery as well as the journey of the slaves to freedom. Some of the important works have been introduced in short and a historical journey of African-American has been discussed. It introduces the history of African-American literature in brief.

**Keywords:** Slavery, Freedom, Harlem, Renaissance, Black Writers

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African-American history predates the emergence of the United States as an independent country and African-American literature has suchlike deep roots.

African-American literature is the body of literature produced in the United states by writers of African descent. It began in late 18<sup>th</sup>- century, with writers such as Phillis Wheatley. Before the high point of slave narratives, African-American literature was dominated by autobiographical spiritual narratives. The genre was known as slave narratives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were accounts by people who had generally escaped from slavery, about their journeys to freedom and ways that clamed their lives. The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s was a great period of flowering in literature and the arts. African-American writers have been recognized by the highest awards, including the noble prize to Tony Morrison. Among the themes and issues explored in this literature are the role of Africans within the larger American society, African-American culture, racism, slavery, and social equality. African-American writing has tended to integrate oral forms, such as spirituals, sermons, gospel music, blues or rap.

The poet Phillis Wheatley (1753-84) published her book of poems on various subjects such as religious and moral in 1773, three years before American independence. Wheatley was not only the first African-American to publish a book, but also the first to achieve an international reputation as a writer. Her poetry was praised by many of the leading figures of the American Revolution, including George Washington. Some whites couldn't comprehend that a black woman could write such refined poetry. Wheatley had to defend herself in court to prove that she had written her own work.

Another early African-American author was Jupiter Hammon (1711-1806) a domestic slave. He, who is, considered the first published Black writer in America, published his poem "An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ with Penitential Cries" in 1761. In 1778 he wrote an ode to Phillis Wheatley, in which he

discussed their shared humanity and common bonds. Some other early African-American writers were William Wells Brown, Frank J., Webb, etc...

Before the American civil war, African-American literature primarily focused on the issue of slavery as indicated by the popular subgenre of slave narratives. The general pattern of the slave narrative-an account of the life or a major part of the life, of a fugitive or former slave (written or told by the slave himself or herself)-information about slave's harsh conditions of life under slavery, physical, psychological, moral and spiritual damage that he suffered from white "Christian" slave holders, his obtainment of literacy, turning point in his life and an eventual escape from the slavery and the South (restriction) to freedom of the North (opportunity). Autobiography became a dominant literary genre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The slave narratives were integral to African-American literature. Some 6000 former slaves from North America and the Caribbean wrote accounts of their lives, of them about 150 were published as separate books or pamphlets. Examples include Frederick Douglass's autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (1845) and Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl by Harriet Jocabs (1861).

After the end of slavery and the American Civil War, a number of African-American authors wrote non-fiction works about the conditions of African-American in the United States.

Many African-American women wrote about the principles of behavior of life during the period. African-American newspapers were a popular venue for essays, poetry and fiction as well as journalism.

Among the most prominent of post -slavery writer is W.E.B Du Bois (1868-1963). At the turn of the century, Du Bois published a highly influential collection of essays entitled *The Souls of Black Folk*. The essays on race were written from Du Bois's personal experiences to describe how African-Americans lived in rural Georgia and in the larger American society. Du Bois wrote: "The problem of the Twentieth century is the problem of the color–line". He believed that African-Americans should, because of common interests, work together to battel prejudice and inequity.

Another well known author of this period is Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), who in many ways represented opposite views from Du Bois. Among his published works is *UP From Slavery* (1901), The Future of American Negro (1899), Tuskegee and Its People (1905), and My Larger Education (1911). In contrast to Du Bois, Washington believed that Blacks should first lift themselves up and prove themselves the equal of whites before asking for an end to racism. Mary Todd Lincoln, Josephine Brown, Willam Wells Brown etc... were other writers in this period.

The Harlem Renaissance form 1920 to 1940 was a flowering of African-American Literature and art based on the African-American community of Harlem in New-York city.

Numerous Black artists, musicians and others produced classic works in fields from jazz to theater; the renaissance is perhaps best known for the literature that came out of it. The Harlem Renaissance was inspired by the great migration. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century African-American faced many factors that made them leave the south move toward the North. These factors included great racist violence, suppression, natural disasters and few job opportunities. The North was the place which offered new economic opportunities and more cultural possibilities for those who wanted to make the African-American voice heard.

The Harlem school of writers probed the question of racial identity and gave it prominence. The themes used by the writers of the Harlem Renaissance were to some extent those used by the writers before it, but with a marked difference. The use of stereotypes and donning of masks had come to an end. Alain Locke, one of the most important figures of the movement stated: "The popular melodrama has about played itself out, and it is time to scrap the fictions and settle down to a realistic facing of facts". The Harlem Renaissance marked a turning point for African-American Literature. Prior to this time, books by African-Americans were primarily read by other Black people. With the renaissance, African-American literature began to be absorbed into mainstream American culture. Among the most renowned writers of the renaissance are Langaton Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, etc... The Harlem Renaissance was also closely associated with the New Negro Movement which was as much concerned with the creation of a fresh American identity as it was with the demise of the old.

The great migration produced a new sense of independence in the black community and also empowered the growing Civil Rights movement which made a powerful impression on Black writers during the 1940s, '50s and '60s. Just as Black activists were pushing to end segregation and racism and create a new sense of Black nationalism, so too were Black authors attempting to address issues with their writings.

One of the first writers to do so was James Baldwin, whose works addressed issues of race and sexuality. Baldwin, who is best known for his novel *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, wrote deeply personal stories and essays while examining what it was like to be both Black and homosexual at a time when neither of these identities was accepted by American culture.

His other important works include Another Country(1962) which centers on racial issues and homosexuality, and nobody knows by my name (1961)-a collection personal essays about racism, the role of the artist and literature. Baldwin published his three most important collections of essays–Notes of a Native Son (1955), Nobody Knows My Name (1961) and The Fire Next Time (1963)–during the years when the Civil-Rights movement was exploding across the American South. James Baldwin's works emphasize the unique problems of the individuals and his characters are portrayed as not mere victims, but also as people with aspirations. It is this that makes these works aesthetically richer and more universal

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Another important writer of American-Civil Rights Movement was Richard Wright. Wright is best known for his *Novel Native Son* (1940), which tells the story of Bigger Thomas Black man struggling for acceptance in Chicago.

The Civil Rights time period also saw the rise of female Black poets, most notably Gwendolyn Brooks, who became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize (1949).

Other well known Writers along with Brooks were Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez etc...

In 1970 there was a burst of literary activity in African-American Literature: twenty five novels, major dramatic works and volumes of poetry were released. This event has been called by some critics the beginning of the second renaissance of black women's writing whereas others consider this movement as the emergence of Black Literary postmodernism. It shares many features common to all postmodernisms(s), -it is characterized as self-conscious, self-reflexive, and it first of all aims to revise history, identity, and aesthetics.

Beginning in the 1970s African-American Literature reached the mainstream as books by Black writers continually achieved best selling and award -winning status. This was also the time when the work of African-American writers began to be accepted by academia as a legitimate genre of American Literature. A number of scholars and writers are generally credited with helping to promote and define African-American Literature. Toni Morrison emerged as one of the most important African-American writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. Among her most famous Novels is *Beloved*, which owns the Pulitzer prize for Fiction in 1988. Another important novel is *Song of Solomon*, a tale about materialism, unrequited love and brotherhood. Morrison is the first African-American to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In 1982, Alice Walker won both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book award for her novel *The Color Purple*. It tells

the story of Celie, young woman who is sexually abused by her stepfather and then is forced to marry a man who physically abuses her. The novel was later made in a film by Steven Spielberg.

The 1970s also saw African-American books topping the bestseller list. Among the first to do so was *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Harley. Other important writers in recent years who achieved best-selling and award winning status include writers Gayl Jones, Rashed Clark, Ishmael Reed, Jamaica Kincaid, Maya Angelo, Rita Dove, Cyrus Cassells, Thylias Moss, August Wilson, etc....

#### Conclusion

In spite of its initial struggle, today, African-American literature has become accepted as an integral part of American literature, as books by Black writers continually achieved best-selling and award-wining status. Finally, African-American Literature has gained added attention though the work of talk-show hosts Oprah Winfrey, who repeatedly has leveraged her fame to promote literature through the medium of her Oprah's Book Club.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Gender Differences across Leadership Styles of Men and Women: An Explorative Study

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#### Abstract

There has been major expansion of research on gender relations in leadership in the recent years. The growing presence of women in the international workforce continues to motivate research on the leadership styles of women. Research on leadership differences across gender concludes that men are task-oriented leaders, while women are relationship-oriented leaders. Though a number of researches have been carried out in this area it has been a constant quest to know if there is a leadership style that distinguishes female leaders from male leaders. In this context this paper makes an effort to review and analyse the past literature on gender differences, similarities and perceptions in relation to the leadership styles and to examine how do men and women differ.

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles, Communication Styles, Task-Oriented Leaders, Relationship-Oriented Leaders,

The proportion of women in the managerial ranks has increased in almost all countries. The leadership-gender issue has become a significant one due to the increased number of women

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in managerial positions in recent years. Though many researches generally have found that males and females differ in their leadership styles, some researches still argue that there are no significant gender differences in leadership styles between men and women. Organizations and leadership are viewed as genderneutral structures which provide the same opportunities for men and women. Carless (1998) did a research on gender differences in transformational leadership because she found out that, even though an increasingly amount of women are getting employed as managers, there still exists a masculine focus on leadership.

Although mainstream research on leadership generally continues to ignore gender relations, over recent years there has been major expansion of international research on gender relations in leadership, organizations and management (Hearn and Piekkari, 2005). Previous studies have found differences in leadership styles in terms of gender and managerial hierarchy. Discussions on the gendered differentiation of leadership have centred on the different qualities and styles of leadership of men and women; that is, the so-called masculine and feminine styles of leadership (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). The presence of feminine or masculine characteristics in leadership styles is related to the construct of gender (Larson and Freeman, 1997). Gender, race, class, and other elements of social difference are acknowledged to play an important role in the development of leadership styles. Fitzgerald (2003) suggested that it was impossible to create conceptualizations of leadership and management without taking into account issues of gender and ethnicity.

Men and women differ psychologically in the way they act, from the style in which they communicate to the way in which they attempt to influence others. These gender differences in communication and influence tactics also have implications for gender differences across leadership styles of men and women.

Non-verbal behaviour in effective leadership is also a very important aspect in organizational performance. Gender differences in non verbal behaviour do exist on some level. Women are associated with transformational qualities such as kindness, affection and care for others. Men on the other hand are associated with qualities like dominancy, assertiveness and masterfulness. However, this doesn't mean that women are more effective leaders than men are since effective women do not necessarily show the same non verbal behaviours as effective men do.

The biggest difference between men and women and their style of communication lies in the fact that men and women view the purpose of conversations differently. Research on psychological gender differences says that while women use communication as a tool to enhance social connections and create relationships, men use language to exert dominance and achieve tangible outcomes (Leaper, 1991; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1996; Mason, 1994). Women are more expressive, tentative, and polite in conversation, while men are more assertive, and power-hungry (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003). Men and women also differ in their relations towards others in society: while women strive to be more social in their interactions with others, men value their independence (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977; Eagly, 1987; Grilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). On the other hand, popular works by John Gray and Deborah Tannen show that while men view conversations as a way to establish and maintain status and dominance in relationships, women see the purpose of conversation to create and foster an intimate bond with the other party by talking about topical problems and issues they are communally facing (Gray, 1992; Tannen, 1990).

Women are expected to use communication to enhance social connections and relationships, while men use language to enhance social dominance (Leaper, 1991; Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001). On average, women use more expressive, tentative, and polite language than men do, especially in situations of conflict (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003). Men, on the other hand, are viewed as more likely than women to offer solutions to problems in order

to avoid further seemingly unnecessary discussions of interpersonal problems (Baslow & Rubenfield, 2003). Research in gender differences across communication styles has come to the conclusion that men tend to be self-assertive and view conversations as a means towards tangible outcomes, such as obtaining power or dominance (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1996; Mason, 1994). Women, on the other hand, value cooperation, this communal orientation "involves a concern with others, selflessness, and a desire to be at one with others" (Mason, 1994). Females are also typically known to have a less clear focus on where the boundaries of their relationships end and their individual identities, defined in terms of relational bonds, begin. Females value talk for the relationships it creates; for females, the process of communication itself is valued (Chodorow, 1989; Hartmann, 1991; Statham, 1987; Surrey, 1983).

On the other side research also argues that women use less powerful speech: they tend to swear less, speak more politely, and use more tag questions and intensifiers (Lakoff, 1975). Women also tend to interrupt less than men do; researchers have hypothesized that this is possibly because of their perceived lower status to men (Thorne & Henley, 1975). This could be due to societal norms that enforce this gender status hierarchy. Pearson (1985) also found that women often weaken their statements. One explanation of this could be due to their lower self-confidence in what they are saying and their fear of being wrong, which can be contributed to their perceived inferior status to male managers in the workplace. Overall, research has showed that, in general, women are more social, emotional in their interactions with others, whereas men are more independent and unemotional or attached in conversations (Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1977; Eagly, 1987; Grilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). Theorists have suggested that these gender differences in communication styles put women at a disadvantage when interacting with others because they speak more tentatively than men, who are known to speak more assertively, thus leaving the impression that men are more confident and capable as leaders (Lakoff, 1975). Many of these gender differences in communication styles outlined make women appear subordinate to men, suggesting they should be viewed as second-class to men. This also has implications for gender differences in leadership styles because women are seen as second-class to men in this arena as well, making them appear unfit for a leadership or managerial position.

As a whole research on gender differences in communication styles tend to agree on how men and women differ in the way they communicate. While the research focuses more on the communication characteristics and traits that men and women exhibit, popular literature makes the connection between psychological gender traits and communication styles and gender differences in terms of basic goals of conversations. Popular literature also points out common mistakes men and women make when conversing with each other, specifically focusing on gender differences in crisis communication.

Men and women not only differ in the way in which they communicate with one another but also in the way that they attempt to influence one another. Influence is a leader's ability to motivate and influence their followers to change their behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes, which is why influence tactics are one of the most common ways to measure a leader's effectiveness. However these influence tactics differ from individual to individual in their effectiveness, as well as across gender.

Many studies analyze the intersection of gender and influence tactics have resulted in mixed findings. While the majority of the research done on gender and influence tactics has found that there is, in fact, a difference in the influence tactics men and women use (White, 1988; DuBrin, 1991; Carli, 1999; Carothers & Allen, 19990; Lamude, 1993); other research has shown that these differences are not attributed to gender but to differences in situational circumstances (Carli, 1999; Carothers & Allen, 1999; Lamude, 1993). A meta-analysis comparing research done on the intersection of influence tactics and gender found that male managers use personal appeal, consultation, assertiveness, and inspirational appeal more than female managers. The studies also proved that females used consultation, inspirational appeal, and ingratiation more with other female employees and exchange tactics more with male employees (Carli, 1999;Carothers & Allen, 1999; Dubrin, 1991; Lamude, 1993; White, 1998). This implies that female managers are more likely to create and foster closer bonds with other female employees easily because of their similar communication styles, but not with other male employees, due to their conflicting styles of communication.

Some of the researches on gender differences in leadership styles have come to the conclusion that there are no quantifiable differences between men and women in leadership roles, rather leadership roles are just extremely situational. This line of literature argues that neither men nor women are better in leadership positions, but that a leadership style's effectiveness is contingent on various features of group and organizational environments (Foels, Driskell, Mullen, & Salas, 2000). Contingency theories recognize that there is no best style of leadership, but "leader effectiveness depends, or is contingent on, the interaction of leader behavior and the situation" (Riggio, 2008). This suggests that followers are as important as, if not more important than the leader in deciding which leadership style best fits the situation.

Psychologists and researches who support gender differences in leadership styles suggest that because men and women differ psychologically in the way they communicate and influence, it is only natural to assume that they will differ in their leadership approaches. They argue that psychological gender differences are due to biological and ingrained sex differences in personality traits and behavioural tendencies possibly due to sex-differentiated prior experiences such as differences in parenting styles or childhood events (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Maccoby, 1988). If men and women inherently differ in their developmental processes, they will grow up to be completely different types of people with different leadership styles and skills, even if they are in similar positions of leadership/management.

The main body of research on leadership differences across gender concludes that men are task-oriented leaders, while women are relationship-oriented leaders. Taskoriented leaders are autocratic, direct, and controlling (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Taskoriented behaviours are "concentrated on performing the job that the work group faces and are thus similar to those of the initiating structure factor. The leader is concerned with setting work standards, supervising the job, and meeting production goals" (Riggio, 2008). These take-charge leadership traits are emulated by men's characteristics when it comes to communication. Men are always goal-oriented when it comes to the way in which they approach communication as they use conversations to achieve results, preserve independence, dominance, and maintain their status in the hierarchical social order (Tannen, 1990). Thus, men's communication style is based primarily on control and power, mirrors their task-oriented leadership style quite perfectly. This aggressive approach is primarily why men emerge more often as leaders than women in the workplace. Other meta-analysis research has shown that male managers are more motivated to work in competitive environments where they exert an assertive role, are able to impose their wishes on others, and stand out in a group of people (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnson, 1994).

While men use a task-oriented leadership approach, women are much more concerned with the bonds they have with their followers. This relationship-oriented style is characterized by democratic and participative leadership characteristics (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Relationship-oriented behaviours are focused on maintaining interpersonal relationships on the job including "showing concern for employees' well-being and involving them in decisionmaking processes" (Riggio, 2008). Female leaders tend to assume more of a caretaker role, possibly because of their stereotypical role as a caretaker to their husband and children in the household. Whatever the reason may be for these behaviours, women have a much more interpersonal leadership style than men. This relationship-oriented leadership approach perfectly mirrors the way in which women communicate. Women see the goal of a conversation to maintain interaction with the other person and to seek control and understanding (Tannen, 1990). Creating and maintaining intimate connections is a common primary objective for women across both communication styles and leadership approaches (Tannen, 1990). This is why women emerge more often than men as "social leaders" or facilitators, as opposed to task-leaders, because of their ability to communicate and connect with their followers on a social and emotional level (Gray, 1992; Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women, on average, are also more often described as friendly, pleasant, interested in other people, expressive and socially sensitive (Eagly, 1987; Hall, 1984).

Non verbal behaviour also indicates a leader's emotion and can improve the involvedness of the followers. Once the leader is aware of gestures and body movements he or she is using, he or she can compare it to more effective leaders. This might improve showing their non verbal behaviour. When followers are more attracted to their leader in terms of the leader's personality, followers are more attracted to their leader in terms of the leader's personality, followers might get more loyal to the company and get more satisfied.

Feminine leadership behaviours include supporting, rewarding, mentoring, networking, consulting, teambuilding, and inspiring, whereas masculine behaviours include problem-solving, influencing upwards, and delegating (Martell & DeSmet, 2001; Yukl, 1994; Hater & Bass, 1998).

Unlike these traditional views there seems to be evidence that people believe that, over time, women's attributes have become more like men's and will continue to do so (Diekman and Eagly, 2000). Recent research has shown that women are more and more viewed as equal to men in intelligence and competence (Hentschel, Heilman and Peus, 2012). These statements can be seen as another evidence for Schein's (1989) statement that effective women do not necessarily show the same behaviours as effective men.

These gender differences in leadership styles should not be looked at competitively. Women are not better leaders than men, or the men than woman. They just have different skill sets and leadership styles due to their psychological gender differences. Therefore, they should be looked at through different models or lenses of leadership toaccount for these gender differences. These gender differences should not be used as a reason to discriminate against male or female leaders, but rather they should be acknowledged and analyzed so that male and female leaders are placed in positions in which they can best contribute their abilities. To increase efficiency and successful leader-situation placement, leaders should be placed where their skills are most useful and applicable to the leadership role.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# Erotic Feminism in Khushwant Singh's The Company of Women

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### Abstract

The Australian writer Germaine Greer believes:-'The Surest guide to the correctness of path that women take is joy in struggle. Revolution is the festival of the oppressed', what she means to suggest is that the oppressed women must revolt and treat this as a festival, if she wants all kinds of equality in society. Though Indian constitution guarantees equal rights to both men and women, still many women do not possess equal political rights, equal economic rights, equal social rights and even equal copulatory rights. Today, such women are struggling hard to grab all these rights by hook or by crook. Some of them have established their presence in Khushwant Singh's The Company of Women. They seek freedom and economic strength, coital enjoyment without any inhibition. The upcoming research paper will be a study on their carnal longings and the realization of those longings.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Equality, Freedom, Coital Enjoyment, Carnal Longing, Economic Strength

*The Company of Women* is a revolutionary novel written by Mr. Singh. It echoes a typical Lawrencian sound. It is perhaps

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the first Indian English novel that deals with the theme of AIDS– the disease due to which the protagonist finally dies. His death is actually the result of his promiscuous behavior wherein he comes into the contact of multiple females and succeeds in having coital rapports with them. And, this success comes to him because all of them are die-hard feminists, open-minded and free from all kinds of social restrictions.

The present paper intends to highlight some of his female characters who echoe feminism in various ways. In the very beginning we come across Dhanno, the maid servant in the house of the hero Mohan Kumar. Even though she is the mother of small children and wife of a drunken man, she has no inhibitions about having extramarital affair with Mohan, her master. Instead of shyness she demonstrates extraordinary courage in her discussions with Mohan Kumar during one of her intimate closeness with him:

Net like this, Sahib, she murmured. You must be like me: she unbuckled His belt & pulled his trousers down. She gasped, "Sahib, I have never seen anything so big". (25)

After Dhanno he develops another lusty relationship with a woman known as Sarojini. It has been yet another fruitful rapport in promiscuous Mohan's life. Both the ladies figure in the first part of the novel entitled "The Secret life of Mohan Kumar". The second part of the novel records the feminists like Jessica Brown and Yashmeen.

Professor Sarojini comes to him voluntarily from Rewari to spend quality time with him for some-days and loves to enjoy his company. Even though she is separated from her hubby and is having a son who reads in a boarding school, she does not fail to celebrate the blues of life with licentious Mohan Kumar. There are several incidents of their carnal closeness in the novel, yet one incident where both indulge in coital rapport in moonlit night on the balcony is worth quoting because here Sarojini's feminist temperament is vividly evident and her boldness is worth appreciations : He sat down in his chair legs apart exposing himself to her, She undid her dressing gown and came over and sat astride him. She put her hands on his shoulder and leaned back, so they could both see and marvel at how a small opening could swallow up his huge organ. All of it, down to its hairy roots. (65)

Therefore, these two images from the very first part of the novel justify as to how new Indian women are getting sexually liberated and enjoying everything that they want, irrespective of family and social restrictions.

The second part of the novel entitled 'The Mamoirs of Mohan Kumar' in which the protagonist records the youthful life he spent in New York (USA) where he was sent for higher studies. Being a womanizer and a skirt-chaser he comes across both western blendes and Eastern women and enjoy their company. Two of them are Jessica Browne and Yasmeen. Though Jessica is black, yet, she has a scintillating persona. She is an American. So, naturally, she is ingenuous and open-minded. It is but natural for her to flirt with him out and out. Her overall appeal is so hypnotic that Mohan gets compelled to loose his 'virginity' in her company. When Mohan visits her room for a drink she greets him with a lusty French Kiss. Mohan's orgasm reached its zenith when Mohan appreciates her beautiful figure, she presents herself in total nudity in front of him without any delay and in return she commands him to don off his clothes. He too strips himself naked. Mohan confesses about his first coital experience as follows:

She took me to her bed, pulled me above her and directed my thing into her. I felt giddy and breathless with sheer joy as she took me in. She gasped with pleasure as I went right inside her. I could not control myself. This was my firsttime and I spent myself, moaning helplessly, almost as I entered her. I had never imagined sex could be so thrilling. (104)

After Jessica, Mohan befriends a Pakistani girl Yasmeen, who is his classmate in the Department of Religion and Philosophy. It is in this relationship that Khushwant Singh has justified that relationship cannot be restricted by cultural restrictions. Even though Yasmeen is a Pakistani, it is she who initiates her erotic encounter with. Mohan, it is actually she who fucks him madly:

She pulled off my trousers and fondled my limp lingam till it was ready for action, she sat astride my middle, spread her ample frame over me and directed my phallus into her. She was wet and eager and my penis slid in easily. Her breasts smothered my face. She held each in turn and put its nipple in my mouth, urging me to snek it. She kissed me hungrily and noisily on my nose, lips and neck, leaving her saliva on me, while she heaved and thumped me with her huge buttocks. 'I haven't had sex for six months. I am famished,' she said as her movement became more frenzied. (123)

Yasmeen represents the feminist culture that flourishes in restrictions. After Yasmeen incident Mohan returns to India accomplishing his course in US. His father, after many religious choosey processes, gets Mohan's wedding solomnised with Sonu. But Mohan's married life shatters soon and once again he starts leading a bachelor's life. Maladjustment of the couple results in permanent separation. Then comes one Molly Gomes in his life for sometime. A nurse and masseuse from Goa is so fast and forwarded in her carnal gestures that even Mohan Kumar falls in surprise. When Mohan is in love with her in a certain situation, she proves how she can make a man moan out of sheer pleasure:

She nibbled the lobes of my ears, pressed her thumbs into the back of my shoulders, ran her fingers over my belly, middle thighs and shins, down to my feet. She rubbed my toes and insteps. No part of my body did she leave untouched. It was relaxing soothing. "If you go on like this, I'll fall asleep," I murmured. She came up over me, kissed me passionately and said, "Darling, you go to sleep, I'll do all the love-making." (247) Thus, it is evident that Molly Gomes is extremely smart and proactive in the matters of realization of sensual longing of other two women.

Mary Joseph and Sushantika are also very claring in their approach towards erotism. Mohan also enjoys their company with full physical gratification. The great American actress Mae West has rightly said: "Sex is emotion in motion". (<u>www.brainyquotes.com/tsopic/sex</u>) Undoubtedly, Khushwant Singh's women are certainly justifying this proverb. Sex for them has been a way of life. It's like food without which one can't survive. Sex is music for their songs of love.

The third and final part of the novel is entitled 'The Last Days of Mohan Kumar'. Although, in this part Mohan Kumar dies a premature death due to AIDS, yet he does not miss chances to enjoy the blues of physical passion even in his infirm stage. In chapter sixteen the author comments about Mohan as follows:

Sex was the most important thing in his life: with the sex urge gone, there was little left for him to look forward to. (311)

When on a business trip he goes to Bombay, he checks into Taj Mahal Hotel near Gateway of India. The weak Mohan drinks scotch and asks the waiter to get him a woman. Within a few minutes a thirty year old lady comes to his room, takes advance payment and presents herself nude in front of him. And, then this happens:

Mohan's member stiffened.

He was delighted. In that one instant all the anxiety and frustration of the past several months was wiped out. He was his old self again. He pulled his pants and showed her what he had. 'For that I should charge you double', she said, 'Most women who see it want it for free', replied Kumar with a leer. (313)

And, after these moments and discussion Mohan enjoys the flesh of this bai of Bombay successfully. She is actually a prostitute with whom he establishes coital rapport without condom at least twice. He is then finally diagnosed with AIDS. This realization leads him to gradual depression and he dies a slow death as any individual who endangers his life due to unsafe practice of copulation.

On the whole, the novel is a record of maturing feminism in India, and changing mindset of women, at least in Urban and semiurban region. Though, this novel was published in 2001 but its appeal is all the more universal today because women of India have undertaken a long journey to modernism so far. Even rural women have changed a lot and are changing further breaking the walls of taboo created by men.

Thus the novel aptly justifies erotic feminism in its story.

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

# A Green Reading of "The World is Too Much With Us"

\*Dr. Rashmi Kumari

#### Abstract

William Wordsworth advocated for the preservation of Nature way back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Besides divinizing Nature, Wordsworth pleaded that it is a panacea for all ills of today's so called modern and tech-savvy world with its capacity to elevate human mind to a higher level of feelings for everything in Nature. His poem "The World is Too Much With Us" is an exploration of the poet's dissatisfaction with modern men over their indifference to and indiscriminate destruction of nature.

In Wordsworth's sonnet "The World is Too Much With US", we find a personal and authentic contemplation from Wordsworth's soul, rather than a fictitious work; a stirring artistic statement concerning the world from his day till now, and a gripping piece of art by which Wordsworth reasons with us and convincingly argues that we become catalyst within our world. In this sonnet, the poet deals with the issue of the glorious blessings of Nature versus the wasteful trappings of society.

**Keywords:** Eco-criticism, Sonnet, Materialism, Nature, Environment.

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They did not tell us What it would be like Without trees Nobody imagined That the whispering of leaves Would grow silent Or the vibrant jade of spring Pale to grey death. And now we pile Rubbish on rubbish In the dusty landscape Struggling to create

A tree.

In the above poem, the poet Tina Morris holds a mirror before the reader's imaginative eye and cautions the present generation realize what the world would be without trees. The consciousness of the writer has brought the two disciplines-ecology and literary criticism together.

Nature has been the subject of different forms of art and its treatment particularly in poetry has drawn specific attention of the readers and critics alike. The poets like William Wordsworth, P.B. Shelley, Robert Frost and many more have celebrated different hues of nature for different purposes and in different perspectives. Treatment of nature in their poetry shows how nature acquires different interpretations and meanings, sometimes it appears as a divine spirit, a holy mother and friend of man, at others, it plays the role of a tyrant and violent force that acts as a supernatural agency to punish human beings for their wrong doings. In whatever forms, it appears, nature forms a prominent part of thematic as well as artistic element in poetic expressions. In contemporary Indian English poetry, the treatment of nature marks a host of contemporary socio-cultural issues emerging against highly capital oriented, technology savvy world. In the changed scenario, nature appears as a prominent concern in the poetry of many eco-conscious writers who are concentrating on evil impacts of excessive exploitation of nature and its resources resulting from man's lust for wealth and materialistic interests and unprecedented intervention of technology.

As literature engages with life and everything in the world, it must also engage with the environment, eco-criticism is fast becoming a buzzword in the academic circles in India. Simply put, eco-criticism is the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment, which necessitates looking at literary studies through a green lens. In order to understand what this branch of study is founded on, Cheryl Glotfelty, University of Nevada, spells out succinctly, "When literary scholars began to ask what their field has to contribute to our understanding of the unfolding environmental crisis." While literature has always engaged with nature and environment from a creative and aesthetic approach (through poems of nature and more), eco-criticism demands a close critical look at nature and environment.

The development of an ecologically sensitive critical thinking is among the most recent developments to have contributed significantly to the field of literary and aesthetic theory. This has been ushered in through a historically necessiated recognition that nature as a living concept and existential being is intrinsically valuable in itself and not as merely contingent on the human being. The rapid growth and development of ecology as a science and the corresponding emergence of ecologically sensitive critical theory social science and humanities is a propitious feature of this very idea. Nature is not merely there for taking and neither is her resource unending: the earlier view of earth as replete with resources for human evolution and expansion would ring merely hollow notes in the present. This definitely has political, economic literary and aesthetic implications. The ground beneath our feet is shrinking: the earth as we have understood is now showing signs of decay. We are faced with crises in a hitherto unimagined scale-What are the literary and aesthetic connotations of this?

Increasing environmental debates and a growing consciousness on environmental issues by citizens have only fuelled interest in the study of literature and ecology. By studying inter-relationship between nature, culture and environment, eco-criticism also explores facets like eco-feminism, eco-poetics and eco-justice. Eco-criticism can provide a new perspective on environmental issues, when perceptions differ, finding alternative solution is possible.

### A Green Reading of The World is Too Much With Us

"The World is Too Much with Us" is an exploration of the poet's dissatisfaction of the modern men over their indifference to and indis-criminate destruction of nature. In "The World is Too Much with Us", William Wordsworth expresses his sadness and frustration with how humanity isn't living to its fullest potential. He uses contradiction and a breaking rhyme scheme to portray this. The poet laments that the material progress becomes the primary goal, humanity is left gasping for profits, the gaining of which leaves only spiritual bankruptcy. While this poem is strongly colored by the mindset of the romantic era, Wordsworth's rebuke of industrial society resonates well with current environment concerns.

In the very first two lines of the poem "The World is Too Much with Us", Wordsworth shares his opinion on humanity. "The World is Too Much With Us; late and soon/Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" (lines1-2). He uses contradictions "late/soon" and "getting/spending" to portray that we are not living the way we should; that our way of life, is in fact, a contradiction. We can also interpret "getting and spending" as his way of saying society is becoming materialistic, we are getting money and then we are spending it, buying material things. He then, very specifically states that humanity is not realizing its fullest potential when he says we lay waste our powers.

Wordsworth firmly believes in the presence of a Spirit which gives him the joy of elevated thoughts and bow his head in respect to this divine power. He feels that Nature has a healing capacity and it is the panacea for all ailments; therefore human beings should live in tune with Nature without indiscriminate destruction of its objects. He bewails the cruelty of man to Nature in "The World is Too Much with Us" which elaborates the theme of modern man's indulgence in getting and spending resulting in their lack of concern for Nature. Materialistic attitude of men makes them oblivious of the fact that Nature should be protected. The beauty, charm and healing attributes of Nature demand that it should be preserved. He bewails men falling out of tune with Nature in the lines:

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon; The winds that will be howling at all hours, And are up gathered now like Sleeping flowers For this, for everything, we are out of tune It moves us not

Great God! I'd rather be

A Pagan suckling at a creed outworn

So might I, standing on this pleasant len.

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn:

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

The speaker, looking out on a pleasant meadow, feels nothing, "It moves us not." He envies the pagans, who see not profits to be harvested, but rather deities to be worshiped in the sea... A.C. Compton Rickett says, "Apart from the sanctifying touch of Nature, men and women are poor creatures to Wordsworth. The farther we travel from Nature, he paltrier we become. This is the burden of his splendid sonnet "The World is Too Much with Us". Better, he says in effect, people, the woods and strains, the plains and oceans, with nymphs and gods and goddesses and retain something of the fresh simplicity and austere endurance of Nature, than give up our souls to the mere accumulation of wealth and to the superficial life of pleasure"

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The poem provides eloquent testimony to the Romantic artist's despair when faced with the inexorable advance of industry at the expense of nature. Faced with dirty, crowded cities, coalblackened villages and denuded forests, 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantics tended to look back fondly on an idealized or mythologized nature. These nostalgic reveries evoke an imaged past when nature and man shared a deep spiritual connection.

It is important to notice that Wordsworth breaks his rhyme scheme in the middle of the poem. The first eight lines starts off as Abba, Abba, then the last six lines change to cdcdcd. He does this to change the tone of the poem. The first eight lines he is stating society's flaws as he sees it. He declares that we "lay waste our powers" (line 2) and "Little we see in nature that is ours" (line 3). Here he is stating that we don't realize our power or see how amazing our nature and world is. He describes nature's beauty in the following lines. Then the rhyme scheme changers and he expresses his sentiment. "It moves us not-Great God!" (line 9). Due to the exclamation mark we can see he is he is yelling and thus angered at the fact that we are not moved or impressed with our nature. In addition to anger he shows sadness. "So might I... Have glimpsed thatwould make me less forlorn" (lines 13-14). Forlorn means sad and abandoned or lonely. So he wishes to see something that will make him less sad, like the sight of Proteus and Triton (lines 15-16).

Preservation of Nature becomes all the more important because it keeps human beings pure and enhances their moral, ethical and spiritual Prowess. Respect to Nature dissuades people from polluting and destroying it. Thus, Wordsworth's concern for nature in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can beconsidered one of the first few attempts from littérateurs to attract the attention of mankind towards the endangered ecosystem.

Wordsworth powerfully deals with the glorious blessings of nature versus the wasteful trappings of society. Wordsworth's sentiment that we have lost connection with the spiritual aspects of nature has come to be even truer today than it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today even environmental protection is couched in commercial terms. We protect the environment not so much because nature carries a spiritual force towards which we feel reverence, but rather because we want to have our tourism industry flourish, find medicine and herbs in the rain forests, trees protectour lungs from airborne pollutants and we want to leave sufficient natural resources for our future generation to use. So, by giving preference materialism to spirituality we have created a vacuum in our life which is to be filled only by adopting a balanced and friendly attitude towards nature.

It is the magic of Wordsworth's subtle observation and stirring contemplation that he takes the seemingly insignificant everyday aspects of life and reveals within them aspects of something naturally divine. Writing in his characteristic simple and straight forward and simple style, he successfully in filtrates the subconscious of his reader and brings him or herto the real awareness of what he sees and thus persuades the reader line by line into the same school of thought. Wordsworth advocated for the preservation of nature way back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Besides divinizing nature, Wordsworth pleaded that it is panacea for all ills of today's so called modern and tech-savvy world with its capacity to elevate human to a higher level of feeling for everything in nature. His poem "TheWorld is Too Much With Us" is a telling commentary on one of the major environmental issues that encounters a modern man. He takes the human heart, the real citadel of human nature, by a storm of beauty over powers by a glow of pictures que presentation, and moves by a stirring of emotions. "Wordsworth is here engaged," rightly observes Wheeler "in the poet's true function which is not to argue about the function of art but to reveal it so that argument becomes superfluous. There is no arguing with the assertions in this poem: stupid men may ignore, and soullessmen may cheerfully accept, but no argument can refute them".

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IJES, Volume LVII, 2020

## Autobiographical Element in Amy Tan's The Kitchen God's Wife-A Critique

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#### Abstracts

Amy Tan, one of the renowned Asian-American writers, through her fictional endeavours offered significant insights which facilitate deeper exploration of human relationships in general and in particular mother-daughter relationship. Her magnum opus The Joy Luck Club (1989) fetched her remarkable success by virtue of her dexterous handling of the theme of mother-daughter relationships. Her next novel The Kitchen God's Wife (1991) with greater intensity presents the similar theme reflecting the novelist's personal conflicts, dilemmas and crisis. The character of Pearl Louie Brandit becomes a mouthpiece for Amy Tan to articulate her own struggle and the trails and tribulations of women in patriarchal society. Further, the curiosity of Tan to know about the past of her mother becomes distinctly evident in the novel. The present paper titled "Autobiographical Element in Amy Tan's The Kitchen God's Wife (1991)- A Critique" undertakes critical discussion on depiction of her

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own tale considering the similarities in situations confronted by Pearl beside touching upon relevant writer's revelations in the recently published memoir *Where the Past Begins* (2017).

Keywords: Subjectivity, Self, Society, Struggle

In the Asian American Literature, the Asian-American writers added a new hue and dimensions to creative endeavours through their bicultural perceptions. They offer wide-ranging ideas pertinent to life and its varies facets. The contemporary Chinese American fictional writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Gish Jen and Amy Tan focused on subtle human relationship in their fictional and nonfictional works. Amy Tan gained considerable distinction as a novelist by virtue of her dextrous handling of theme of motherdaughter relationships in her maiden novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989).

Amy Tan (1952) was born in Oakland, United States of America to Daisy and John Tan, migrated Chinese Americans. As a child she displayed her writing acumen by attempting an essay *What the library Means to Me* which fetched her appreciation and reward. She became popular with maiden fictional work *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) which depicted the conflicts of four migrated Chinese mothers and their American born daughters.

Some of her other literary works are *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's* Daughter (2001), *The Opposite of Fate* (2003), *Saving Fish* from Drowning (2005), *The Valley of Amazement* (2013) and personal memoir *Where the Past Begins* (2017). She exclusively wrote for children and the works include *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* (194), that were telecasted in an animated series in PBS.

The main aim of the paper is the revelation of self that Tan endeavours in her novel *The Kitchen God's Wife (1991)*.

Tan's second novel *The Kitchen God's Wife (1991)*, is her mother Daisy's own tale and maintains the best-selling record as her maiden work *The Joy Luck Club (1989)*. Tan's father John Tan was an electrical engineer in China and received study visa of the U.S.A to complete post-graduation. He married a Chinese woman Daisy, who before arriving in the U.S.A, has suffered grievous personal setbacks in China and divorced from her first husband. His religious faith turned him as Chinese Baptist and he used to read his sermons and short stories to his children. Tan was immensely influenced by her father's upbringing. She suffered a colossal personal loss by the consecutive deaths of her affectionate father and brother who succumbed to fatal brain tumours. Daisy cursed her fate and she vigorously felt guilty of committing sin by abandoning her daughters from her previous marriage in China. At the age of ten, Tan's mother unravelled her past to her daughter.

Tan gained considerable distinction through her first novel *The Joy Luck Club(1989)*. Her mother Daisy wished her daughter to write about her real life, her sufferings in China and her strong desire for true love. Tan promised, and the result was the publication of *The Kitchen God's Wife (1991)*.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife (1991)*, the protagonists are the mother character Winnie Louie, a Chinese migrated mother and her American born daughter Pearl Brandit. Tan endows the Winnie's character with the qualities of courage, positivity, innocence, freedom of thought, hope for bright future and with the passionate quest for true love. She bestows all her mother, Daisy's qualities in Winnie character.

Daisy was born in an educated family in China but lost her father in her childhood. Her mother was trapped by a wealthy man and who committed suicide after giving birth to a baby boy, the successor to the wealthy man's property, for not honouring his words of announcing her as his first wife, the true heir of his property. She hardly had any reminiscences about her mother as she was sent to her uncle's house. The attempt of suicide by her

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mother by swallowing excessive dose of opium, nurtured insecure feelings in her and made her feel desperate and diffident, losing meaning and faith in life. But with optimism she rejuvenates herself and visualises bright future. Upset by her mother's act, Daisy never held her in esteem. But Daisy proved to be hypocritical as she too toes the line of her mother. When Tan was in her teens and faced arrest in drug addiction case, Daisy threatened of committing suicide.

Tan identifies herself with the character Pear Louie, who is confused with her mother's behaviour and the strict Chinese custom of obeying parents' scrupulously at home and embracing free American culture. Tan expresses her emotions about her father's death with brain tumour through the character Pearl.

Pearl remains silent and conceals her grief at her father's burial ceremony, who dies of stomach cancer. Winnie slaps Pearl for not respecting her father's death but Pearl screams back that he is not her father.

Her true feelings are best revealed in the following lines:

I did not want to mourn the man in the casket, the sick person who had been thin and listless, who moaned and became helpless, who in the end searched constantly for my mother with fearful eyes. He was so unlike what my father had done once been: charming and lively, strong, kind, always generous with his laughter, the one who knew exactly what to do when things wet wrong. And in my father's eyes, I had been perfect, his "perfect Pearl," and not the irritation I always seemed to be with my mother. My mother blew her nose. "What kind of daughter cannot

cry for her own father?"

That man in there is not my father," I said sullenly. (KGW 45)

In her memoir *Where the Past Begins* (2017), Tan shares her relationship with her father John Tan and her sweet memories with her father.

Tan mirrors her true opinions on her father in the character of Pearl. She elucidates her feelings about her father in her memoir *Where the Past Begins* (2017) as follows:

If I had had a choice, I would have picked him. He was special, the best in a roomful of fathers. One other thing, he was not a hypocrite. I have often publicly cited that. His beliefs and his actions were consistent, and that was very important to me when I was teenager and prone to idealism and rapid disillusionment. (WPB 192)

Winnie remained childless and victimised by her husband's harassment. She married Jimmy Louie and was blessed with a girl and a boy, Pearl and Samuel. Pearl suffered from multiple sclerosis, about which every member of family except Winnie was aware of. Tan's notion of strong mother-daughter relationship lies in mutual trust and respect. She sketched Winnie as a good mother of Pearl by finding true Chinese medicine for her illness.

Though Tan had problematic relation with her mother Daisy in real life in her teens, she started giving importance to her mother feelings. She treated her with due respect and showed concern for her emotions. As Tan already knew about her mother's first marriage in China, she criticised her mother as a selfish woman who had left her three daughters from her first husband in China and started a new life with her new husband in America. She met her half-sisters along with her mother in China and knows about their experiences. Her half-sisters also suffered from their abused father and step-mother both physically and mentally. Though Daisy knows about the harassments she couldn't try to secure her children in China hecause of lack of financial support. But Daisy's children in China never misunderstood her mother and await her return.

Tan shared about her mother's sacrifices with her mid halfsister Jindo, who was seven years old when Daisy left her and Jindo's father who never stopped from her step-mother's harassments. Deeply despaired Jindo, felt orphaned and her outburst was as follows: "But my father was my father," she said to me in apologetic tones, "just as my mother was my mother." (WPB 122)

Tan endeavours to analyse her mother's psychology and the reasons for her endless efforts to death. She memorises the incidents of her mother's threat in her memoir *Where the Past Begins* (2017) as follows:

My mother had had suicidal thoughts ever since she saw her mother die of an opium overdose. She was nine and said she wanted to fly off with her mother. (WPB 121)

She clearly understands the mother's true intention of emotional blackmailing by threatening. When Tan was six years old, her mother's aggression and ambitious nature surfaces, when Tan decides to unwillingly stop her most cherished pursuit of playing piano. Her mother's emotional blackmail placed permanent threat of death on sensitive child's mind as follows:

"Why you should listen to me? Soon, maybe tomorrow, next day, I dead anyway." (WPB 123)

When Tan was adolescent, she was addicted to drugs and tried to elope with her boyfriend. Her mother became hysterical and almost launched a physical assault using cleaver. But this time Tan's self-confidence and resolve to pursue her life on her own accord saved her. She described the chase and her act of protesting in her memoir as follows:

My mother is holding a Chinese cleaver, the one she uses to slice raw beef. She's coming at me and I'm backing away. She locks the door with the skeleton key in the keyhole, and throws the key to the side.She keeps coming toward me and I keep backing away from the cleaver until I'm flat against the wall. I won't show her I'm scared. I'm stronger than she is. I can make myself not feel a thing. (WPB 119-120)

Tan was puzzled to know that her grandmother too employed similar strategy to dominate. Though Daisy was too young at the time of her mother's death, she faced her mother's serious attempts and threats. Tan makes a mention of her mother's quest to find answers for formidable questions of life and her guilty consciousness.

Candidly, Tan gave her mother's perception on her own self and constant preoccupation to contemplate about her past:

She was always looking for answers to why things happened, and by looking for guilt, she found it. (WPB 121)

Daisy wished Tan to undertake writing fiction as she wanted to visualise the world where the in women become stronger to bear with patience the excesses of men and confront them with grit. She tolerated many physical and mental wounds inflicted by her husband and society which makes her too strong enough to face the hurdles in her life. Tan pictures her mother's miseries and abused life with her husband in China through the character of Winnie. After every unfavourable and irksome incident she becomes more conscious about her own self and respects her inner-feelings. She questions the false close-knit blind Chinese culture that ill-treats woman discarding their feelings and selfdignity . Her good intentions are best revealed in the form of an idol named Lady Sorrow free towards the end of the fiction *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991). The following lines bear testimony to Tan's conception about life of women.

When you are afraid, you can talk to her. She will listen. She will wash away everything sad with her tears. She will use her sick to chase away everything bad. See her name: Lady Sorrow Free, happiness winning over bitterness, no regrets in the world. (KGW 414-415)

Tan champions the cause women's individual identity, selfrespect, liberty and freedom of living. She questions the social and gender inequalities between rich and poor, women and men as well in her novels. Though she had positive perception towards her native Chinese culture in some respects, she seriously denounced through her novels the maltreatment of women in China. Her protagonists were either the sufferers of wars or by the male domination and their abusive behaviour.

In her novel The Kitchen God's Wife (1991), the protagonist Winnie is the victim of both societal restrictions and patriarchal set up. After marriage, Winnie is stunned by his cruel and merciless behaviour on her and children. She wished him to die in wars so that she can survive freely. His torture and the silence of the society transform her as a strong woman and found her own way of living in peace. Daisy runs from her own cruel husband in China by abandoning her three daughters with him because of society's hostile behaviour. She nurtures of taking her children along with her to America after her settlement in the U.S.A. But she lost her husband and son in U.S.A. and faced financial difficulties to survive and remained silent with her abandoned daughters. Her mother's mistreatment and her efforts to death and disillusionment of her married life suffocated Daisy and raised to question the society about women equality. Had her mother societal support, she could have rendered justice to her children. Besides lamblasting injustices inflicted by society, she pictured the humanity through different characters which was the basic premise for the human survival.

Daisy faces humiliation and denunciation in the society since her childhood. Her mother's unacceptable act of living as a concubine to a wealthy man made her to hide her distance herself from the society. Though she was the step-daughter of a wealthy man she had no face in the society which grabbed her self-respect and made her to walk towards the thoughts of death. In the event of knowing past life of her mother Daisy, Tan recapitulates her mother's pathetic emotions in her memoir as follows:

My mother cried whenever she talked about her mother. "They treated her like some kind of prostitute," she once said. "My mother was a good woman, high-class. She had no choice."

I said I understood. And she replied: "How can you understand? You did not live in China then. You do not know what it's like to have no position in life. I was her daughter. We had no face. We belonged to nobody. This is a shame I can never push off my back." (WPB 163) Gender plays an eminent role in the society, that decides the future of any child in the Chinese society. It is always favourable for men. In this aspect Duz Burcu words are worth mention to describe Chinese inequality.

Gender roles are so strong in the society that they just make the woman the victim of it. The marriage is the best way to make it passive and gendered. The only thing that a woman can do is to pray for luck to change her fate or to have a rich husband. If she is lucky, she has many sons and a good mother-in-law and no concubine. Otherwise Winnie was threatened with the idea that she would be a like her mother. (Duz Burcu 40).

Amy Tan, too, was a victim of gender bias and social discrimination. In fact the insults broadened her fictional powers and consider themes 'unintended gifts' to put it in her own words from *Where the Past Begins* (2017). After a long period of her grandmother's death, even Tan also experienced this social embarrassment and inequality in China when she attended the writer's award function in Shanghai, China. She was introduced by a wealthy and a scholar in the function and later was asked about her grandparents. Tan revealed the truth and faced the embarrassment and odd looks. She felt awful and endorses her mother's aversion to apathetic society in the following manner:

A moment later I realized that the man's insult was an unintended gift to a fiction writer: the punch in the gut that enabled me to viscerally feel what my mother and grandmother had endured, what I had to captured in stories. (WPB 160)

### Conclusion

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In *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), Tan's mouth piece Winnie, is replica of Daisy, Tan's mother. Tan whole heartedly portrays her mother's pathos and predicaments in Winnie's character and depicts her own self through the daughter character Pearl Bandit. She denounces society's patriarchal domination and suppression of women. She visualises the world's gender bias and social

inequality of China through these characters. Even in her memoir Where the Past Begins (2017) also she vividly elucidates the social discrimination among three generations of her own. Tan through her fictions urges the society for the need and importance of equality for women and their survival in society. She wishes the rapid change of thoughts in society towards gender discrimination and hopes for the identity and support for the women. Tan's self becomes a bigger landscape to explore various facets of life and she lends a conscientious treatment of her self in her fiction.

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### Abbreviations

KGW: The Kitchen God's Wife (1991) WPB: Where the Past Begins (2017)

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

## SHORT STORY

# **Corridor Therapy**

\*Ramesh K. Srivastava

At the age of fifty, Lalita felt happy that a grandson was born to her and that he was as fair and beautiful as she herself was in her young age. It was a living incarnation of her concept of beauty. She was very proud of her grandson Rohit and breathlessly told her friends and relations that her beauty was duplicated into him.

Since her son and daughter-in-law were in jobs in a private company and were inexperienced in bringing up the child, Lalita took care of the newly-born son after a couple of weeks. Though she and her husband Ved Ram lived in the village Lakhanpur of Meerut district, they lovingly took care of Rohit. Lalita massaged him well, gave him bath, dressed him well and took complete care of him. Her son and his wife visited the village occasionally on Sundays and were very happy to see that Rohit had a good time with his grandparents and hence continued to do their jobs without any problem.

As the child Rohit grew a little, he was sent back to his parents in Meerut because now he could be handled by them. Lalita's initial care was like that of the early care of a seedling which usually has a high mortality rate. As a grandmother, Lalita wanted to

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accompany Rohit to Meerut but the house in which her son Om Pal was living was rather small. Within his small salary, he could not afford a large house but Lalita drew a promise that whenever they found any problem, Rohit would be sent to the village again.

When Rohit reached the age of four, he was sent once more to his grandparents in the village because his mother fell ill and was hospitalized. For Lalita and her husband Ved Ram, Rohit was a welcome member, no less than a VIP who brought happiness in their lives. Considering him a living toy, they fondled him, talked to him, imitating his halting, prattling way of talking which made even the neighbours happy.

In the village, Rohit enjoyed what to the urban people appear exotic items. He rode on the cow or buffalo, ran and jumped with the newly born calves, enjoyed watching the milking of cows and buffaloes, sat on the shoulders of the cowherd, plucked various kinds of fruits and flowers, washed his hands and feet in the thick stream of the tube well and looked with wonder on the green crops of wheat and rice.

In the mornings, both Lalita and Ved Ram used to have a cup of tea. Rohit too wished to have one. When a half-filled cup of tea was given to him, he placed it on the floor, rushed in excitement to his grandmother, shouting, "Dadiji. Dadiji, the cup has fever. Bring that thermometer with which you had measured Dadu's fever."

Lalita picked him in her arms, kissed him repeatedly and said, "Cups don't have fever, my little son; only men, women and children have."

"What about cows and buffaloes?" Rohit asked innocently. "Do they have fever?"

This was a puzzling question to the grandmother and she gave an indirect reply, "Even if they have, we have never come across the fevering animals."

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After preparing and serving meals in the night, Lalita or Ved Ram would often narrate a number of tales from *Panchatantra*, the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata* which Rohit enjoyed. When the condition of his mother in the city became better, Rohit reluctantly went back to Meerut where he was admitted to school. It was from that time onwards that his visits to the village were drastically cut short because the schooling became more important than anything else.

Lalita was now eighty years old. A series of illnesses had made her quite weak. Her grandson Rohit was now a married young man who had a good job with a high salary and kept her in a beautiful, well furnished room. Lalita's husband Ved Ram, her only son Om Pal and his wife had died in a car accident and now she as the sole survivor stayed with her grandson.

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Rohit had vivid memories of his childhood spent in the village with his grand parents, as also of the love that his grandmother Lalita used to bestow on him. He remembered too how he was fond of toy cars and how his grandmother used to bare her tummy which due to acidity used to swell like a smooth, shining balloon on which Rohit, as a child, would place cars one by one and then would allow them to roll down. The disease of Lalita was such that after an hour or so of her taking midday or evening meal, her tummy would swell painlessly like a balloon, a little less in size than that of a football. Then gradually, she would press and squeeze her hands and feet and as a result of which the burping and belching sounds would emanate from her mouth which would gradually un-swell the tummy till it came to its normal size.

Now after thirty years, Lalita was quite aged and ill, and things had changed a great deal. Remembering vividly every moment of his childhood spent in the village, Rohit wished to compensate his grandmother, particularly in the absence of his own parents and his grandfather. He selected the quietest room on the first floor, got it fitted with an Air Conditioner, purchased the most expensive

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curtains for the door and the window, and had two or three call bells fitted at various places, including the toilet, so that in the hour of need, she could press it from any place without any need of shouting and he, his wife, his children or the maid would rush there to help her. A colour television with a large screen was fitted to the wall of her room which she could operate with a remote control. He also got the best physician in Meerut who visited her once or twice a week. Unfortunately, her condition continued to deteriorate slowly as though the treatment had no effect on her. Later, her body refused to respond to the best treatment available and she became so weak that she could hardly get up from her bed.

When such a thing went on for a couple of months, the physician apologized, "I am sorry, Rohit ji, I have done all I could, but she is not responding to the treatment. To me the disease seems to be from within. It appears as if she has abandoned the desire to live and no medicines work under such circumstances."

Lalita remained alone in the room, thinking of the past which was now no more. Rohit came two times a day to her-before going and after coming back from work and so did his wife. Their children-one boy of six years and a daughter of four years did drop in occasionally to pick up their rubber ball which happened to drift to the terrace in front of her room. Lalita felt happy in seeing both the great grandchildren though occasionally she heard their voices when they played either in the house or outside. She yearned to see them, to hold them, to touch them as she used to do her grandson Rohit in his childhood, but she was now too weak to get up and counted her days for the last journey. She thanked god that while her other senses were failing, her sense of hearing was somewhat better. In the games of children, in their shouts and yells, she nostalgically revisited the past when her grandson Rohit was a child and used to play the same way, particularly with his toy cars on her swollen stomach.

Disturbed somewhat while sitting with his grandmother, Rohit was nearly heart-broken and wailed, "Dadiji, I don't know what to do. I know you must be remembering the tragic deaths of Dadaji, and my parents and you know I cannot bring them back. I too feel bad about them. All I have now is you, and for you I am doing all I can but the medicines of the best doctors have no effect on you."

Lalita touched his forehead and softly consoled, "Rohit, don't worry about me. My time has come. I have no repentance. I have lived a good life. Where else could I have found so much of happiness after the passing away of your Dada ji, your own father and mother? I am so happy and satisfied with what you have done and are doing for me. Since the medicines have no effect on my ailment, it simply implies that my last days are here and I would like to live the way I like."

"Is there anything that I or my wife has not done for you?"

"No. Rohit, you and your wife have done everything," Lalita asserted. "Look at this room. Is it in any way less than that of a queen? What is there which this room lacks? Now that the medicines are having no effect on me, would you be good enough to fulfil my one last wish?"

Holding her bony hands, Rohit said pathetically with tears in his eyes, "Dadi ji, just tell me and I would do anything you say."

"Then shift my bed to the corridor on the ground floor."

"To the corridor?" Rohit felt shocked. "There can be no facilities—no Air-conditioner, no television, no privacy, no peace. No second cot can be placed there for the nurse in case of need. You may have no rest or sleep because all kinds of noises reach there. Our children and those of neighbours play so boisterously that you would not have even a good hour's sleep in day time. I cannot give there any of the comforts that you find in this room."

Lalita smiled and said, "There is the whole night for me to take rest and to sleep. Remember Rohit, I come from the village where I lived the simplest sort of life without electricity. Hence let me live now as I wish."

Rohit appealed, "Dadi ji, please think again. It is not a very good place for you. But since you wish it, I cannot say 'no' to you. In such a case, promise me that when you don't feel at home in the corridor, you will come back to this room."

"I assure you my son," Lalita said. "If needed, I will shift to this room, but the occasion would not come. Just wait and see."

As her bed was shifted to the corridor, much against the wishes of her grandson and his wife, Lalita felt very happy. She felt as if she had re-linked herself to the living humanity. In her room on the first floor, the only visible scene was that of the Muslim kabaristan (graveyard) in which many caskets of the dead bodies were brought, the graves were dug up and the dead bodies lowered and buried in them. She saw the grief-stricken, drooping heads of their friends and relations. Even when she used to keep her face away from the window, the scene was reflected in the mirror of the steel almirah kept in front of her bed. It was as if there was no escape from the inevitability of death. Each time after the mourners had left, the peace of the graveyard reigned there literally and metaphorically till another dead body arrived. The scene stayed in concrete form in her mind as if she could touch it. When the curtain was drawn on the window to block the view and the light switched off, the dark room appeared as a vast open grave and she as a dead body waiting for the soil to be poured on her. Even the dreams were really nightmares which related to the horrible pictures of deaths and murders in their most gruesome forms. After being shifted to the corridor, she could witness the games that both her great grandchildren played in the inner yard or outside. She saw or heard their giggles, their peals of laughter, their movements, their running around or together and their frequent complaints against each other which they brought to her for arbitration. Life seemed livable now. As the children came, touched and teased her, Lalita enjoyed every moment of their activities.

One day, the boy came running to her in excitement, asking, "Baddi Dadi, I have found a coin. Of how much value is it?"

Lalita scrutinized the coin carefully and found it to be outdated. She said, "*yah chalta naheen*" (it is outdated).

The boy took the coin, played with it with his sister for sometime, and then placed it on Lalita's swollen tummy. Soon it fell down and rolled in a circular motion and the boy said, "Look Dadi ji, *yah chalta hai*" (It moves).

Lalit felt very happy and embraced him. It was as if Rohit as a child had come in the form of her great grandson.

During the whole day when Rohit and his wife were on the job, the activities of the children rejuvenated her drooping spirits. Gradually, she began to get up, to sit on the bed and to enjoy the giggling company of the children. It was as if she were revisiting her own and her grandson's life in the past.

Within one month, Lalita felt recuperating her energy fast. One day, Rohit was surprised to see his grandmother standing up on the ground and throwing the ball at her great grandchildren as it had fallen on her cot.

One month after his sojourn abroad, the physician saw was unbelievably surprised to see the glow on Lalita's face and the movements of her hands and feet. Fumbling for an explanation, he philosophized, "It is all due to god. What the medicines failed to do, god's blessings did it. Or did you change to some other treatment—I mean, Ayurvedic or Homeopathic therapy?"

"Doctor Sahib," Lalita broke in before Rohit could say anything to the physician. "It is because of the shifting of my bed to the corridor where I interact with all the living people, particularly children, physically and ocularly, while I was all alone in the room above looking at the Muslim graveyard. I would say that it is neither Homeopathic, Ayurvedic nor Allopathic but what has brought a transformation in my health and spirits is the corridor therapy.

# **POETRY SECTION**

## **Three Poems**

\*R.K. Singh

#### 1. SELF-NEGLECT

Meditation living long but failing to live wide says Seneca we are fugitives from ourselves

the busyness and weariness of now we toss about regulating our sleep by one another's

love or hate what others dictate we get duped our time lost, without inner wholeness

#### 2. ROT

Moon energy fills up the inner space call to wake up

or be hostage to wounds that don't auto correct astral faults

knitting the luck amidst the waste gods spread I smell the rot

#### 3. POST-ELECTION

They don't hear the silent screams of millions

tired of misfortune play games of convenience innocent voters

sordid life nation's destiny heaven-fed

Creative Writing

\*Ram Krishna Singh, an Indian English poet, has been writing for over four decades. Professionally, till recently, Professor of English at IIT-ISM in Dhanbad, he has published more than 160 research articles, 175 book reviews and 42 books, including Sense and Silence: Collected Poems (2010), New and Selected Poems Tanka and Haiku (2012), You Can't Scent Me and Other Selected Poems (2016), God Too Awaits Light (2017), Growing Within (2017), and There's No Paradise and Other Selected Poems Tanka & Haiku (2019). His haiku and tanka have been widely read and appreciated. More at: <u>https://pennyspoetry.fandom.com/wiki/ R.K. Singh; email: profrksingh@gmail.com</u>

#### **Two Poems**

\*Susheel Kumar Sharma

#### 1.

#### **The Fountain Square**

The fountain on the city square Oozing out dreams with coloured water Under the shades of the tinged lights Stands erect endearing songs Celebrating environment protection.

The white marble around the fountain Has come from Dungri where The mother is tracing her lost Arm and the leg in the quarry. The fountain is no match to The burning sun that changes Colours at different hours Like the marble in different Stomachs of the continents.

The game water and marble played In the Pandava's palace Made Draupadi smile; Thrilled and enthralled Were the Pandavas And deluded was Duryodhan. Water helps in cutting marble.

The wishes exuberantly dancing By the water in the musical fountain Look for the drummers, pianists, Bas players and guitarists. Krishna With his flute intact in his hip Smiles and smiles. Will he play Or won't he? Radha conjectures. The guessing game is on.

Mahabharata is taking shape. A dice will be thrown To decide the date For cutting the marble. Creative Writing

The palace may turn desolate The fountain may dry up. Is someone bothered? Does it matter to me?

#### 2.

#### Ram Setu

(Remembering Prof. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)

The chain of shoals, the creation Of nature but the eye-sore of a few Draws me from Rameswaram and Invites me to take a bath in the serenity.

Standing at the Bridge of the Sea, The creation of Nala and Neela, I ponder over the past and think Of Ram, Ravan, Sita and the vanars.

The land's connection with Sri Lanka Unfolds ignorance, jealousy and hatred. How can one welcome light and love When thorium outshines the glory of Ram?

The son of a boatman ferrying pilgrims Diving deep into the calm sea learnt To catch the huge fish and dig out pearls. Newspapers alone don't supplement income. Who would believe the son of an Imam, The boat maker, will hold a Veena And will give wings of fire to India? Dissatisfied Dean's threat did the trick.

Smiling like the Buddha he mastered The art to ignite minds catching Them young in schools and colleges Removing all heart clots in one go.

The luminous sparks he created In his valiant vision forged the future Of the wandering devilish souls trapped In the middle of tornados and earthquakes.

The bachelor to occupy the Bhawan Coming from uninhabited Dhanushkodi Conquering Prithvi with spirited Agni acts On a common code to dispense justice.

If every Sita is to be rescued and saved Should the People's President, our Ram, Listen to the pleas of the rapist Dhananjoy? Does the kidnapper Ravan deserve a mercy?

Ram was left alone in Ayodhya. Abdul was deserted by friends in Delhi. Defeat corruption is a slogan of the frothy Waves striking the slippery rocks hard.

#### Creative Writing

Leaving his books, a CD player and a laptop The soul seeks release of the diamond ring. Born to blossom, bright Chhotu, surviving the Strife, renames himself Kalam seeking victory.

Puzzled, baffled, bemused, besotted I, wandering under warm sunbeams, Look at the waves coming from eternity. Seeking peace Lingam becomes Ramalingam.

It is time to return home; the train is calling; Interfaith respect and dialogue are waiting; Is it so difficult to make stones float and Create a liveable and loveable planet earth?

\*Susheel Kumar Sharma, Professor of English, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj-211002, Email: sksmateng@gmail.com

## Awaiting Bapu in New Form!

#### \*Dr. Kalikinkar Pattanayak

The Birth of Bapu Was a necessity In human history To exemplify How to live life With bare necessities; How to love men Without a sense of possession; How to fight foes Without aggression; How to win friends With empathy and admiration; And how to realize Truth Through experience and experimentation.

The accidental death of Bapu Is not without a meaning, Bapu shot dead became more powerful Than Bapu living; Top leaders of the world felt That light went out Of their short-spanned lives. The assassin missed his narrow target; He immortalized the assassinated.

Today, the bleeding nation Longs for liberation From violence, intolerance, Cynicism, bigotry and corruption.

The President of the U.S.A, Donald J. Trump Conceives of world peace and mass leadership, Discovers Bapuji in Modiji. Great tributes to Indians

Creative Writing

As patriots and apostles of peace.

Modiji calls upon the country To celebrate Bapu's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary Such a preparation instills A noble feeling in humble Gandhians Of necessity of non-violence, peace and progress Contrary to the wishes of war -mongers And beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals.

Surely, the Second Coming in new form is inevitable. New form can never be uniform.

Dr.	Kalikinkar	Pattanayak,	Cuttack	(Orrisa)
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## Home is where...

\*Pashupati Jha

You used to rush to my sturdy arms taking them potent seals against outside elements; now you feel there squeezed to death, years have affected minds and charms; and so I leave you gasping for breath.

But life is easy only in pairs when there is some soul sweet to share joys and divide despairs; yet you want freedom of the lonely, sitting alone and sipping your tea.

But dear me, see above the powerful sun burning alone in his searing pain, yearning for one, who really cares; home is where one gets repairs and likes to return, again and again.

#### **Nuclear Family**

That *was* our home, visible from miles with many parents, and many a child. When love was plenty and words were mild, like music soothing wildest of wild. When bond was mighty and care was free, everything was done by a simple plea. When home was close to heaven above and all we forty were happy enough.

Number has now declined to four, yet ego is always sitting at the core of all our fight and daily noise explosion and all, without any poise. This is our small, squabbling home where everyone largely lives alone.

**\*Pashupati Jha,** Professor of English, Humanities Dept., IIT Roorkee, Uttarakhand.

Creative Writing

#### See the pic

\*R.P. Singh

Squint appeal towards impairing self , picturing strategies of a politics sour I see my friends!

The picture perfectrosy ,shiny,myriad flash, comes now sharp... the lousy backdrop!

A union unfairoozing drops on a fomented dish , I see it all !

A piquant draught!

We will meet again and live it all, You,me one and all!

The ball is squeezing it is already a li'l small.

We will meet again, Why to stand on ceremony here !

The taste is fusty, let it be See the pic and feel the splash !

See the pic, and find the sick ! You too will it feel a day we'll have, then, joint a say!

**\*Dr. R.P. Singh** is an award winning playwright and poet. He is a Professor of English at the University of Lucknow.

#### **BOOK REVIEW**

# *Greatest Short Stories of Premchand,* Trans. Ram Bhagwan Singh & Chhote Lal Khatri, Aadi Publication, Jaipur, pp. 160, Rs. 195, ISBN: 978-93-87799-20-2

Premchand's stories and novels are invaluable assets of Hindi Literature with an outreach beyond geographical boundaries. They are the classics of literature having perennial value.

Generations come and go, social values transform, political configurations change but human emotions and passions remain. Premchand's stories count both for temporal reality and eternal, spiritual awakening.

I am happy to read a copy of *Greatest Short Stories of Premchand* in English translation. It has sixteen selected stories dealing with rural life of poverty, ignorance, oppression, superstition and family feud. The translators Ram Bhagwan Singh and C.L. Khatri have wisely selected stories representing different aspects of human activity. The one highest common factor is Premchand's sense of pity and compassion for the suffering humanity. While he takes a dig at the agents and factors responsible for the suffering, He also at times suggests a way out from the malaise. His social concern at times approximates his art to a catholic orientation and becomes an organ of reform for which he is ascribed as a humanist writer.

The stories in this anthology carry different segments of social activity agitating the sensitive mind of the writer. They show the evil aspect of human behavior as well as the noble instincts redeeming them. The popular story "Namak Ka Daroga" translated as "The Salt Inspector" is an example of bureaucratic corruption rampant in those days. But it also shows a man of principle who stakes his job, even his life to maintain the rule of law. The same pattern recurs in "Panch Parmeshwar" translated as "People's Court". In the story the two friends Jumman Sheikh and Algu Chaudhary are friends, no doubt, but when the critical situation arises Algu sticks to law disrespecting his friendship and decides the case against Jumman. In a like manner Jumman forgets his enmity and delivers justice in favour of Algu. That shows Premchand's belief in essential human natureunalloyed by circumstantial compulsions. He takes it much further to illustration the noble nature of a boy Hamid whose primal compassionate nature prompts him to override his personal please and care for his grandma's comfort. No wonder, the child buys a pair of tongs and not a balloon or a toy for himself.

But inscrutable is the nature of man, noble here, ignoble there. In our culture mother's filial affection and kindness is proverbial. But the son may betray his mother's sacrifice for him. In the story "Mother" Prakash is such a disloyal and selfish son who leaves his mother in the lurch. In "A widow with Four Sons" again, after her husband's death Phulmati's four sons treat her so shabbily that she is compelled to drown herself in the Ganga. From such stories a trend emerges that daughters are more gentle, co-operative and obliging than sons. Anandi in "Daughter of a High Family" well illustrates this view. Her noble nature speaks of her gentility and noble upbringing.

"The Temple" and "Thakur's Well" are stories of critical social realism. They expose the evil of caste superiority that denigrates humanity to an abysmal level. A poor woman of a lowly caste is not permitted to draw water from a well. The well is reserved for upper case people. Similarly, a Dalit woman is not allowed to enter a temple though she belongs to the same religion and worships the same god. Premchand's story by implication wants an apartheid – free society. "The Shroud" in the same line shows society's insensitivity to the poor, who is driven to drinking and wasting his life. Other stories like "The Old Auntie", "Ramlila", "A Night in Poos", "The Tale of Tow Oxen", "Chess Player", "Cricket Match" and "Test" are also memorable ones.

The books as a whole, is an appreciable venture to present the stories of Premchand in English. The Choice of the stories is wise and relevant to the present time. The language is simple and easily comprehensible for which I congratulate the translators and thank the publisher for low pricing.

# *The Sport of Allama and Other Plays* by Basavaraj Naikar, Authors Press, New Delhi. 2019. pp. 289. Rs. 595.

Indian English Drama is the poorest among the literary genres. Although India is a land of many religions consisting of countless saints and sages, religious drama is not developed to the proportionate extent by our playwrights.

The Sport of Allama and Other Plays is a collection of plays by Dr. Basavaraj Naikar that in all the three plays there runs a common theme, spirituality amid the worldliness. Flowing as an undercurrent the theme binds them together homogenously to study or stage them in their very order the theme is better illustrated for the audience. They also stand out as singular examples to show how the fabric of spiritualism spreads across generations influencing life to get over the mundane in search of beatitude. The Sport of Allama, the first of three plays, is about the meeting between Allamaprabhu, an unparalleled mystic, and Mayadevi and Allama and Akka Mahadevi, the divine-feminines in human form followed by The Golden Servant of God, about a great reformist-composer Kanakadasa and The Pilgrim of Life, dealing with Sarif of Sisunala, a renowned mystic–composer and a symbol of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood.

**Prof. Kumar Chandradeep,** Professor of English, College of Commerce, Arts & Science, Patna.

Allama, Kanakadasa and Sarif who lived generations apart have shared a common ground of existential exigency that runs through the vast fabric of Indian spirituality and philosophy. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar's fertile inventiveness has spotted and identified this common but dominating factor in the lives of these three great supra-conscious souls or seers of Karnataka and dramatized it in such a way that it would be a visual treat if enacted on stage or for a deeper spiritual experience if read in silence.

The Sport of Allama is a three-act play depicting the encounters between Allama and Mayadevi followed by a similar meeting between Allama and Akka Mahadevi. Akka is understood to be a symbol of women's freedom which is evident when she chose not to marry the local ruler Kaushika. If a man was free to marry or remain a celibate, why not a woman, was her argument, it seems. Being in love for eons with the Lord of the Universe spiritually she chose to justify her stand before the leading lights of the age Allama, Basava and other Siva-Saranas in Kalyana. In this context Akka being portrayed as the satvic aspect of the divine-feminine she cannot be juxtaposed to Mayadevi, the *tamasic* aspect of the same divine-feminine since she had not come to lure Allama and win him over. She had come to Kalyana all the way from Udutadi only to absolve herself of the stigma of being branded as one who broke the vows of marriage. Neither can we draw a parallel between Allama and Kaushika. Allama facing Mayadevi is totally different from Kaushika facing Akka. This thematic contradiction in the play seems to raise the question of propriety. But the playwright seems to be modeling the play in the format of our mythologicaltraditional plays of yore which obviously enough gloss over such trivialities. In doing so the playwright succeeds in his intention of making it appeal to both the lay and the learned.

The travails of both Mayadevi and Akka as presented in the play are climactic presenting pictures of hope and despondency in their respective situations. Similarly they play their respective roles and speak decisively in the pursuit of their goals. The credit for putting well crafted words into their mouths should automatically go to the writer. Both are born to compel the divine to submit to their will, but for one it eludes and as for the other it enwraps her to glory and immortality. In this respect both present human faces despite their divine origin. The interplay of the language used here, theatrical effects of the scenes, dramatic shifts in actions involving fully rounded characters display that the writer of the play is both an excellent dramatist and director combined in one.

The play *The Golden Servant of God*, in five-acts consisting of sixteen scenes, surveys the life of Kanakadasa, one of the leading lights of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Haridasa movement in Karnataka. Being a shepherd by birth he toured the entire land spreading the message of brotherhood and equality. He declared that true devotion to the Lord alone distinguishes one from the other no matter how high or low one is by birth. To prove his point view he faced a series of tests and trials cast him into by his enemies and adversaries in his long but eventful life. But the turbulence so caused rendered him fit for God's beatitude.

To-day Kanakadasa is remembered as a great saint-poetcomposer. His poetical works like *Haribhaktisara, Ramadhanya Charitre, Mohanatarangini* and hundreds of his socio-spiritual compositions of great literary merit in Kannada have made him occupy a unique place in the socio-religious history of India. In this play Basavaraj Naikar dramatizes the plain but momentous life of the saint-poet effectively. Seemingly unadorned the play successfully brings on the stage the complexities of the saint's life on the one hand and on the other the reservations of the orthodox elements of the time in which he was caught. But the chief interest of the play lies in how the saint powered by his spiritual prowess wins the battle against the ignorant and finds redemption and gets rewarded every time he was put to test or quizzed. When the envious and the baiting worldly lot of dubious devotion fail to see God appear in the form of a dog the saint tells his guru Vyasaraya, 'God can be seen only by the inner eye or subtle eye and not by the external, gross one.' Kanakadasa was right that the formless God could only be seen or experienced by the intuitive eye! This wonderfully crafted play appeals more on the stage than on the printed page.

The longest play in the collection, The Pilgrim of Life, dramatizes the life of Sarif of Sisunala often called the Kabir of Karnataka and Sarif Sivayogi which euphoniously enough sound pleasant on the ears of those who profess communal and religious harmony. With many a dramatic turn and juxtaposition, Dr. Basavaraj Naikar presents his plot with great verve and abandon. Sarif here plays a dual life – life of body and of soul, life of flesh and life of spirit and life of self restraint and life of priorities. Sarif, a Muslim by birth, was blessed and brought up by Hindu gurus of Virashaiva and Upanishadic traditions who subscribed to 'unity in difference' philosophy. Sarif gets transformed under their influence into a renowned mystic and poet-singer, a troubadour, a legend in his own time, the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Karnataka. Believed to have possessed some superhuman powers, Sarif offered cures to many evils and ills of mundane existence. Govinda Bhatta, Sarif's guru, tells his brother Bandibhatta, 'Anna, there is nobody in the village whom I can call my own. He is the only man who is my own man.' 'My own man' here refers to Sarif and the speaker Govinda Bhatta was himself a great but eccentric mystic known for his oddities. Look at the kind of relationship between a Brahmin guru and a Muslim disciple! About the distinction between father and guru, Sarif says, 'One gives us the mortal life, but the other cancels the mortality of life.' Subsequently Sarif tells his mother Hajjuma, 'I shall never return to this body-house, Mother. Kindly bless me,' meaning rebirth stands cancelled for him. Such was the greatness of Sarif Sivayogi who has composed hundreds of tatvapadas, songsmystical, in Kannada sung even to this day in Karnataka. Sarif is called the pilgrim of life in this play, most appropriately, rendering his character dazzle through the play brilliantly.

In penning these plays and publishing them Dr. Basavaraja Naikar has achieved a rare feat and in their generic sense all the three plays are but representations of God's self-exteriorization in human form, forget about the birth and background of the protagonists. My unqualified appreciation for Basavaraj's contribution to this form of dramatic art and for his enrichment of Indian English Religious Drama. These plays may be studied along with similar plays like Chattopadhyaya's *Siddartha: Man of Peace*, Parthasarathy's *Ramanujar* and Kalburgi's *Fall of Kalyana*.

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# Susheel Kumar Sharma's *Unwinding Self*. Cuttack: Vishvanatha Kaviraja Institute, First Edition: 2020, pp.160. Paperback, Rs. 250/-, ISBN: 978-81-943450-3-9.

This new volume of poems *Unwinding Self* speaks for itself on the artistic talents of its author Prof. Susheel Kumar Sharma from Allahabad University. As in his previous works, Prof. Sharma's knowledge of his native Hindu culture is interestingly blended and, somehow, complemented by the intellectual voices coming from the Western world; in particular, the English literary tradition. As an academic, Prof. Sharma has published four books, and over eighty research papers and book-reviews. His first poetry book, *From the Core Within* (1999) and a second collection of poems *The Door is Half Open* (2012) were very well-received and reviewed, with translations into various languages.

His third volume *Unwinding Self* reads, as its title suggests, almost as a contemplative meditation or devotional chant on what it is to be human. It does so with a touching nearness and intense

familiarity, paying close attention to minor but important details that go largely unnoticed. In spite of the many sensitive and even subversive themes intended to raise awareness on the wide range of problems and dilemmas that our world faces, there is underlying tone of sympathetic multi-coloured understanding that reaches and engages the reader into a cross-cultural journey of self-discovery.

There are many types of poems; some are short and more lyrical; others are longer narrative poems. The volume opens with a piece entitled 'Snapshots', visual fragments, as if painting with words, in the style of Ezra Pound. Like life itself, these casual and apparently disconnected moments of contemporary occurrences reveal their ultimate hidden message at the end of the reading and transformative journey, when the collage of images becomes a visual whole. The last poem of the volume returns to Pound, this time illuminated with the Hindu tradition and the stories of the Mahabharata, each synthetized in three fundamental thematic verses. Thus, like the river Ganga, the sacred Hindu representation of the flow of life, the collection moves from the present to the past, a well-devised fluvial poïesis that coerces the readers into meditation about the futility of material pursuits, while lifting their minds and offering subliminal comfort in the journey through the circles of consciousness and existence. Wandering alone or with others, delving into the routines of life or flowing into undiscovered territories, the volume also voices of the unheard, bridging the distance between near and far.

While the collection offers a wide display of themes and dilemmas, I have chosen a few poems where I can hear women's voices. Like Ganga, or Anna Livia Plurabelle in another cosmic tale reaching out to life and death in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the voices may come in the form of bubbling murmurs, as in the long narrative entitled "Bubli", or in the heavy rain and storm of "Durga Puja 2013".

Me too; I arrived in Allahabad one October 7<sup>th</sup> of 2019 when Durga Puja was taking place. I witnessed the *Homa and bhog*  (fire oblation), followed by *Sindoorkhela* (immersion in the confluence of the three rivers Triveni Sangam). The celebration of women's empowerment was everywhere. For Western readers with little knowledge of Hindu myths, Prof. Sharma provides a glossary attached to the volume. If you are visiting him, you will hear everything from his own voice. Durga festival marks the victory of warrior goddess in her battle against a shape-shifting demon. In Prof. Sharma's poem, the soul longs to be with Durga and her manifestations: Kumari goddess of fertility, and Mai, the mother. The mother figure is revered on a "monumental pandal, the home for Ma for four days". The devotional and dreamy atmosphere of the first three stanzas contrast with the sudden awareness of the outside world and the coming storm, since Durga Puja is, in part, a post-monsoon harvest festival:

Darkness saves birds

From getting chased.

Tigers run into thick forest.

Dolphins stay where they are.

Nobody bothers the sea gulls.

Will the ninety lakhs hang hopes on evacuation?

The sound of *dhak* which accompanies the ritual helps 'dispel the clouds' and the celebration of rain washes all impurities so that the narrator can walk barefoot. "Durga Puja 2013" is the first piece in a collection where several poems are dedicated to the difficulties women face in the world. Mahishasura, the shapeshifting deceptive demon vanquished by Durga, symbolizes some of these difficulties.

The second poem that struck me is "Me, A Black Doxy". Here we move away from Indian and, using slang North-American English, the author gives voice to the life experiences of a black prostitute. A lonely migrant in a foreign land, the Christian woman struggles to make a living for herself, contemplating whether is right or not to sell her body for money. Ain't it prophesied in the Holy book:

-None eye pitied thee,

to do any of these unto thee,

to have compassion upon thee;

but thou wast cast out in the open field,

to the lothing of thy person,

in the day that thou wast born. (Ezekiel 16: 5)

The struggle for self-respect becomes particularly strong and touching in the repetition of verses which start with an assertive personal pronoun:

Me not alone? In the crowded street Me not alone?

They 'ave white, grey, pink hair

Me 'ave black hair-me not alone

There's a crowd with black hair.

Me 'ave no black money

Me not alone?

Ain't my money black?

The dilemma is presented in a poignant way. The nameless narrator pays her taxes (no black money), and works hard. Still, society rejects her.

How is my money black?

Wages of sin is death.

Me works for belly not death;

Belly dance is no black art;

Me paid fee to learn it with effort

Body turned blue and writhed in ache;

My soul ain't black.

In the poem, Prof. Sharma chooses to give voice to the prostitute; not only to show her exploitation, and to openly blame men:

He could have spent that amount

On his wife, on his children. [...]

The entire poem is conceived as an obvious Durga chant for the empowerment of women, where everyone is coerced to empathize with her marginality.

My skin is black My soul ain't black My money ain't black Their acts is black; Me ain't alone My soul is with me My God is with me.

Me ain't contaminated,

Me ain't a sinner.

Me is the Lord's faithful bride

And, thou art the man.

The theme of migration is taken up again in "Thus Spake a Woman", a shorter piece where, again, Prof. Sharma's sympathizes with a woman who remembers her flight with the man she loves in search of the American dream. But her dreams are broken, and she laments over what she left back in India. Her sadness and loneliness is moving. Her husband, better acclimatized to the new culture, is no longer by her side. Her child, not well-adapted to the new culture, might be deeply depressed and heading for suicide. The woman remembers her difficulties in conception; the *pujas* and prayers she did, thinking she was not fertile. But barrenness was not in her own nature. It was all around her in the new land.

The final pieces I will briefly comment upon are entitled "Bubli Poems", a long narrative about the journey of a village girl in the city; once more, Allahabad. Bubli comes from a village

Where a dish connection was available

Courtesy some Panchayat scheme

Sponsored by the state government

With a loan from the World Bank.

The punch in the above lines on the World Bank's policies and the state government's actions is quite obvious. Bubli is attracted by the apparently carefree city life.

Next day the people in Allahabad

Have a gleeful morning on all the known squares

Where the newspaper vendors sit cross legged

Mourning with their piles, waiting for a customer

To buy a paper, local or national

But people holding their earthen glasses in one hand

Sip tea and read all newspapers for free.

The most important news today they discuss is

Of the affair of a girl and two amorous lads,

Hurled bombs and pistol shots.

In her search for personal freedom, she tries different activities: she becomes a dancer and a cheer-leader in sexy outfit, a tennis player in a tiny mini-skirt.

Bubli can dress well now

She can dress as she likes now

[...]

The village is hid behind the trees

Who cares for a bullock cart

When a modern car is right in front?

She can make a fast buck in the city of joy.

[...]

She could be nominated to represent the district; But her dress was a problem; she was playing wearing a

Salwar and kurta; she needed a skirt, The smaller, the better suggested the coach. [...] The coach said she could not be recommended To represent the state if she did not meet The Secretary of the Association privately. That she was a lone female in the man's world

All these liberation promises do not work for Bubli. She cannot find happiness in the city. With deep dilemmas in her mind, she visits a sage for advice, still struggling with self determination:

Bubli is sitting before her master

Cross legged like Apala must have

To ask questions, to seek knowledge

And to defeat the sage to prove her

Wit, logic, strength and worthiness. [...]

A thousand questions are asked, and

The master gazes into the thin air;

Bubli is bubbling with puzzles.

In her conflicting agony, Bubli decides to go directly to the temple:

In their wisdom the temple authorities

Had provided for two queues but

Bubli felt segregated; discrimination

Even in the house of the Lord

Pinched her; she wanted to ask

Questions but "Keep silence" plates

Checked her momentarily;

Like many others there

She sat cross legged and tried to meditate.

The questions resurfaced in hordes.

[...]

Answers were not coming.

The poem tackles feminist struggle for liberation in India although, like other poems in the volume, it reaches out to the world. The condemnation and rejection suffered by women from small country communities and certain social groups, including the Muslims is there. Echoes from the news on similar issues spring from all corners of the verses.

Bubli is worried about the growing

Weight of sin around her world.

Neither feminism nor socialism provides

Any clue; a blame game has been on;

Some blame poverty; some the IMF;

Some the UN; some the environment;

Some the arms race; some the crony's lust;

Some the US's craving for power;

Some the UK's greed.

Bubli is looking for happiness;

How can a worried person be happy?

Bubli prays to all the Hindu goddesses for strength: Durga, Saraswati, Jai Kali, Jai Ma, and more. She searches solace in Krishna, and even Christ, moving from one shrine to another. Thinking that she is capable of taking life into her hands and making her own decisions, Bubli fails. The poem closes the circle and flows back to Durga Puja, with Bubli aspiring for Mukti (liberation from the circle of life) and Moksha (freedom from Samsara or material world). All her previous dancing moves have now taught her that

One has to synchronise with the symphony

To be a part of the harmony;

Self-consciousness has to be lost

To be a part of the great love;

#### Book Review

Bubli is not capable of forgetting her own self-consciousness, and the poem concludes that she is not yet ready for salvation.

Like Prof. Sharma's collection, my commentary finishes where it started, in the continuous transformation of life; in the flow of Ganga. In an interview with Syed Ahmad Raza Abidi titled "To Serve the Cause of the Universe" (Points of View, XX, 1(Summer 2013), pp. 150-165, ISSN 0971 - 605X, http:// pointsofview.in/viewarchive.php?volume\_num=XX&number=1), Prof. Sharma explains that creativity is an innate faculty that people use to illuminate the world. As William Blake would have put it, the poet is a sensitive soul who can use this faculty to "transform from one domain into another" (p.151). This is the definition of cognitive metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) would have it in Metaphors We Live by. The linguist and the philosopher go on to say that metaphor is a creative mechanism that turns the abstract into the concrete and vice versa in dynamic flux. Indeed, stagnant water corrupts. Everything has to flow, and solutions must be found for the dilemmas that men and women face.

With the hand of a painter, Dr, Sharma is able to capture a kaleidoscopic scenario made up of micro concrete moments of conflicting life events, turning them in to a macro-cosmic experience; a larger perspective with encompasses the harmonic sublime. Prof. Sharma's collection is an extraordinary and successful attempt to unwind the ambiguous, complex and colourful nature of all human selves. This volume of poems is a joy for readers all over the world and a chant for sympathetic cross-cultural understanding.

AsunLópez-Varela is Associate Professor at the Department of English Studies, Complutense University, Madrid (Spain). Her research interests are Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, as well as Cognitive and Intermedial Semiotics. Since 2007, she coordinates of the research program Studies on Intermediality and Intercultural Mediation SIIM. A proactive member of the profession, currently, López-Varela is Deputy Head of the Department of English Studies at UCM and member of Executive Committee of the Association of Alumni of the Real ColegioComplutense at Harvard University, as well as an active member of the Marie Curie Alumni Association MCAA. Between 2017 and 2019, López-Varela was President of the European Society of Comparative Literature.

# *Intrigue at Ikkeri* (A Historical Novel). Basavraj Naiker. New Delhi: Education Publishing, 2019. pp. 155. Price Rs. 200.

Intrigue at Ikkeri (A Historical Novel) written by Basavraj Naikar is about Raja Vibhadra Nayaka, one of the powerful and popular kings of Ikkeri, the capital of which was Keladi kingdom. How intrigues and conspiracies play their role in dethroning the legitimate king/leader from political power and how even the close relatives turn disloyal have been portrayed in an effective and interesting way. How 'vaulting ambition' takes place in the incompetent persons and how they can disturb the entire administrative and social set up is vividly presented in the novel.

The story opens with the description of the ill health of Raja Venkatappa Nayaka, whose condition is deteriorating from bad to worse and all medicines prove to be ineffective. Venkatappa Nayaka is anxious about his successor. He nominates Virbhadra Nayaka, his grandson, as his successor. Virbhadra Nayaka assumes the throne of Ikkeri and leaves no stones unturned in giving good administration to the people. His benevolent nature wins the hearts of all the people of the kingdom. But he is childless. He along with his two Ranis, Virammaji and Kollurammaji, goes to pilgrimages and also to some holy shrines to get the wishes fulfilled. They visit the temple at Tirtharajapura, Sringeri and Kolluru to earn the blessings of God. When Virbhadra Nayaka enters the river Tunga to have a bath, he sees two human figures. Later on his body guards inform him tht they had killed them as they were to attack the Raja. Virbhadra suspects that something is amiss somewhere. Actually in his absence some of the conspirators joined hands with Vira-Odeya whom Venkatappa Nayaka had imprisoned sensing that he (Vira-Odeya) was mischievous and could create problems. Sadasivayya, Commander Timmanna Nayaka and some other conspirators get Vira-Odeya released from prison and enthrone him at the palace of Ikkeri. But soon Virbhadra defeats Vira-Odeya and regains the lost power.

The novel tells the story of the game of politics of power. How even the incompetent and incapable persons want to grab power for the sake of wealth, prestige, and immoral and illegl sex has been beautifully dealt with. Poetic justice has also been maintained. Timmanna Nayaka who had forcibly made sexual relations with the mentally derailed widow of a soldier is ultimately stabbed by her to death. Sadasivayya, the brother-in-law of Virbhadra Nayaka also commits suicide by drowning himself into a river. All the conspirators who had played foul role in destabilizing the legitimate King are punished. The writer has presented a universal and common theme i.e. struggle for the throne of political power in an interesting and effective way. The story of the novel fulfils the classical demand of beginning, middle and end. The flow of the story is smooth and pleasant. Most of the emotions i.e. love, hatred, lust, valour etc. have been evoked and the readers feel the sensation of having read something. Except for a few grammatical and typographical errors the novel is a successful one. (Pages-156, Publisher-Education Publishing, Bilaspur, Chattisgarh, 2019. Price: Rs 200)

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# Road Not Taken and Other Stories by Ramesh K. Srivastava. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2018. Paperback, pp. 247. Rs 495. ISBN:978-93-86722-63-8

Road Not Taken and Other Stories by Ramesh K. Srivastava is an anthology comprising twenty short stories dealing with various day-to-day activities of life. Srivastava is not new to the field of creative writing in English. He has to his credit two novels Neema (1986) and Coils of the Serpent (2011), seven collections of short stories, an autobiography, a book of essays and a dozen books of literary criticism. His short stories obviously carry the mark of a mature artist and a skilful literary writer. Besides being a literary critic, Srivastava is widely regarded as an immaculate Indian English short story writer. The reader gets so much carried away by some of his short stories that he cannot put them aside until he has finished reading them. The basic reason behind the popularity of his short stories is his firm belief that a writer must keep the reader's interest in mind. In his "Preface" to the anthology, he writes: "To write a short story without keeping the reader in view is like staging a play without caring for the audience" (14). Since he writes most of his stories for literary journals as well as popular magazines, he takes care to see that each of his stories has a beginning, a middle and an end and, in addition, has a good appeal to most of the readers.

A writer is a man of imagination andof vision who adopts appropriate measures to shape up his raw material into a work of art. In the "Preface" to the anthology, Srivastava writes: "A short story is an artistic portrayal of ever-unfolding mysteries of human existence" (9). With the help of his creative imagination, he takes up an idea of a story as a seed and then surprises the readers by transforming it into a full-fledged flowering green plant. In his short stories, he deals with the lives of the rich and the poor, the exploiter and the exploited, human beings and animals, rural and urban people, friendship and love, and so on. The idea for the title of this anthology has been taken from Robert Frost's poem "Road Not Taken" in which the poet has shown that a man who undertakes a non-traditional path has to encounter numerous difficultiesbut this is where, like Frost himself, the person makes a mark for himself by getting apt recognition in the area of his operation. The protagonist of the story "Road Not Taken" is Kushagra Mathur whose character is based on the real person of a great scientist named Vishishtha Narayan Singh of Patna. The latter was such a great genius that he could have got a Nobel Prize for India but for several reasons, including the apathetic attitude of the Indian government due to which he ended up in a lunatic asylum.

What is particularly fascinating in these short stories is Srivastava's use of parallelism and contrast. One finds characters who have parallel traits or positions in the beginning and then end up in contrasting situations. Paltoo Ram in "On Being and Becoming," is quite honest, but has a group of other household workers who, being jealous of his honesty-driven progress, gang up to paint him as a corrupt person till the Seth himself finds the truth to be otherwise. The story "Together We Live" also implies the cessation of their lives simultaneously. Here two characters Pravendra Prajapati and Jai Kiran Upadhyaya are such close friends that they by their intimacy surprise their neighbours who felt: "It was as if god had made them for each other" (157). The motto of these two people was: "Together we live and together we die" (158). When Pravendra deceives Jai Kiran by raping the latter's irresistibly beautiful wife, conditions become such that they die together.

There are excellent portrayals of some idealistic characters who are worth emulating. Two notable characters among them are the self-sacrificing girl Harsha in "A Dumb Show of Lovers" and a patriotic girl Shubhapreet in "Of Terrorism and Friendship." In the former story, Harsha, the central character, becomes the sacrificing idol at a very young age. In order to shoulder the responsibilities of her home after her mother's death, she brings up her younger sister and one-month old brother, manages the household affairs and eventually sacrifices her lover for the sake of her younger sister and the family. In "Of Terrorism and Friendship," Shubhpreet, being the daughter of a staunch nationalistic father, sacrifices her very dear lover for the sake of her country by informing her officers that her lover Harpal Singh was a terrorist and that he was going to explode the building of Hindu college which might have resulted in several deaths, particularly when a function for children was going to be held there. Though idealistic characters have a tendency to appear flat without being rooted in the soil, Srivastava has made them down-to-earth real as well.

For the sake of soundness of effect, most of Srivastava's stories have stings at the end "so as to leave an unambiguous impact on the reader" (14). Sometimes this impact is attained from the reversal of fortunes. In "Of No Use to Me," Somya as a wife utters those very words for her impotent husband Priyansh which he had used for her who, because of her barrenness, was of no use to him as she was incapable of giving birth to a child. In "Lucky Rope," Raja Bhunaresh Singh was a great exploiter of the village women. After he had raped Bhanwari Bai for a number of years, he asserts his right to rape her newly-married daughter-in-law. In a clever move, the young woman, with the help of a piece of lucky rope, gets the room of sexual exploitation burnt, not excluding the great exploiter Raja Bhunaresh Singh, justifying her mythical name of Holika. These stories bring about not only the reversal of fortunes but attain poetic justice at the end so that the virtue is rewarded and the vice punished. This, of course, is done in a very natural and artistic way so that no manipulations of incidents jar the story.

A major weakness in the creative writing of academics is that their compositions—short story, novel or poetry—are heavily weighed down by the overt use of literary devices, such as, myths, symbols, classical allusions and other literary claptraps which make their works ponderous and their reading halting and difficult. Though Srivastava is a highly educated academic and continues to occupy a Professor's post, and furthermore, he does make a covert use of myths and symbols, he ensures by writing in a simple, natural language that the stories satisfy both the common readers and literary critics. It is decidedly no mean achievement.

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# Dr. K Balachandran: For Whom Does It Rain? 2018.

Dr. Balachandran's collection of poems on various topics entitled "For Whom Does It Rain?" is a brilliant explication of his vision, attitude, and conviction relating to social, cultural, political and human concerns. He, like Mathew Arnold who said that "poetry is the criticism of life" and its greatness lies in its "application of ideas of life" and to find the solution of the problem "how to live", thinks that he started quest for his life inside his life and his poems have honestly been with him looking for life within the life.

The anthology contains 52 poems in all spreading on various issues, concerns, and themes. Out of these 52 poems, about 16 poems deal with the theme of crime against women in one way or the other. Issues like marital discord, acid revenge, committing suicide, victims of rape, illicit relations, caught in black mailing, dowry demands, eve-teasing, political scenario and so on form the themes of these poems. These poems have a number of direct

or indirect rhetorical statements, mostly at the end, that are like the messages given by the poet. Some examples are, "Don't be hasty in committing suicide,too!", "Think twice or thrice before marrying", "Is killing the only way to settle disputes?", "Illegal connections know/Not manners, morality and motherhood!", "Will domestic peace be possible/If one kills one's wife & daughter?", "Is it ethical if any teacher/Takes liquor during school hours?", "If a father himself/Rapes his daughter who will give her/Safety and security in this world?" "Will the public/Remain calm after seeing the eve-teasing?"

It is clear from the above examples that asking such questions in a poem is a typical style of the poet. The questions are indirectly suggestive and convey strong messages relating to the various fields of society and human life. This can also be termed as the special feature of the poet's poetic diction. Descriptions full of specific references and proper nouns add to the strength of his style. Dr. Balachandran doesn't write imaginatively but realistically. His poetry has an undercurrent of realism relating to the social, political, and cultural overtones of the hollowness, imperfections, and deterioration in the process involved.

An interesting collection of poems on the malaise affecting our society everyone should read.

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